



RK NARAYAN'S VISION OF LIFE AND SOCIETY IN THE MAN EATER OF MALGUDI AND WAITING FOR MAHATMA

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ABSTRACT

To put it simply, a cultural crisis is a circumstance that poses a threat to both individuals and the larger community. Cultural crises may manifest themselves in a wide range of disciplines, including but not limited to those dealing with education, politics, human resources, management, etc., since culture can have both individual and societal meanings. Natraj and Vasu's relationship is shown via metaphorical elements in R.K. Narayan's *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*. Natraj, a prosperous printer in town, is furious that Vasu has disrupted his tranquil existence. He is known as the "Man-Eater of Malgudi" because of his efforts to put down the city's defenseless citizens. R.K. Narayan, like many other Indian writers, makes heavy use of them in his fiction. From the Bhasmasura story to the cyclical deva-asura conflict, the author of *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* returns to many different myths, sometimes to recreate them as markers of the collective unconscious and other times to adapt myth to reality.

KEYWORDS: Malgudi, Man-eater, Writing, life and society

INTRODUCTION

There is no greater symbol of peace than Gandhi. Truth, peace, and independence were among the many lessons he imparted to many people. He has had an impact on almost every facet of modern Indian society. Since literature is a mirror of society, it would be impossible for there to be any without the other. Numerous Indian authors have penned works examining Gandhi's ideas and legacy. A select few writers have fictionalized Gandhi's life. As one of India's most celebrated living authors, R. K. Narayan has risen to prominence in recent decades. In this article, I'll analyze how Narayan's book *Waiting for Mahatma* reflects Gandhi's core beliefs and values.

When it comes to Indian authors who have written in English, R.K. Narayan is universally considered to be the most creative. Unlike Mulk Raj Anand, whose work has a societal purpose, his primary motivation is to please the audience's aesthetic sensibilities. Author R.K. Narayan rose to prominence in the 1930s because to "a rare capacity of connecting his fresh and funny vision of the mundane world with the deeper meaning and bigger perspectives he finds in the legendary riches of his own faith," as Britta Olinder put it. (p.22)

He was born on October 10, 1906, in Chennapatnam, Southern India, close to the city of Mysore; he died on May 13, 2001. Narayan was a timid and sensitive little kid because of the time he spent alone as a child. Though he attended the same school as his father, he never got over his distaste for education. Narayan's sworn enemy, the prerequisite for the master's programme in the arts, proved to be an insurmountable obstacle. He made up his mind that he would make a life as a writer and use English. Writing for defunct magazines, dabbling in freelance journalism here and there, and other such "literary" odd jobs were more satisfying for the soul than the wallet. He continued to submit his work. He spent a year at home reading and writing before embarking on a literary career informed by the happenings around him. He had been an

English language and literature instructor, but after just five days in the classroom he decided to devote his life to writing instead.

There are four broad groups into which Narayan's books fall: 1. Those books that take place in a home, those about money worshipers, and those about politics make up the top four. Ten novels and around 150 short tales are among his many works. Almost universally, his paintings demonstrate a pristine artist who is unaffected by ideological currents. You wouldn't expect him to have the energy or persuasiveness of, say, Anand or Bhabani Bhattacharya. He does not denigrate Indian politics as Manohar Malgonkar does and does not elevate India's spiritual history like Raja Rao does. He stands in a league of his own. He never dwells on the macabre or the gloomy in his writing, but he does capture the everyday feelings of the typical person. He has a firm faith in the importance of family unity and mutual respect in interpersonal interactions.

The first works written by Indians in English date back to the colonial era. Initially, it allowed people to verbalize their most basic emotions. Later on, however, it succumbed to the inexorable forces of Indian history, namely the social phenomena known as the growth of nationalism. In particular, social realism began to use fiction as a strategy. Colonialism, oppression, and self-realization were all central themes. Over the course of its formative years, giants like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, and R. K. Narayan worked to elevate it to a level where it could compete with the literary canons of other countries.

NARAYAN AND GANDHIAN IDEOLOGY:

Many of Narayan's works, including *Waiting for the Mahatma*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *The English Teacher*, *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The Man Eater of Malgudi*, and *A Tiger for Malgudi*, have themes and ideas inspired by Gandhi. Narayan skillfully weaves Gandhian doctrine with the everyday life of Malgudi, his made-up town. A wide range of Gandhian ideas are on display in his writings. His heroes and secondary characters, raised on a diet of Indian ethics and philosophy, are all seekers of truth who, in their own ways, exemplify Gandhian values. When they lose hope, they represent the frustration felt by the people who were unable to absorb Gandhi's message without watering it down.

