

Reclaiming Indigenous Wisdom: A Study of the Indian Knowledge System in The English Teacher

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Abstract:

This research paper deals with the representation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in R. K. Narayan's novel *The English Teacher*[1]. R.K. Narayan's *The English Teacher* is often read as semi-autobiographical novel, but it is also interpreted as a novel that critiques colonial education system and simultaneously presents an alternative view on education system and advocates for indigenous education system. Through the protagonist Krishna's disillusionment with the then colonial education system which was followed in his college, the text exposes the hollowness of colonial education system and the alienation produced by colonial modernity. The novel also presents an alternative views on education and the alternative model offered by the headmaster's "Leave Alone System" or play-way method of learning reflects holistic, child-centered learning traditions rooted in traditional Indian education system and resonates with the ideas of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Furthermore, Krishna's spiritual transformation, especially his communication with his deceased wife Susila, illustrates epistemic modes beyond rational empiricism, echoing Vedāntic and yogic traditions. *The English Teacher* is an anti-colonial critique and it integrates educational and spiritual dimensions of IKS, foregrounding a holistic approach to life, knowledge, and self-realization. By situating Narayan's narrative within the larger discourse of indigenous intellectual traditions, the paper contributes to the growing field of Indian literary and cultural studies that seeks to provide an alternative system of education which is rooted in Indian traditions but marginalized by colonialism.

Keywords: R. K. Narayan, The English Teacher, Indian Knowledge Systems, Colonial Education, Alternative Education System, Spirituality, Pedagogy, Vedānta, Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi, Indigenous

Introduction

R. K. Narayan is one of the tallest figures in Indian English literature and has played a very significant role to lay down the foundation of Indian English Fiction. He is a wonderful story teller, often deceptively simple in form and style. Through his novels, he has presented the complexities of Indian life under colonial and postcolonial conditions. Among his novels, *The English Teacher* occupies a very significant place. The novel often read as semi-autobiographical, narrating a delicate tale of relationship between an Indian husband Krishna and his wife Susila. The young college lecturer, Krishna loses his loving wife Susila very early in his life, and then gradually finds spiritual reconciliation too. While most of the critics have focused on the novel's personal and psychological dimensions, the novel also offers deep insight into knowledge, education, and spiritual traditions – both colonial and indigenous.

This paper argues that *The English Teacher* serves as a critique of Western education system—especially colonial models of education—while simultaneously advocating for the recovery and restoration of indigenous Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). Indian Knowledge Systems refer to and include diverse traditions of philosophy, pedagogy, spirituality, and holistic sciences that have evolved in India over centuries, ranging from the gurukula model of education to the metaphysical insights of Vedānta, Yoga, and Bhakti. The novel exposes the limitations and shortcomings of colonial structures and systems and suggests alternative ideas which are rooted in Indian traditions.

The paper begins with a theoretical discussion of IKS and focuses on its relevance in both traditional and contemporary contexts. It then examines how *The English Teacher* critiques colonial education, particularly through Krishna's dissatisfaction as a lecturer of English literature. Then the paper examines carefully the figure of the headmaster and his "Leave Alone System," and reads it in the light of Indian pedagogical traditions and alternative educational models advanced by figures such as Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. The first half of the paper thus seeks to examine Narayan's pedagogical critique. The second half focuses on Krishna's spiritual transformation, his communication with Susila after her death, and the reconciliation of education and spirituality as part of an Indian epistemic worldview.

Objective of the Study

The research paper seeks to examine the representation and embodiment of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in R. K. Narayan's celebrated novel *The English Teacher*. The novel is often regarded as a journey of transformation from intellectualism to spiritual awakening. This study seeks to explore the inadequacy of western education system and provides an alternative education system rooted in Indian knowledge and tradition.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate how *The English Teacher* juxtaposes Western rational education with the spiritual and experiential learning rooted in the Indian Knowledge System.
2. To examine the protagonist Krishna's transformation as a symbolic journey from *Avidya* (ignorance) to *Vidya* (knowledge), reflecting the Upanishadic model of self-realization.
3. To explore the influence of Indian philosophical traditions integrated in the organic structure of the novel.
4. To evaluate how Narayan bridges colonial modernity with indigenous wisdom, there by situating Indian epistemology within the English literary framework.

