



Myth as a Narrative Vehicle in R.K.Narayan's The Man Eater Of Malgudi

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R.K.Narayan's special position as interpreter of the contemporary Indian cultural scene needs to be understood in terms of his cultural values- particularly literary values- from India's past. His art expresses a genuine, formal as well as contextual continuity with the best efforts of Indian literature. He is also expressive in the English idiom, so sophisticated and sensitive to the western literary tastes that we are rightly struck by his affinities to the large tradition of western literature. And yet it can't be said of Narayan that he is a man whose sympathies and ideals separate him from his own society and its history.



Every creative artist is, at heart, a visionary and every creative vision has its roots in culture, tradition and values of life. "R.K.Narayan, a creative artist in fiction over four decades, draws his strength from an inexhaustible source- Indianness. His view of life and his world of values are Indian. R.K.Narayan is an internationally famous writer. He is a novelist whose artistic intent is not doubted in India. The most attractive feature of his personality is that he is a pure Indian spirit and thought. He may be described as a novelist of middle class. His novels present member of the indian middle class, as engaged in a struggle 'to extricate themselves, from the automatism of the past'. In the words of Dr. Paul Verghese, though not vehicles of mass propaganda, his novels also depicts the breakdown of feudal society and express the changed ideas concerning the family as a unit and the conflict between old and new. But Narayan is more concerned with the analysis of character of the individual in his course through life.'

Narayan literary oeuvre contains the artistic dexterity which manifest through the literary devices employed in his works like comic, humour, irony and myth. Myth has its own inevitable importance in the novels of R.K.Narayan. He uses it as a powerful weapon in some of his works such as The Man Eater of Malgudi, The Dark Room, and The Painter and The sign etc. Myth is an all pervasive as well as a recurring motive in Indo-Anglian fiction and its importance can't be undermined on being an ancient culture with rich mythology. Most of the Indo-Anglian writers have made an extensive use of it. Myth has been defined differently by various people. Its meaning has been changing radically with the passage of time. Earlier the Term meant ancient tales of Gods or Supernatural human beings, but today, it has been linked with culture. Therefore in literature its place has been extended to the vast area of imaginative activity. Myth, according to Eliade is a true sacred story because it is associated with reality. It contains the model for all human acts of significance. Since it gives us an account of creation either of significance. On the whole mythology defines the religious beliefs, historical traditions as well as the cosmologic speculation of a society.

The socio-ethical life portrayed in the novels of Narayan is rooted in the ageless past of India, of which the myths are objective correlative. The characters are allegorical reductions, as they are reduced to a role of a particular character. But the particular becomes universal; the part signifies the whole. If the characters are mythical or allegorical in their universal or ethical dimension, there is irony because of the tension between the ethical and human, between the 'dharmic' role and the human. In the introduction to



Gods, Demons and others which is followed The Man Eater of Malgudi Narayan explains some of the classical principles which make classical myths but they are: the inevitable triumph of good and the destruction of evil, the laws of Karma, the time scheme of the Gods and Specific stylized role of Gods, Demons and Sages. The Man Eater of Malgudi is a re-creation of old Hindu Myth of Bhasmasura in modern form and a presentation of two diametrically opposed attitudes to life. The Bhasmasura parallel is clearly indicated in the novel in more than one place. The story of Bhasmasura: ‘who acquired a special boon that everything he touched should be scorched while nothing could destroy him’. Through this story he wants to convey one more message that evil has self-destructive power in itself.

This novel re-affirms the fact that Narayan’s conception of life is an essentially Hindu one. According to Gita Dharma protects those who protect Dharma. Narayan also has great faith in the balance of power in human relationship.

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