

HUMAN FATE IN R.K. NARAYAN'S LATER NOVELS

* Prashant Bajpai

R. K. Narayan (October 10, 1906 – May 13, 2001) shortened from Rasipuram KrishnaswamiIyer Narayanaswami was an Indian Author whose works of fiction include a Series of Books about People and their Interactions in an imagined town in India. R. K. Narayan is one of three leading figures of early Indian Literature in English, along with Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. R. K. Narayan is credited with bringing Indian Literature in English to the rest of the world, and is regarded as one of India's greatest English novelists.

R. K. Narayan Characteristically employs novel from to spell out man's destiny, the chances of his being happy in this world and the various pitfalls that human life has chalked out along the road of his temporal journey. Significantly enough, Narayan's characters realize the meaning of their destiny not in any metaphysical vision like Raja Rao's or in any political commitments like Mulk Raj Anand's , R.K. Narayan posits his metaphysical. It can be pointed out that his protagonists are passion and intensity and in this process they sometimes succeed, sometimes fail, sometimes depart but do not cross an attempt has been made to suggest that Narayan's comic vision should be viewed in the larger Indian tradition and Indian value system so far as man's destiny is concerned. The present paper is based on the analysis of two later Malgudi novels of R.K. Narayan, namely, The Man-Eater of Malgudi (1961) and A Tiger for Malgudi (1983). I have selected these novels because the nature of human destiny here acquires new dimension since Malgudi is no longer the idyllic Malgudi of the earlier novels.

In The Man-Eater of Malgudi, the destiny of Vasu acquires new dimension in the light of Indian view of life. The Hindu view of life has it that each one of us lives one's life according to our karmic determinations. This tradition makes distinction among human beings on the basis of the predominance of one guna over the other. The three

* Asst. Professor, Department of English, DB PG College, Bachhrawan, Raebareli

gunassattva, rajas and tamas from human characters and men have freedom to choose one of these modes of life. Significantly enough, Vasu is portrayed as a tamsic character and this leads to his destiny. He is wrecked in the end because fails to rise above his tamsic instincts.

A Tiger for Malgudi should be read as a swquel to The Man-Eater of Malgudi. The novel was the result of Narayan's brooding over whether there could be communion between humankind and animals. Here a tiger, traditionally a symbol of tamsic instincts, narrates the story. Narayan presents through the tiger a person, which is less than animal yet more than human. By writing A tiger for Malgudi Narayan has in a way shown that given the right kind of path and guidance, even a tiger can shape up its destiny by transcending the existential imperatives.

In the two novels under analysis binary projection is made with many angularities of vision. In The Man-Eater of Malgudi, Natraj in some way or the other exercise a beneficent influence upon the tricky Vasu- the intentionally low-mimetic character, who weaves a network of high-sounding relationship, yet finishes with the meanest of the act possible. With Vasu's appearance on the scene, the social customs and behavior, which foster the community are terrorized at all levels. His very first entrance indicates the infringement of social rules that is likely to take place:

He came forward, practically tearing aside the curtain, an act which violated the sacred traditions of my press(15).

The coming of Vasu in Natraj's life creates havoc and commotion in not only Natraj's life but also in Malgudi. Meenakshi Mukherjee writes:

Vasu, the only villain in Narayan's fiction, is
 Allegorically a demon on the puranic pattern. Vasu's
 Very philosophy of life is in opposition to the peaceful
 Ordered universe of Magudi (152).