Through these objectives, the study seeks to establish *The English Teacher* not merely as a tale of personal loss or as a journey of self-discovery but as a demonstration of India's traditional epistemologies and larger framework of the Indian Knowledge System that harmonizes reason, intuition, and consciousness.

Review of Literature

R. K. Narayan is one of the founding figures of Indian English fiction and his works explore the Indian sensibility into a universal idiom. *The English Teacher* (1945), the concluding novel of Narayan's Malgudi trilogy, is often regarded as an autobiographical novel that marks a turning point in his artistic and spiritual quest. The novel is often interpreted by many critics as a personal saga of Narayan's grief over the death of his wife and his subsequent spiritual quest. However, the novel is also interpreted as an exploration of Indian traditional epistemologies through the larger framework of the Indian Knowledge System.

The novel *The English Teacher* has been variously interpreted by various critics. To some the novel is a personal journey of the protagonist Krishna's transformation, some consider this to be an anticolonial narrative and to some it is an exploration of Narayan's rejection of colonial system of education in favour of traditional Indian system of education. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, in his famous book *Indian Writing in English* (1962), calls *The English Teacher* "the most autobiographical of Narayan's novels" and describes it as "a movement inward, a spiritual pilgrimage toward self-realization." [2]. Similarly, William Walsh in *R. K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation* (1982) observes that Narayan's art lies in the "transmutation of the ordinary into the sacred," a process that mirrors the Indian philosophical vision of discovering divinity within daily existence [3]. Such early critics spoke about the presence of Indian spirituality in the novel, though they did not explicitly name it as a manifestation of IKS.

In later decades, critics began to examine the novel more rigorously and interpret *The English Teacher* as an allegory of self-discovery through inner awakening. N. S. Pradhan in *The Novels of R. K. Narayan* (1988) suggests that Krishna's pedagogic transformation symbolises his philosophical shift from external instruction to inward illumination, which reminds us of the *Guru-Shishya Parampara* of ancient India [4]. S. Krishnan, in *R. K. Narayan: The Novelist and His Art* (1993), argues that the novel is an exploration of Indian spirituality and the novel dramatizes the Vedantic concept of the unity of *Atman* and *Brahma*.

Recent Interdisciplinary Approaches:

Scholars such as Meenakshi Mukherjee and Makarand Paranjape have suggested that though the novels of Narayan often depict a conflict between tradition and modernity, both of them have also emphasized Narayan's subtle resistance to colonial modernity through his reaffirmation of native modes of knowing and being. Paranjape's *Decolonizing English Studies* (1993) asserts that Narayan's fiction embodies a distinctly Indian modernity that rejects the alienation inherent in Western rationalism [5]. Within this intellectual lineage, *The English Teacher* can be seen as Narayan's philosophical manifesto that harmonizes empirical learning with intuitive knowledge.

Recent scholarship has widened the scope of the novel by linking Narayan's narrative ethics to indigenous epistemologies. Kapila Vatsyayan's theoretical writings on the interrelation between aesthetics and consciousness in Indian tradition provide an illuminating context for understanding how *The English Teacher* internalizes Indian pedagogical values [6]. Rajiv Malhotra's *Indra's Net: Defending Hinduism's Philosophical Unity* (2014) similarly offers a framework to analyse how Indian literary texts maintain a close communion and continuity with ancient knowledge systems through narrative and ethical coherence.

Despite these valuable contributions, a direct, systematic connection between Narayan's literary imagination and the conceptual framework of the Indian Knowledge System remains underexplored.

