



A STUDY OF R.K. NARAYAN'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

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ABSTRACT

R.K. Narayan gained immense fame not only in India but also abroad, especially in England and America. In America, he is second only to Faulkner. He was also included in *Writers and Their Works* published by the British Council. He is the only Indian to receive this honour. Many of his short stories were broadcast by the BBC, which is a rare honour. Both the University of Leeds and the University of Delhi awarded him the degree of D.Litt. Apart from this, he won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1960 for his novel *The Guide* (1958) and the Government of India awarded him the Padma Bhushan in 1964 for his achievements. The sole purpose of all his writings is to give aesthetic satisfaction. He never considers art as a medium of propaganda like Mulk Raj Anand, but he interprets Indian life largely as 'art for the readers'. But as a result, the incongruity and absurdity in life do not bother him, but only amuse him. This has been the characteristic attitude of humorists from Chaucer to modern times. His success as a writer lies in the fact that he can convey to the readers this sense of joy and happiness in life. Narayan is indeed a gentle novelist and short story writer, who loves his country and countrymen very much. His criticism, however bitter and far-reaching it may be, can never be violent, and what is found in his novels fully reflects the gentleness and humanity of his country. As a humanist, Narayan could not accept the dichotomy of city and countryside. Human beings are the same everywhere, each is born with his qualities, be they good or bad, and each is only partially molded by his surroundings. Narayan's villages have everything good, and evil, and murders and officials are also seen as corrupt and inefficient. Narayan is so adept in the art of novel writing that it is not possible for him to study corruption in depth. He simply sprinkles his comments here and there and his casual approach gives him strength as it makes corruption seem like a perfectly normal part of life.

KEYWORDS:- Gained, Especially, Novelist, Dichotomy, Good, And Evil.

INTRODUCTION

R.K. Narayan got immense fame not only in India but also abroad, especially in England and America. In America, he is second only to Faulkner. He was also included in *Writers and Their Works* published by the British Council. He is the only Indian to receive this honor. Many factors influence to formation of the philosophy about the life of a writer with a distinctive globalization. As far as R.K. Narayan is concerned, he started his history as a writer when the country was annexed to the empire British. He started his writing at a time when nothing was said about the life of the Indian masses. Education, initiation social surface, and many superstitions were Indian people were influenced by the sentiment itself. So R.K. Narayan's personal orchestra also added a lot to it to present to develop a monolithic vision of South Indian life as a Florida-Fulki. His early failures may have something to do with his tendency to withdraw into himself. He hails from a country owned by the masters where failing in exams is a matter of disgrace, where young boys jump into wells, hang themselves, or swallow cyanide because they are unable to pass exams. He wrote his stories as if Malgudi is the center of the universe and the domestic happenings in the middle-class family, no matter how much they dominate the enrolled boy or even the graduate, are the stories of the highest value. So it is with Narayan that the shot masques are masters of different hues catching the light from different corners. Yet another influence influenced R.K. Narayan to a great extent. Excerpts from Indian Writings in English, Critic, Historian, K.R.S.C.

Gandhian saw his group as the task, philosophy, and anti-imperialism.

Iyengar called the period of 1920-1947 as "Gandhian Era". Gandhiji's influence in all walks of life during this period cannot be denied. During this time Gandhian principles of Swadeshi, Khadar, Charkha, Flag, Ahimsa, Swaraj, Satya, and Ahimsa became similar to the principles of Swadeshi, Khadar, Charkha, Flag, Ahimsa, Swaraj, Satya, Ahimsa, which were protesting against the anti-colonial rule with the awakening of an independent and revolutionary nation. Gandhian saw his group as invincible work and became a trend of village philosophy, personality philosophy, and anti-imperialism. R.K. Narayan naturally shows the influence of Gandhian philosophy in his novels and *Small Dynasty*, yet he is not a politically theoretical novelist like Mughar Raj Anand, nor a spiritual philosophical novelist like Raja Rao, but he is a novelist. Sarma writes that Gandhiji was the greatest man of the 20th century, the inventor of a harmless unique technology to fight oppression and injustice anywhere in the world, and a one-way trader of India's freedom struggle, but no great novel can be written about him, but the truth is that Gandhiji has inspired a whole library of books in different languages. In my view, the reason for this is that Gandhiji fought for the common people. Similarly, R.K.



