

# A Critical View of Richard Flanagan's Novels

P. Jayakar Rao

M.A., NET, SET (PhD)

Assistant Professor of English, Govt. Degree College (W), Gajwel - Telangana

---

Richard Flanagan is widely recognized as one of the most important authors working in contemporary Australia. He has garnered praise not only on a national but also an international level for the beautiful and moving stories he tells, the poetic writing he writes, and the profound awareness of human emotions that he possesses. His works have garnered attention for their picture of the nature of Tasmania, as well as his portrayal of the colonial history of Australia and his investigation into the identity of Australasians. In this article, I will provide a critical analysis of Flanagan's novels, concentrating on his portrayal of history, his prose style, and the way he deals with characters.

One of Flanagan's most important contributions to Australian literature is his examination of the colonial past, which is frequently the subject of his novels. Flanagan's works are frequently concerned with the history of Tasmania and Australia. In *Death of a River Guide*, he recounts the narrative of Aljaz Cosini, a river guide who is dying in the Franklin River and who relives his life as he sinks further and deeper into the water. He tells the story from the perspective of Aljaz as he is reliving his life as he sinks deeper and deeper into the water. His ancestors were Slovenian immigrants who came to Tasmania to work in the mines and forests, and he is haunted by the previous crimes that the white settlers did against the Aboriginal people. His ancestors came to Tasmania to work in the mines and forests. One of the most dramatic points in the book is when Flanagan describes the killings of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. He describes them with a terrifying vividness that conjures the sense of injustice and cruelty that still resonates in Tasmania today. This moment is one of the most emotional parts in the book.

Flanagan portrays the narrative of Dorrigo Evans, an Australian surgeon who is a prisoner of war during World War II, in his most famous work, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. Dorrigo Evans is a character that Flanagan created. The novel is a horrifying description of the life of prisoners of war in the infamous Burma Railway. This railway was constructed by the Japanese and resulted in the death of tens of thousands of captives and local labourers. The novel was written by an American author. The existence in the camp is portrayed in a manner that is harsh, violent, and profoundly touching by Flanagan. The book illustrates the toll that war takes on human life, the devastating power of hatred and violence, as well as the significance of love, compassion, and community. The writing style that Flanagan uses in the work is sophisticated, poetic, and even meta-fictional at points. Flanagan explores the nature of storytelling and memory as he wanders between multiple narrative perspectives, time periods, and genres while writing this novel, which is very fragmented.

*The Living Sea of Waking Dreams*, Flanagan's most recent work, is a meditation on the environment, more specifically on the impacts of climate change on Australia. The protagonist of the book is an extremely talented and successful artist named Anna. She is now dealing with a health issue and is also attempting to come to terms with the fact that her mother's death is imminent. The reader becomes aware of the extinction of species, the devastation caused by wildfires, and the disappearance of the natural environment that Anna cherishes as the story progresses. The novel written by Flanagan is both a rallying cry for people to take action and a scathing condemnation of the political structures that are not adequately addressing the most urgent problem of our day. The language style of the novel is less structured than that of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, and it has a quality that is more poetic and lyrical than that of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. In order to convey both the splendour of the natural world and the devastation that we are causing to it, Flanagan illustrates his points using photographs of animals, woods, and oceans.

The manner in which Flanagan writes his novels is one of the most recognizable characteristics of his work. The writing of Flanagan is frequently characterized as poetic, lyrical, and immersive, and the form of his sentences contributes to the development of a sense of rhythm and musicality. The clarity of Flanagan's language is another important component of his writing style in the form of prose. To create vivid pictures in the imagination of the reader, he takes great care in selecting his words and employs portions of descriptive writing only when necessary. His writing is characterized by a profound sympathy for his characters and the hardships they face, and he frequently conveys his characters' inner lives with delicacy and compassion in his work.



The dense nature of Flanagan's descriptions presents a particular obstacle for readers of his prose style. Because of his propensity for lengthy metaphors, allusions, and poetic language, Flanagan's novels are frequently fairly lengthy, which might cause the plot to progress at a more leisurely pace. The prose might, at times, become overly excessive and self-conscious, and the freshness of Flanagan's writing style can lose its lustre after a while. The employment of meta-fictional elements in Flanagan's stories, most notably in "The Narrow Road to the Deep North," can at times feel too complicated and detract from the emotional effect of the narrative. This is especially true of "The Narrow Road to the Deep North."

Another facet of Flanagan's writing that merits critical examination is the author's approach to character development in his novels. It is well recognized that Flanagan creates characters that are highly flawed and complex, and that they are compelled to confront the most negative aspects of their personality. All of the characters in *The Living Sea of Waking Dreams*, including Aljaz Cosini, Dorrigo Evans, and Anna, are dealing with traumatic experiences, feelings of guilt, and the knowledge that their time on earth is limited. Throughout the course of the novel, many of Flanagan's characters go through considerable transformations, and these alterations are accompanied by a feeling of emotional development and self-discovery on the part of the characters.

On the other hand, Flanagan's depiction of his female characters has been subject to a certain amount of criticism. While he frequently gives his male characters intricate inner lives and portrays them as terribly flawed, his female characters can occasionally feel underdeveloped and just serve to bolster the narratives of the male characters. For instance, Dorrigo Evans's wife Amy is portrayed in the book as a flawless and attractive woman, but her primary function in the story is that of a silent and uninvolved supporter of her husband's emotional journey throughout the book. In a similar vein, Anna, the main character of *The Living Sea of Waking Dreams*, is essentially characterized by her relationship to her mother and the rest of her family; in contrast, her creative career is underdeveloped. Other female characters in the book, notably those who work in the hospital alongside Dorrigo Evans, are relegated to a supporting role in comparison to the male characters and are not given the same level of attention to detail in their development.

In conclusion, Flanagan's novels are works of art that are poetic, evocative, and powerful depictions of the history, identity, and environment of Australia. His writing is typically characterized by its complexity and poeticism, which can be both invigorating and overwhelming depending on the reader's perspective. One of his most important contributions to contemporary Australian literature is his investigation of the complexity of human emotion, particularly as they pertain to traumatic experiences, feelings of guilt, and one's own mortality. However, there is opportunity for critical review of his portrayal of female characters, particularly in respect to the level of character development that they are given. The books written by Flanagan are an important part of Australian literature, and his body of work is deserving of wider recognition and appreciation due to the insights it provides into the human condition as well as the way it portrays Australian history and identity.