Research Gap

It is to be noted that *The English Teacher* has received critical attention for its autobiographical, spiritual and anti-colonial aspects and dimensions. But it is also undeniable that there is a considerable gap in research concerning its presentation of traditional Indian epistemology within the Indian Knowledge System. Most of the studies on *The English Teacher* focus on Krishna's transformation

in different levels but rarely examine his journey within the intellectual traditions of *Jnana Yoga*, *Karma Yoga* and *Bhskti Yoga*.

Though some critics have dealt upon with the theme of spirituality in the novel, very few have explored how Narayan's representation of knowledge rooted in Indian knowledge System transcends Western dualisms of mind and matter, or teacher and learner. The English teacher presents a pedagogical model that considers learning as a process of self-realisation not merely accumulation of information and it directly echoes the fundamental principles of Indian Knowledge system which holds education as a transformative and holistic process.

This research paper seeks to fill this gap by offering a literary and philosophical analysis that posits the novel within the epistemic structure of Indian tradition and knowledge system. So the research paper will focus on an interdisciplinary enquiry integrating literary studies with Indian knowledge System and thus attempts to re-read not only as a wonderful story teller but also as a true interpreter of India's enduring traditional wisdom and knowledge system.

Methodology

The research paper is going to apply a qualitative and interpretative methodology based on literary theories, philosophical analysis and cultural interpretation. The methodological framework of this research includes the following approaches:

Textual and thematic analysis:

This paper is going to explore and identify the areas in the narrative that signifies the shifts from colonial institutional learning, which is external, to experimental learning which is inward and Indian. The paper will focus on the protagonist Krishna's actions and dialogues—his reflections on pedagogy and his spiritual and transcendental communication with his deceased wife Sushila as symbolic demonstration of traditional Indian epistemology.

Philosophical Framework:

The research paper will interpret the journey and transformation of the protagonist employing concepts from Indian knowledge System drawn from *Bhagavad Gita*, *Upanishads* and *Vedas*. The paper will decode Narayan's philosophical and metaphysical vision and the concepts of *Vidya* and *Avidya*, *Atman* and *Brahman* will serve as analytical tools for the said purpose.

Comparative Epistemological Approach:

This research will compare and contrast between Western education System, which is a rational-empirical model of education, and Indian education system which is holistic and integrates ethical, spiritual and intellectual development. This comparative analysis will bring to the fore how Narayan in *The English Teacher* redefines 'education' as a sacred and holistic process of self-realisation rather than a mechanical process of learning and accumulation of knowledge.

Secondary Source Analysis:

To provide interpretive depth and theoretical validation to the textual readings critical works on Indian philosophy, IKS and R. K. Narayan will be extensively explored and consulted. These include classical texts, modern commentaries and contemporary academic discussions on decolonising knowledge.

Analytical Synthesis:

This research paper will carefully integrate literary theories and criticism with philosophical interpretation to explore how the novel demonstrates the epistemic ideas of Indian Knowledge System where learning is not mechanical rather a process of moral, intellectual and spiritual evolution leading to self-realisation. The paper will show how *The English Teacher* serves as a modern narrative that

explores ancient Indian knowledge and wisdom blending the temporal with the eternal.

Colonial Education and Its Discontents in *The English Teacher*

Krishna, the protagonist of the novel *The English Teacher*, is depicted as an English teacher in Albert Mission College. He teaches canonical English Literature – Keats, Milton, Shakerpeare, and Wordsworth and so on – to Indian students who often found little relevance in this. A note of discontent and dissatisfaction is perceived in Krishna at the very beginning of the novel. Narayan depicts this dissatisfaction of Krishna in this way:

“The very first day I stood before my class, I realized how futile my work was going to be. I was expected to expound English poetry to a class of boys who would never read it again after their examinations”.