As a cultural icon, Gandhi continued to have an impact on India even after his death. While his works were originally written in Gujarati, they have now been translated into English. Though he wrote much himself, his influence on other authors deserves greater attention. Gandhi has been the subject of works by every major Indian author writing in English. Notable writers include Rao, Anand, Narayan, Bhattacharya, and Abbas. Gandhi's thoughts and beliefs have been articulated by these authors. To sum up, Gandhi's ideas have been an inexhaustible source of inspiration for modern Indian authors, and his influence can be seen at the foundation of a vast body of Indian literature.

WAITING FOR MAHATMA

Waiting for the Mahatma by R. K. Narayan was published in 1955, almost seven years after Gandhi's death. R. K. Narayan analyzes how Gandhi has affected the typical Indian in this work. The protagonist Sriram exemplifies the average, middle-class Indian by sharing many of their vices and failings. It's the only book he's written where Gandhi plays a major role. *Waiting for the Mahatma* has been called a "rare piece of success" by critic William Walsh for the way in which it so brilliantly conveys the brilliance of its subject. Indeed, *waiting for the Mahatma* is not a political tale, since Sriram and Bharati are shown to be seeking the Mahatma's love teachings only on a superficial level. To a female reader, Sriram's grandmother and Bhatia's positions in the story reflect those of stereotypical Indian women. They stand in for the stereotyped docile, nurturing, submissive, conservative, and conventional Indian woman. There are 70 years of patriarchal ideology and norms that rule R.K. Narayan. On the one hand, his depictions of women in *Waiting for the Mahatma* are realistic, but on the other, he perpetuates stereotypical portrayals of Indian women from the past.

THE IDEA OF NON-VIOLENCE

In the book, Narayan exemplifies the nonviolent philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Some mention of Mahatma's arrival is made. Due to Gandhi's widespread popularity, a sizable crowd has gathered on the Saryu River's bank to welcome back their revered leader. Khadi-clad volunteers direct attendees and ensure order throughout the gathering. Even though it was quite hot, the throng sat on the scorching sand without making a fuss or moving an inch. The Mahatma arrives to the podium and begins his address with the words, "No good. This is just not enough. I want to see more energy, rhythm, and life from your arms. It must sound like the nonviolent troops pushing forward to liberate Mother India from her shackles.... I'm hoping for harmony in it. (p. 26)

In this era of excessive modernity, characterized by the expansion of advanced technology and knowledge, a return to the realm of myth may seem pretty quaint. In today's society, when science and technology have advanced at an unparalleled rate, people have less interest in mythology and the supernatural because they no longer find the stories of the gods and goddesses to be wonderful or mysterious. Despite this, the myths have shown pretty convincingly that they are ageless and relevant in every era. Although the veracity of these claims may be contested, such practices are still embedded in many people's everyday lives and worldviews. Interestingly, German hermeneutic philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey thinks mythology is where science all began; in other words, he doesn't consider myth to be pre-scientific, as is often believed. The reason for this is because every tale may be interpreted in several ways, and as a result, myths have an eternal value. As a result, they have been able to maintain their legitimacy and popularity despite the fact that the world around them is constantly changing (Makkreel 2008).

This is bolstered by considering it in the context of Indian culture, which is not only steeped in a history of myth-making but also the result of a magnificent civilization based on the ideals of the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and the Puranas. It is clear that these mythological tales have had a firm grip on the minds of Indians throughout history, shaping almost every imaginable ideology and principle, from the most mundane daily routines to the loftiest philosophical and spiritual ambitions. Since this is the case, it's not surprising to find so many mythical aspects in Indian writers' works. To put it more simply, myths have become so ingrained in Indian culture that parts of myth naturally find their way into the works of Indian authors, whether they do so purposefully or not. Given this, it is hard to grasp the full import of this literature without delving into these components and their context. The names of writers like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore, Anita Desai, Nissim Ezekiel, and Amitabh Ghosh provide an air of verisimilitude to the claim. As such, this article makes an attempt to investigate how R.K. Narayan's *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* makes use of mythological aspects, focusing on how the author goes back to the mythical world in order to ground these concepts in the modern world.

Successive generations in India have produced many notable individuals. It has generated and continues to produce personalities who are enormously prominent in many areas of our society, including the literary world. Our "Father of the Nation," Mahatma Gandhi, also known as "Bapu," educated us with his philosophical and religious ideas. If we were to compile a list of Indian writers who have written in English, R.K. Narayan would likely be towards the top.

The books of Narayan seem to have an equal confidence in the divine, which is the first component to consider. "I can survive without water and oxygen but cannot live without him," Gandhiji said; "if you pull my eyes I would not die but if you blow my confidence in God then I will die." Savitri says, "I have always completed my daily pooja without fail," in Narayan's book *The Darkroom*. During a particular event, hundreds of people in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* visit the temple of Lord Krishna to worship, sing devotional songs, and make sacrifices to the idols of Radha and Krishna there.