Narayan is also an exporter of the ethos of South Indian Hindu middle-class families in the backdrop of Malgudi. Therefore R.K. Narayan's Malgudi reflects the time and image of the whole of India. It is not a microcosm but a macrocosm that combines the mood of the old and the new, tradition and modernity, the novelist and the contemporary world.

Gandhiji's unfathomable personality with political vision inspired patriotism and anti-colonialism which spread like legends and pervaded the Indian consciousness. C.D. Narasimhaiah has aptly remarked that Narayan is interested in the brave talk of the youth who gather on street corners and repeat the high-pitched words of their elders, most of whom could be no more effective than school boys who adopt nationalistic postures without any purpose. Gandhiji's political movements raised many issues that were connected with the British colonial educational system which distorted and suppressed the real face of India. R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The English Teacher* (1945), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), and many short stories protest against general issues of the educational and social system. For example, in *Swami and Friends* (1935) Swaminathan feels humiliated and sleepy in his scripture class at Albert Mission School, where the school teacher Ebenezer, a staunch Christian, abuses the Hindu gods. Swami tries to harass him and as a result, he is beaten up and his left ear is injured. However, he avenges the insult by taking his father's complaint against the teacher to the headmaster.

He says that he does not care about his headmaster's dirty school. This is a Gandhian protest against the British education system rooted in India by the colonial empire. Mani and Swamy listen to Gauri Shankar, a khadi-clad Gandhian, who addresses them, "We are slaves of slaves. English is no bigger than our Madras Presidency is inhabited by a handful of white scoundrels and is thousands of miles away. Yet we pay homage to the English." They decide to boycott English goods, especially Lancashire and Manchester cloth, and resolve to wear khaddar, the rough home-woven cloth. In Narayan's stories, Gandhi's teachings reverberate on every page. Narayan's heroes demonstrate the highest virtues of the Hindu way of life on the main street, exactly where Gandhiji wanted to see them. His story "The Seventh House" is about Krishna, a common man whose marriage was an unconventional love marriage.

So to avert the effects of Mars and save the life of his ailing wife, he tries in vain to do as advised by her husband. To transfer his love to the astrologer, the prostitute, and the temple dancer. Knowing everything about his characters, along with their characteristics, R.K. Narayan does not feel the need to invent the absurd, promote social theory, seek sensational subject matter, or delve into abnormal psychology to attract the attention of his readers in his short stories.

It requires great courage and self-restraint in a writer particularly a modern writer to write about ordinary, everyday events in life or about ordinary, everyday people. In other words, it requires great talent and truth to keep readers interested and enthralled by such writing, story after story, book after book. As R.K. Narayan himself writes, "Everything is interconnected. Stories, scriptures, ethics, philosophy, grammar, astrology, astronomy, semantics, mysticism, and moral codes are an integral part of holistic life and indispensable for gaining a fourfold understanding of existence.

Literature is not a branch of study to be kept in a separate compartment for the knowledge of scholars, but a comprehensive and artistic medium of expression to benefit both the literate and the illiterate." The Gandhian influence is evident on almost every page of Narayan's short stories. Mostly R.K. Narayan is sympathetic to the common people of the country. The major themes of his stories are modernization, westernization, caste, prejudice, violence, urban dehumanization, oppression of women, injustice, and many more. Thus "Father's Help" in R.K. Narayan's *Malgudi Days* (1982) and "A Hero" in *Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories* (1987) deal with childhood adventures.

The author's compassionate and amiable humor makes these stories extremely appealing. Narayan's short stories are full of stories about children. Swaminathan enters the world of the children of the children of the same age – happy, innocent, mischievous, and saddened by the little problems of life. How easily and naturally the author enters the spirit of childhood is evident from the opening lines of the story "Father's Help". Lying in bed, Swami realized with a jolt that it was Monday morning. It seemed as if just a few moments ago it had been the last period on Friday. Monday had already arrived. He had expected the school building to be reduced to dust by the earthquake, but that good building Albert Mission School had been enduring such prayers for more than a hundred years. At nine o'clock Swaminathan cried. 'I have a headache. The story reminds us of Swami from the novel *Swami and Friends* (1935). In the story, Swaminathan makes excuses because he does not want to go to school. So he makes a humorous remark typical of Narayan: 'That Geography teacher has been teaching the same lesson for the past year. And we have Arithmetic, which means we are going to get beaten up by the teacher the whole period.