This sense of futility reflects a larger critique of colonial education. Krishna is alienated both from his subject matter and from his students, who see English literature as a hurdle rather than a source of joy or cultural grounding. His role is reduced to preparing them for examinations, which epitomizes the mechanistic, utilitarian approach of colonial curricula.

Krishna’s dissatisfaction with his profession is echoed from the very first chapter of R.K. Narayan’s novel “The English Teacher.” Krishna was suffering from a vague discontent as he says —

“What was wrong with me? I could not say, some sort of vague disaffection, a self-rebellion I might call it.”.

He thinks that he should not simply live like a cow. He eats, speaks, walks and talks almost to perfection, yet he feels something missing.

He takes stock of his daily life. He gets up at 8 a.m. in the morning and reads Shakespeare, Milton and Carlyle, looks through the students’ compositions, takes his meals and rushes out of the hostel room to college. He returns to his room after a few hours. During this period he warns, threatens and persuades his students to learn their lesson. The college pays Krishna 100 rupees as salary. But Krishna is growing dissatisfied with this monotonous framework of work. Krishna is a poet, his conscience always pinches him for doing the unworthy work that is teaching instead of creative work:

‘Of all the persons on earth I can afford to do what seems to me work, something which satisfies my inner most aspirations. I will write poetry and live and work among children and watch their minds unfold’.

Later Krishna visited a school of children and there he meets the Head Master. He is very much impressed by the personality of the Head Master and the system of education in his school. He regards the school as an ideal one and thinks very highly of the system of education which is followed there. He thinks the education system of his college as empty. He decides not to continue the college work, nor the pay now. He feels no urge in this profession. He intends to say to Brown:

“Sir, what am I doing in the college hardly seems to me work. I mug up and repeat and they mug up and repeat in the examinations... this hardly seems to me work, Mr. Brown. It is a fraud I am practising for a consideration of 100 rupees a month... which does not peace my innermost self.”.

In his resignation letter he thinks of, however he does not send it to Mr. Brown, attacking the false education. He does not want to thrust Shakespeare, the Elizabethan drama and the Romantic poetry into the young minds. He was against the whole education system and held that the present education had reduced the Indians to a nation of morons.

“I am up against the system, the whole method and approach of a system of education which makes morons, cultural morons, clerks for all your business and administrative offices’.

Krishna places the resignation letter before the principal Brown. When Brown asks him the reason for resignation, Krishna offers two reasons:

1. His college work is only mugging up and therefore no work at all.
2. His real interest lies in teaching the children in a school.

Thus, the novel is both a personal tragedy and a critique of the colonial education system. Through Krishna's dissatisfaction and transformation, Narayan exposes the mechanical nature of modern education and advocates a more humane and meaningful approach to learning

It is quite evident that Krishna is not at all satisfied with his role as a teacher. He feels that he is "a stranger to himself" in the classroom. This reminds us of Paulo Freire's critique of the "banking model of education," where students are merely considered to be passive recipients of deposits rather than active participants in knowledge production [7]. Although Freire was writing in the context of Latin American liberation struggles, his critique is very valid and relevant with respect to Krishna's experience under colonial education policy and system.

Moreover, Krishna's profession exemplifies the disjuncture between colonial intellectual life and indigenous traditions. As an English teacher, he represents the very class Macaulay envisioned—Indian in appearance but formed by English cultural capital. Yet his disillusionment suggests that such a formation produces not empowerment but alienation. The narrative arc of the novel, in which Krishna gradually moves away from his college job toward a more spiritually and pedagogically fulfilling life, can thus be read as a symbolic rejection of colonial epistemology in favour of indigenous systems.

This critique aligns with what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak terms the "epistemic violence" of colonialism—the way colonial discourse discredits indigenous knowledge and forces colonized subjects into alien intellectual frameworks [8]. In Krishna's case, the epistemic violence manifests as an inability to find meaning in his own teaching. His journey is not only personal but epistemological: he must discover alternative forms of knowledge to heal both himself and his society.

