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HUMAN RELTIONS IN R.K. NARAYAN'S: *THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI*

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Abstract:- The Man-Eater of Malgudi (1961) is certainly one of the mature novels of Narayan's creative genius. The novel has a definite sustained mythical structure. Narayan's use of Basmasur myth in the novel is a piece of conscious effort. The novel is:

"An impressive fictional statement dealing with ethical issues such as the fate of evil and the question of human relationships, the precepts and practice of entire business of living."¹

Keywords:Human Reltions , The Man-Eater Of Malgudi ,mature novels .

INTRODUCTION

Walsh William observes, "Narayan has a perfect pitch in his sense of human relationships. This is exactly what people say and do so; this is precisely how they behave."² The theme which, more than any other has defined and projected Narayan's world of human values, is the theme of love but in this novel he has projected the other aspects of love as to how violence occurs in the love relationships. K.R.S. Iyengar rightly observes, "this novel is full of confusion, mystery and violence; physical as well as psychological. 'H. Vasu, M.A. Taxidermist', bursts upon the peaceful little world of the printer Natraj and his friends, the journalist and the poet, with all the sudden fury of a man-eating tiger descending on a quiet Indian village. But the sanctity of Natraj's premises is violated by Vasu."³ Vasu is of "blackness all compact, he is the prince of darkness". He has no feeling for others sentiments. When the novel opens, Natraj is correcting the proof of a wedding invitation. It is really a pure and sacred beginning. Vasu forces Natraj to abandon his work and sit in his jeep.

In the very first meeting Vasu introduces himself as, "Vasu", he said, and added, "I know you didn't catch my name. You were saying something at the same time as I mentioned my name." He took from his inner pocket a wad of paper, searched for a hand-written sheet and held it out to me. "Five hundred sheets of note-paper, the finest quality and five hundred visiting cards." This sudden entry of an unknown visitor embarrasses Natraj, because up to now Natraj, being a social man keeps healthy relations with almost all of his customers by following the dictates of his 'real will'. Now, this stranger stirs his life as Vasu is a victim of his 'actual will'. He doesn't like to follow the social norms. He is a typical rascal. Full of weird mind and being egoistic, he never follows his 'real will'. Natraj is in a state of total confusion. His will power is so weak that he cannot cope with the time. By following his 'real will' Natraj is ready to go with Vasu wearing a shirt without any buttons and without any money in his pocket. He even pleads to Vasu, "I am hungry. I had no time for breakfast this morning." But this request falls flat on Vasu and he resumes his discussion about the pugmarks with the villages. Poor Natraj cries in anguish "Have you not any loose coin with you? I'll return it to you as soon as I am back home." But his ravishing nature hurts other's sentiments and inspires Vasu to touch another vital cord in Natraj. The wish to have a cup of tea to mitigate his growing hunger is repulsed by Vasu's diabolic remarks. "When I am on business I rarely think of Food." But here Natraj is not on business. He is here because Vasu has forced him to be. This causes much psychological violence to Natraj.

Vasu is very eloquent and rude. Sen, the journalist who behaves as an idealist commentator of current politics becomes the man-eater's target the very first day when he expatiates on the five years polar. Vasu listens for a moment to the journalist's talk and satirizes him saying:

"If you feel superior to Nehru why don't you go to Delhi and take charge of the Cabinet?"

The very first taste of his rough bullying manners hurts the inoffensive poet. And Sen, the journalist, drew him up haughtily and cried, "Who is this man? Why does he interfere with me when I am talking to someone? Is there no freedom of speech?" This causes much psychological harm to Sen the Journalist. Vasu leaves him in this state of high tension and goes in search of a big game. Vasu returns from Mempi forest after a gap of one month with a dead tiger.

Vasu is a man who "embodies materialistic values and dehumanized reason."⁴ He becomes a permanent source of mental torture to Natraj this way or that. The poet once wants to celebrate the event where Krishna meets his future wife Radha and their marriage is to be celebrated in a portion of his poem. This celebration in poetry coincides with the festival at the temple. Printed appeals for subscription are circulated through Malgudi. Vasu finds in it a golden opportunity to grab money. He intrudes into the programme and takes away the green folder carrying the account, receipts and cash. During his visits Natraj meets people who remark, "What a money gatherer you have engaged. One will have to sell the vessels of the kitchen and find the money only to get rid of him. What a specimen!" Thus Vasu bullies the populace of Malgudi.