All of Narayan's main characters have names that have some kind of spiritual significance. The religious undertones of his works are further highlighted in this way. In *The Dark Room*, Savitri is named after the legendary woman who married the god Satyavan. Sriram is a revered name for Lord Rama that appears in the Ramayana. Even the radical Jagadish has a name that is similar to a deity in *Waiting for the Mahatma*.

However, it seems that Narayan's books provide a thorough exposition of the Gandhian idea of nonviolence. Gandhiji, a prophet of nonviolence, concedes that violence is inherent to the human condition. Additionally, Narayan regularly refers to Gandhian activities like satyagraha, civil disobedience, non-cooperation, the

Dandi March, and Quit India, all of which are grounded in Gandhi's ideology of non-violence. The author P.S. Sundaram makes the following observation: "Violence in whatever form, Narayan thinks, is evil, a thing to be avoided."

Nonviolence, according to Einstein, MLK, Pearl S. Buck, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the Dalai Lama, is a powerful tool for social change and conflict resolution. Gandhi achieved the independence of India via a "revolution without the use of violence," as stated by Albert Einstein. When considering the fourth factor—immorality as a threat to religion—it may be claimed that the Western and Indian lifestyles interact often, impacting many people. Indian faith was threatened by the enticing influence of Western culture. While Western culture promotes immorality, Gandhiji argues that Indian culture tends to enhance the moral being. The second is atheistic, whereas the first is founded on religious faith.

However, the Bachelor of Arts contrasts the Western way of life with the traditional Indian way of life, highlighting the shortcomings of the latter. Rosie's M.A., her heritage as a temple dancer, and her use of a Western name all appear to contribute to her moral decline in *The Guide*. Similarly, Raju's moral decline begins with his abandonment of traditional jibba and the lace-edged dhoti in favor of dashing bush-shirts, corduroys, hair- and face-lotions, and scents of every kind in an effort to impress Rosie. In a same spirit, Mali in *The Vendor of Sweets* becomes affected by western culture and begins eating meat, living an immoral lifestyle with elegance, and is eventually imprisoned for having half a bottle of wine in his vehicle.

Krishnaswami of Rasipuram In India, Narayan Ayyar is a household name amongst writers. Each of his books is an intriguing blend of classic and contemporary values, a journey of introspection and revelation of social traps. The book originally written in English about India has been "Indianized" by him. By blending modern and historical perspectives, this analysis of India is completely dispassionate and unbiased. We see the traumas of wives, the felicities of conjugality, the jostling of scholars and scamps, the yearnings and inner pinning's of youth, the heinous wickedness of demonic men and the silent suffering of innocent submissive people, the allure of money, the rumination and reminiscences of youthful love, the pangs of separation from the beloved wife, etc. You won't find any monotony here, just a nice breath of fresh air. No negative connotations, just an objective look at things. Since R. K. Narayan sees truth and human destiny as accommodating both empirical fact and mythological or primal reality, his writings may be seen as an ongoing endeavor by man to mould the future of humanity. His ability to create a bridge between the two is exceptional, and the result is a retelling of ancient Indian stories set in a contemporary Indian environment, which makes R.K. Narayan a Medium of profound ideas and insights. His perspective on the world is timeless since it includes both the past and the present.

THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI

It is the jubilee book of Satan's defeat and death that brings about worldwide comfort, and it is the most classical of Narayan's books. When Satan is alive, he may startle and delight; when he's dead, he can bring up feelings of nostalgia and euphoria. Narayan "performs the marvel of satisfying both the sense of justice and the feeling of awe," as Balram Mishra puts it: "In hands less mature than Narayan's, the book would have become a dry dogmatic tract of nemesis and poetic justice."

Thus, we can see that R.K. Narayan's use of myth is not gratuitous, but rather serves to restrict his overall scope and impose a more profound concern on the surface level of storytelling. What C.D. Narsimhaiah calls "the traditional Novelist" exemplifies Narayan: a writer who writes "not simply with a strong social consciousness of his own period but with the history of India in his bones." 9 Implicitly affirming certain ideals of Indian traditional life, the theological and philosophical views grounded in the great Indian epics, folklore, and folk stories unquestionably impart on his works a special aesthetic quality.

CONCLUSION

In light of this, he writes about this in his book *Waiting for Mahatma*. R. K. Narayan is a Hindu example of the Gandhian ideals of truth, nonviolence, renunciation, and the karma theory. The narrative traces Sriram's evolution from an everyday citizen to a satyagrahi, from Gandhian ideals to radicals, and eventually to his incarceration by the police. This is only the upside of sticking to Gandhi's ideas, and the downside of not doing so. The essential historical facts of India's freedom and following events in the presence of Mahatma Gandhi and his ideology are portrayed in a straightforward narrative, making *Waiting for the Mahatma* an

enjoyable read. We have studied the characters in R. K. Narayan's book, including Gandhi himself, and have come to the conclusion that, although being a work of fiction, the text is in reality a mirror reflecting many elements of Gandhian philosophy at its finest.

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