The novel also gestures toward the broader socio-political climate of India in the 1940s. Published two years before independence, *The English Teacher* reflects the ferment of ideas around education reform, nationalism, and cultural identity. Leaders like Tagore and Gandhi had already proposed alternative educational models that sought to decolonize learning. Narayan's novel, while not overtly political, resonates with these debates, offering a fictional narrative of one individual's shift from colonial education to indigenous epistemology.

The Headmaster and the "Leave Alone System":

One of the most striking characters in *The English Teacher* is the headmaster of a small nursery school, whose "Leave Alone System" embodies a radically different pedagogy. Unlike Krishna's alienating college environment, the headmaster's school emphasizes freedom, storytelling, and emotional growth. Narayan describes the headmaster's philosophy:

"We do not interfere with the child. We let it blossom in its own way. We keep the atmosphere clean and pure and let it function in freedom. It is like tending a plant—one waters it, keeps the soil loose, but one cannot pull it up and make it grow".

This description clearly echoes the organic metaphors often used in Indian pedagogical traditions. The child is likened to a plant, whose growth cannot be forced but only nurtured. Such an approach stands in sharp contrast to the rigid, examination-oriented colonial system.

The "Leave Alone System" resonates with the gurukula model of education, which prevailed in ancient India. In the gurukula, students lived with the teacher, learned not only academic knowledge but also moral and spiritual values, and developed their character through discipline, storytelling, and close observation. Learning was experiential and holistic, integrating intellectual, physical, and ethical dimensions [9]. The headmaster's system reflects this spirit by fostering creativity and individuality rather than rote memorization.

This pedagogy also recalls Rabindranath Tagore's experiments at Shantiniketan. Tagore envisioned an education rooted in freedom, creativity, and closeness to nature. As he wrote in *Towards Universal Man*, "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence" [10]. The headmaster's philosophy, with its emphasis on natural growth and emotional well-being, aligns with Tagore's vision.

Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi's *Nai Talim* or "Basic Education" sought to integrate craft, moral instruction, and community service into learning. Gandhi believed that true education should cultivate the whole person—head, hand, and heart—not merely the intellect [11]. The headmaster's stress on storytelling, character-building, and emotional health echoes this holistic approach.

Krishna's attraction to the headmaster's school is therefore significant. Disillusioned with his own alienating role as an English lecturer, Krishna finds meaning in collaborating with the headmaster. By the end of the novel, he resolves to join the school, marking a symbolic shift from colonial pedagogy to indigenous, holistic education. In this sense, *The English Teacher* dramatizes the possibility of reclaiming Indian pedagogical traditions as a form of healing—not only for individuals like Krishna but for the nation as a whole.

Spiritual Knowledge and Krishna's Quest

While the headmaster represents the pedagogical dimension of IKS, Krishna's personal journey after Susila's death represents its spiritual dimension. Susila's illness and death plunge Krishna into despair. Yet this crisis becomes the occasion for his encounter with an alternative form of knowledge—communication with the spirit world.

Initially, Krishna experiences Susila's presence in dreams and fleeting intuitions. Later, he begins to practice automatic writing, receiving messages that he believes come from Susila:

"I had a feeling that Susila was not far away, that she could hear me, that she could even answer me if I knew the right way of listening".

This passage signals a crucial epistemological shift. Whereas colonial education emphasizes external, empirical knowledge, Krishna here turns inward, cultivating receptivity to subtle realities. His "listening" becomes a spiritual discipline. The automatic writing sessions, though perhaps susceptible to skeptical interpretation, are presented by Narayan as transformative experiences that help Krishna overcome grief and regain purpose.