Vasu himself represents the turbulent force terrorizing the social system. Killing innocent animal tells the story of its own because it is one's karma, which leads to the formation of one's destiny – good, or bad. The binary relationship between Vasu and the animals might be

considered as the relationship of the powerful with the powerless. But the truth is that the powerless will boomerang (rebound) upon the powerful and settle the score in the total scheme of things. In R.K. Narayan the art of characterization is governed by the binary relationship, which has gravitational pull – now in this direction and now in that direction. Because the character is involved in the act itself and is not able to analyse or detach himself from the act, his fall is imminent in his act itself. What R.K. Narayan is trying to focus upon is this that our desire leads us to perform various kinds of acts, which ultimately make a heaven or hell of our being. The element of destiny comes into the forefront – before, during and after the performance of the act. For example, Vasu's attempt at the killing of the elephant called Kumar results in failure even though Vasu had not planned this. The intervention of Natraj is there because of the force of destiny and the fact that the elephant has not been killed is also an element of another form of destiny. The introduction of the lady called Rangī is a symbol of the contingency that the life often becomes a victim of. Characters are made to play certain parts, which they may or may not know, Sastri sums up:

Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the rakshasas that were ever born. Every demon carries with him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moments. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity (182–83).

Ultimately, the demon destroys itself and Malgudi having passed through a difficult time, now settles down to its routine. Thus R.K. Narayan is able to structure the story of the novel under a certain existential scheme of things where forces other than human are governing man's life. The meaningful part of this scheme is that goodness is returned for goodness and badness of badness. Options for choosing one's way are open and even though R.K. Narayan makes use of existential ideas, it will be wrong to say that characters are only puppets in the hands of fate.

This is amply shown by transformation of the tiger in the later

novel. **A Tiger for Malgudi** is an unusual, and even a challenging novel in the sense that its chief protagonist is a tiger, and its essence lies in the tiger-protagonist undergoing spiritual transformation. The tiger lives in its jungle home in the Mempi Hills. Then it is captured and trained to become a performing circus tiger under the regal name Raja. Fortuitous circumstances are about to turn it into a cinema-tiger, a film star. But it manages to escape from the film shooting camp but in fact it strays into the buys and crowded streets of Malgudi,. Eventually, it is once again captured, this time by a hermit, and away from the Mempi Hills to live with him. The hermit talks to it on philosophical and spiritual matters and as a result the tiger is transformed inwardly and attains knowledge of the self.

Raja is a handsome male Tiger of a Zoo. He thinks about his former life as R.K. Narayan says in his introduction '**an aged tiger**'ruminating on its past'. He assumed himself as 'supreme lord of the Jungle' (13). In his arrogance he surmises:

Everyone I encountered proved weaker and submissive, but that submissiveness did not count - I delivered the fatal blow in any case when I wished and strode about as the King of the Forest (13).

Tiger is full of energy but the energy can do good to nobody. Such energy often explodes upon the self and destroys it. The tiger is just saved from this high drama by a stroke of destiny, which brings it in the contact with hermit who teaches it the power of renunciation and the golden rule of striking a balance between the self and the other objects of nature, which include man and other animals.

We see that ultimately Raja is completely transformed. He can now understand his guru's discourses, has a sense of gratitude towards him and willingly suffers hunger for several days. Raja has undergone a spiritual suffering and has achieved that state of mind, which the **Bhagvadgita calls Sattvic**. (Raja has attained the Satvika state of mind in which he feels happiness emanating from his goodness to others) This journey from his tamsik life to his present state of poise, humility and selflessness has been an arduous one and has been made possible by his guru. ShyamAsanani writes:

An anonymous tiger, spanning the earth and the sky, with a tale capable of encircling the globe, the claws and hood on the clouds and the teeth that could grind the mountain and possessing immeasurable strength to match, he is uncannily tamed, moulded, purified, taught the 'Four Noble Truth' of the Buddhist doctrine and is ultimately transformed into a creative who is an animal In its exterior form only, but beneath it has a soul as pure, innocent and enlightened as his master's (6).

R.K. Narayan is trying to show in both the novels that binary or the tripartite structures of relationship may be given by nature to man but man always has the capacity to transcend such binarism which ultimately leads to detachment and a subsequent solution to the problem involved. Narayan is basically a character – situation centred novelist and he keeps the story line as strong as possible. But the Indian ethos structures, destructures and restructures in narratological designs.

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