Thus, this is another kind of disturbance and bitterness that we find in this novel. How this haughty man found solace in teasing others is also a point of interest in the novel. This rakshasa named Vasu shows his cruelty not only to people around him but also he emerges as a terror for animals and birds. His frustration leads him to shoot animals madly. Being malicious in heart he behaves indifferently towards every aspect of life. "The sexual sip is no more than a sip of coffee."⁵ Vasu's conversion of the attic into a brothel has its bad effect upon Natraj. He too falls a prey to the temptation. He seeks pleasure in watching the girls descending the stairs of the attic between seven and eight in the morning.

Natraj has confronted all the violence that Vasu inflicts upon him with the weapon of non-violence. When he goes to ask Vasu to vacate the attic and Vasu gets angry and pugnacious, Natraj assumes the Gandhian way of solving the problems. He surrenders himself to a mood of complete resignation. Then again with his non-violent ways he tries his best to dissuade Vasu from shooting the temple elephant. He adopts the peaceful means up to the last moment. The procession passes undisturbed and Natraj saves him from committing violence.

In *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, many factors are responsible for making Vasu such a bad character. His 'actual will' always dominates over his 'real will'. Social self makes a man a good human being who thinks for the welfare of the society. The relationships get disturbed in terms of material inequality. Besides the inequality springs up from difference of age, bodily strength, qualities of mind, privileges of honour and power also plays a significant role in bringing about distortion, decay and even bitterness in relationships. Vasu is shown as a ruthless and self-centered man. There is not even a single seed of humanity in him. He is a through rogue, a blunder of God who bore him just to create complications in this smooth world.

So the study of R.K. Narayan's fiction confirms the impression that human beings, their love, sympathy and friendship matter the most to the writer. With his characteristic curiosity about man, R.K. Narayan treats human beings as objects of interest and attention. We find in his novels man not as an individual but in relation to other men in different units of social life.

Human behaviour is influenced by many motivating forces which not only induce in man desires of innumerable types but also set the standards of values in life. Values are an integral part of personality and so long as we are human we can assume that these mental sets of preferences will be with us. But when one tries to satisfy one's desire by distorting the set standards of values, decay and bitterness is caused. When one deviates from these social (real self), cultural and moral values one's behavior becomes turbulent or hurting either to one's own self or to others. The present study has tried to examine human relations with regard to distortion, decay and bitterness in the human beings. In Narayan's novels the family is treated very saliently. The Indian family novels the family is treated very saliently. The Indian family as the nucleus of the social structure has its strict norms, morals and values. Its sanctity is inviolable and any attempt at its violation is equal to sacrilege. When the sanctity of the house is violated, Vasu brings unhappiness to the lives of other people around him due to his obsession with power and pleasure. Human relationships in 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi' are more distorted and quite apparent. In this novel, the man-eater is not a ferocious animal, but Vasu, a human being who glories in his demonic strength and cares for nothing except his own comforts, pleasure and success.

Vasu represents the paradigm of violence. If we try to evaluate the positive traits of kindness, forgiveness, charity and service, respect for the people, utmost compassion for the affected beings, friendship towards all, we find none of them in Vasu. He is designed solely to confirm the title of the novel. Excessive violence and disregard of human relationships in Vasu's nature may be ascribed to Vasu's belonging to the class of rootless intellectuals. The frustrated intellectual may be the cause of social upheaval and dislocation as in the present novel.

The traditional life-respecting sensibility of Natraj is outraged by the nefarious trade of Vasu and Natraj feels "dwarfed and tongue tied before him". Vasu is an extreme individualist and believes in the superiority as the key to existence. He has his own philosophy of life. He upsets the entire rhythm of the quiet life of the small community and a reign of terror sets in. There is a total disorder, distortion and decay in relationships.

• **Human Relations In R.K. Narayan's: *The Man-eater Of Malgudi***

Natraj and his companions undergo mental torture and agony that is generated because of an all-pervasive incompatibility in various relationships. Vasu's immoral and ruthless nature is incompatible with Natraj's peace-loving and moral world. These two opposites clash resulting in distortion and bitterness and force to suffer all those whom come in contact with this demon directly or indirectly. Vasu is "the prince of darkness" and embodies materialist values and dehumanized reason. His conscience is dead, he has no ethical sense and his gigantic strength degenerates his formidable destructive power.

The analysis of the novel from the point of view of human relations reveals an undercurrent of the struggle between the forces of evil and good throughout. Here evil appears in the form of a superhuman devil who storms the pacific world of Malgudi. Good is represented by the peace-loving Natraj and his friend circle who are living a low-key but happy life. Throughout the novel there is a struggle between two types of forces the evil always subjugating the good. As is the way of life at last the pot of evil becomes brimful and bursts. The heroic struggle of Natraj and others against the demon and their sufferings have a sublimating effect upon them. They are fearless even in the face of death and are ready to sacrifice their lives to rid Malgudi of the evil. There they come out as angels to save the holy earth of Malgudi.

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