Such experiences resonate with Indian spiritual traditions. In the *Upanishads*, knowledge is not merely intellectual but experiential, involving the realization of the *ātman* (self) as identical with *Brahman* (ultimate reality). The *Katha Upanishad*, for instance, states: "The Self is not known through study, nor by intellect, nor by much hearing. It is known by him who longs for it. To such a one the Self reveals its own nature" (*Katha Upanishad* 1.2.23). Krishna's longing for Susila leads him to a new form of knowing—one based on receptivity, devotion, and spiritual attunement.

Similarly, in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Krishna (the deity) assures Arjuna that death is not the end: "Never is the spirit born, nor does it die; nor once it has been, can it cease to be" (*Bhagavad Gītā* 2.20). Narayan's Krishna, in his communion with Susila, comes to affirm this continuity of consciousness.

The practice of automatic writing in the novel may also be read alongside traditions of *bhakti* (devotion) and *yoga*. In *bhakti*, communication with the divine often takes the form of intimate dialogue, as seen in the poetry of Mirabai or Kabir. In *Yoga*, particularly the meditative practices described in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*, deep concentration (*dhyāna*) allows one to perceive truths inaccessible to ordinary senses. Krishna's experience of "listening" to Susila may be interpreted as a literary representation of such meditative receptivity.

Critically, Narayan does not present this as a supernatural spectacle but as an intimate, deeply personal process. The focus is not on proving the existence of spirits but on the transformative effect of the experience on Krishna's life. In this way, Narayan emphasizes the pragmatic dimension of Indian

spirituality: its value lies in healing, integration, and the cultivation of meaning.

Synthesis: Education, Spirituality, and Healing

By the novel's conclusion, the strands of education and spirituality converge. Krishna resigns from his college job, commits himself to the headmaster's school, and embraces his spiritual bond with Susila. In the final scene, he experiences a profound moment of unity:

"I felt her soul pass into me, completing my personality. I was whole again".

This passage crystallizes the novel's vision of healing. Krishna's wholeness arises not from external success or rational certainty but from the integration of education, spirituality, and love. In IKS terms, he has moved from fragmented, alienated knowledge to holistic knowledge that encompasses the inner and outer, the living and the departed, the personal and the cosmic.

The synthesis suggests that education and spirituality are not separate domains but mutually reinforcing. True education, as the headmaster practices it, nurtures the inner life of children. True spirituality, as Krishna discovers, involves communication, receptivity, and integration with others. Both are forms of knowledge that affirm life and foster healing.

Critiques and Counter-Arguments

While this reading highlights the novel's engagement with IKS, it is important to acknowledge possible critiques.

First, one might argue that Narayan romanticizes tradition. The headmaster's "Leave Alone System," while appealing, may seem impractical in modern contexts. Critics might question whether such freedom can be sustained in large-scale institutions or whether it risks neglecting academic rigor.

Second, Krishna's spiritual experiences can be interpreted skeptically as psychological coping mechanisms rather than genuine spiritual communication. From a Western rationalist perspective, automatic writing may appear as self-deception. Narayan's refusal to provide external validation of Susila's presence leaves the narrative open to such readings.

Third, some scholars might contend that *The English Teacher* does not explicitly reference classical Indian texts or doctrines. Unlike Tagore or Gandhi, Narayan rarely theorizes education or spirituality directly. His narrative remains personal and anecdotal, raising the question of whether it can be legitimately read as an articulation of IKS.

However, these critiques need not negate the IKS reading. Rather, they highlight the hybridity of Narayan's project. As A. L. Basham notes, Indian traditions have always been dynamic, adapting to new contexts [12]. Narayan's novel represents one such adaptation: a modern, fictional narrative that reinterprets indigenous epistemologies for a twentieth-century audience. Its value lies not in doctrinal precision but in its capacity to evoke a holistic vision of life, healing, and knowledge.