But Narayan's use of wisdom is evident in the father's words, "Move around less on Sunday and you won't have a headache on Monday". Swami complains about his class teacher who beats the boys very badly, especially when they come late. When Swami's father tries to complain about Swami's teacher to the principal, Swami goes to school, hesitates to make his complaint, and is finally very happy when he learns that the principal has taken the afternoon off and will not return for a week. Swami returns the envelope to his father. His father calls him a coward and makes a mocking statement: "Even if Samuel strangles you, you don't come to me



for help. You deserve your Samuel". In the second short story "A Hero" from the collection *Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories* (1987) mentioned above, the title itself is ironic, because in the story Swami is a coward. Swami is once again the hero. He has to sleep alone in his father's office, as his father wants to correct his habit of sleeping with his grandmother. Swami initially boasts of his courage, but when his father insists on proving his courage, Swami makes excuses. Poor Swami, who studies in the second standard, is forced to sleep alone and he makes a funny remark: "Let me sleep in the hall, father." Swami promises. "Your office room is very dusty and there might be scorpions behind your law books". But no excuse helps Swami. He starts hating the newspaper that had published the news about the little boy fighting the tiger, which his father had read. He wanted the tiger not to spare the boy, who seemed not a boy but a monster. The various sounds in the silence did not let him sleep. He covered himself so much that he could hardly breathe. Swami quickly got up spread his bedding under the bench and crouched there. He fell asleep and in his sleep he had nightmares. He groaned and cried out that 'someone has bitten me'. In a moment the father, the cook, and a servant came in with a lamp.

The three of them fell upon the thief, the most notorious thief in the district. Herein lies the irony of the situation. Swami, who had no courage at all, is being congratulated by the police inspector and the school headmaster for his ungrateful service to the police. Though Narayan started writing in the days when there was intense political activity in the country and every Indian's pulse was in sympathy with those who sacrificed their lives for the nation, Narayan has practically nothing to say about what happened to him. We find no evidence in his short stories or novels whether he was influenced by our national leaders, their ideals of the freedom movement, and their scheme of social progress. Rather, it seems that he watched all this perhaps with an amused detachment. As C.D. Narasimhaiah has rightly said In fact, the world-makers and the benefactors of the world never pleased him, so much so was his sense of alienation from everything going on around him that it helped sharpen his intellect and increase his compassion for everybody, for everything, but mainly for things that came within his sphere of influence. And his sphere was the South Indian middle class.

Narayan stays away from religion as much as he does from politics. The result is that the reader rarely finds a plot in his short stories that goes beyond the experiences of the common man. In "Nithya" from *Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories* (1987) Narayan presents a good story based on the principle of "generation gap".

Nitya, a twenty-year-old college student, expresses his reluctance to offer his beautiful and well-groomed hair to fulfill the pledge made by his parents when he was only two years old and suffering from whooping cough and convulsions. Nitya, half-persuaded by his parents, goes to the place of worship. But when all the arrangements for the tonsure ceremony are done, he starts arguing with his parents and suddenly leaves the place and escapes the possible rape of his beautiful hair. Thus, in the story, Narayan tries to depict the sentiments and pious feelings of the parents and the carelessness and atheism of students like Nitya.

While the older generation respects certain customs and values and wants to stick to them, the younger generation despises them. In conclusion, one can say that Narayan's vision is moral because the problems he tries to solve in his short stories are largely moral. This is not to underestimate the comic irony of an artist, which is much admired by critics in the West on the contrary it is his liveliness that makes Narayan's grand vision human. And yet, looking at Narayan the artist, one cannot be sure of his real outlook. His sense of humor is a strange mixture of irony and humor. He is difficult to understand, just as it is difficult to get William Shakespeare down to his true nature in his novels and short stories.

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