Results and Discussion

The present study reveals that R. K. Narayan's *The English Teacher* is not merely a semi-autobiographical narrative of grief and self-discovery, but also a profound literary articulation of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). The analysis demonstrates that the novel consistently critiques colonial models of education while simultaneously foregrounding indigenous epistemologies rooted in spirituality, ethical learning, and holistic human development [13][14]. Through Krishna's dissatisfaction with the mechanistic colonial education system, Narayan exposes the alienating effects of Western pedagogical structures that prioritize rote learning and examination-oriented instruction over self-realization and experiential wisdom [15].

One of the most significant findings of the study is the manner in which Krishna's transformation symbolizes a movement from *Avidya* (ignorance or fragmented knowledge) toward *Vidya* (true

knowledge or self-realization). His rejection of the colonial classroom and attraction toward the headmaster's child-centered educational model indicate Narayan's endorsement of indigenous pedagogic principles similar to the *gurukula* tradition and Tagorean educational philosophy. The "Leave Alone System" particularly emerges as a literary embodiment of holistic Indian pedagogy, where learning is viewed as a natural unfolding of the individual personality rather than mechanical acquisition of information.

The study also finds that Narayan integrates spiritual epistemology with educational philosophy in a highly organic manner. Krishna's communication with Susila after her death represents an alternative mode of knowledge that transcends rational empiricism and aligns with Vedantic and yogic traditions. Unlike colonial epistemology, which privileges material and empirical validation, Narayan foregrounds intuition, inner consciousness, and spiritual experience as valid forms of knowing. This reflects the Indian philosophical understanding that knowledge is experiential and transformative rather than merely intellectual.

Another important result of the research is that Narayan's critique of colonial education anticipates contemporary discourses on decolonization and educational reform. The novel's emphasis on holistic education resonates strongly with the objectives of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which advocates the incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems into mainstream curricula. Thus, *The English Teacher* acquires renewed relevance in the present academic context because it proposes an educational framework that integrates morality, spirituality, creativity, and intellectual growth.

The discussion further establishes that Narayan's narrative technique itself reflects an indigenous worldview. The blending of everyday domestic life with metaphysical inquiry demonstrates the Indian philosophical idea that the spiritual is not separate from ordinary existence. As critics like Iyengar and Walsh have noted, Narayan transforms the ordinary into the sacred through subtle narrative realism. This synthesis of the mundane and the metaphysical reinforces the central argument of the study that *The English Teacher* embodies the principles of Indian Knowledge Systems not only thematically but structurally as well.

At the same time, the study acknowledges certain limitations and ambiguities in Narayan's approach. The spiritual experiences of Krishna may be interpreted differently by rationalist readers, and the practicality of the "Leave Alone System" in large-scale institutional settings may be questioned. Nevertheless, these ambiguities do not weaken the novel's engagement with IKS; rather, they reveal Narayan's attempt to reinterpret traditional Indian wisdom within a modern literary framework [12].

Conclusion

R. K. Narayan's *The English Teacher* offers more than a story of personal grief. It dramatizes the confrontation between colonial epistemologies and indigenous Indian knowledge systems. Krishna's disillusionment with college teaching reflects the alienation produced by colonial education. The headmaster's "Leave Alone System" exemplifies alternative pedagogies rooted in Indian traditions of freedom, storytelling, and holistic growth. Krishna's spiritual communion with Susila illustrates an Indian metaphysical orientation that values inner receptivity and continuity of consciousness.

Together, these elements constitute a subtle but powerful articulation of Indian Knowledge Systems. The novel suggests that true education must integrate intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions, and that healing requires a reconciliation of modern life with indigenous wisdom. In doing so, Narayan anticipates contemporary debates about decolonizing education and revaluing indigenous epistemologies.

For today's India, where the NEP 2020 emphasizes the incorporation of IKS into curricula, Narayan's novel remains strikingly relevant. It offers a literary case study of how individuals and societies might move beyond colonial alienation toward holistic, life-affirming knowledge. By blending the pedagogical and the spiritual, *The English Teacher* affirms the enduring significance of Indian

Knowledge Systems in shaping both personal and collective futures.

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