

Philosophy as a Way of Life in the Novels of R. K. Narayan

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Abstract – Narayan, popularly known as R.K. Rasipuram Krishna swami. Narayan, born in Madras, India in 1906; died in 2001, Madras. Narayan is now considered to be one of English's greatest Indian authors. He is the most creative of Indian authors, his sole purpose being to provide aesthetic pleasure, and not to use his art as a tool to serve any social purpose. In both high school and intermediate tests, he failed. When he was twenty-four years old, he could not get his degree. Such school and college setbacks make him shy, quiet and tentative, and introvert rather than extrovert. Ever since he has been reserved & modest, rather too modest.

Keywords: Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan, Novels, Philosophy, Indian Writing, Malgudi.

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of founding fathers of Indian Writing in English is an institution in itself, Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan (1906–2001). Narayan is a true Indian, born and raised in traditional South Indian family, both in spirit & in thought. As an excellent and unassailable storyteller, much has been said about Narayan. Research volumes on his eye-catching narrative style & characterization art have been published. If Raja Rao is called a metaphysics novelist, Narayan is often applauded as a Malgudi vivid painter, an Indian social microcosm. Through India's social criticism, he has always been listed as a writer par excellence.

But little has been written about how Narayan incorporates in his novels the deepest Indian thoughts, philosophies & spiritualism in general, and Karma theory in particular. "You have to have roots to be a good writer everywhere-both in spirituality and in the workplace. Born in a South Indian family of "the purest Brahmin stock," Narayan's origins in religion and heritage were strengthened by his mother's grandmother, who during his childhood was instrumental in introducing him to classical Indian & Tamil cultures, describing traditional Brahmin values & lifestyles.

She made him recite the Tamil alphabet every night, accompanied by the saying of Avvaiyar as well as a few Sanskrit Slokas praising Sarasvati, Goddess of Knowledge. The traditional family & social background of Narayan thus initiated him into knowing Hindu philosophy, religion & culture in the early stages of his life. Narayan remarks in one of his

interviews with Susan E. Craft, "There are so many legends, so many signs, so many imaginations. That's where we're supposed to start. K. Narayan translated and published condensed prose versions of the 2 great Indian epics, Ramayana & Mahabharata, and some legendary Hindu stories in Gods, Demons & Others.

Narayan, a typical South Indian brahmin, used to begin his day with meditation, some Puranas reading, and Gayatri Mantra recitation. With abstract philosophy and metaphysics discourses unnecessarily. He does not use the novel genre as a propaganda tool for any social or political purpose, nor does he in writing like his peers pour too much ideology and theory. Jayant K. Biswal has the following opinion:

"R. K. Narayan views the lapses of life not with any religious benevolence or zeal, but with an artist's understanding and experience that understands various compulsions, complexities of life behind his chimerical narrative styles. His comic mode is thus hiding his ideology. Narayan is attempting a vision of life behind the fictional façade of his novels... a world of conflicting dualities, appearance and truth, convictions and betrayals.

II. NARAYAN'S NOVEL

The novels of Narayan can be divided into four categories including 1. Late Romans 2. Novels at work, 3. Mammon worshippers and 4 books. Novels from economics. He wrote about 10 novels and about 151 short stories in everything. He is considered to be a pure artist who remains

unruffled by political movements and 'isms' in almost all of his works. One cannot imagine in him neither the populism of Anand nor the vigor of Bhabani Bhattacharya. Like Manohar Malgonkar, he neither disregards Indian politicians nor believes in exalting the importance of Indian spiritual heritage such as Raja Rao. He's in himself a school. He is undoubtedly a writer of average emotions, surprises springing up and even giving mild shocks, but never indulges in the morbid aspects of life.

He is a staunch believer in harmony at home and good relationships with people. His novels' central theme is man's location and plight in this universe. Narayan himself once said: "The mood of comedy, the responsiveness of the atmosphere, the investigation of psychological factors, the crisis of the individual soul and its resolution are the necessary ingredients of fiction." Narayan claims that life is illogical and that man still attempts to turn his dreams into reality. Thus, Narayan completes story of rise & fall of man through the reversal of fortune and thus presents an overall view of human life. He may be defined as a middle-class novelist.

His novels portray Indian middle class members as engaged in a fight to "get out of the automation of the past." Most of Narayan's characters belong to middle class, especially to South India's lower middle classes. Chandran belongs to the family of the middle class. The idea of earning his bread & butter is also bothering Editor Srinivas. Mr. Sampath's entire life is based around the money-making problem, and Raju, the guide, is not always beyond money-making. Such men are the normal kind of people, cautious, clever and prosaic.

Narayan is, without doubt, a writer of ordinary people and common circumstances. His plots are made of neither extraordinary nor heroic materials and incidents. His novels' voice is calm and quiet. He picks daily events that occur one time or another to almost any one of us. His characters are average human beings and they do not possess exceptional abilities, but they will soon achieve greatness by some events to return to their original state. When you take a school boy like Swami's life, you will find nothing unusual or odd in your life.

Similarly, in a web of accidents that are just normal, Mr. Sampath and others stay, love and suffer. Narayan's fiction comprises a series of books on people in an imaginary city in South India and their experiences. He is one of the four leading figures of early Indian literature in English. Narayan is credited with bringing Indian literature to rest of world in English, and is considered one of India's greatest novelists in English language.

With the aid of his mentor & friend, Graham Greene, who was instrumental in getting publishers for Narayan's first four novels, including *Swami and Friends*' semi-autobiographical trilogy, *The Bachelor*

of Arts, and *The English Teacher*, Narayan broke through. Narayan's plays *Financial Expert*, hailed as one of 1951's most original works, and *The Guide*, the recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award, adapted for Hindi and English movies.

After brief, uninspiring stints as teacher & newspaperman, Narayan published his first novel *Swami and Friends* in 1935. In it, he invented Malgudi's small southern Indian city, a literary microcosm which he later criticized compared to the Yoknapatawpha County of William Faulkner. In Malgudi, there have been more than dozen novels & several short stories that followed. His style of writing was compared to that of Guy de Maupassant, as both of them have the ability to compact the plot without sacrificing elements of the story.

The second novel by Narayan, *Bachelor of Arts* (1939), marked the beginning of his popularity in England, where it was primarily the duty of the novelist Graham Greene to write it. Greene called Narayan "the most revered writer in English." His 4th novel, *The English Teacher*, published in 1945, was partially autobiographical about the struggle of a teacher to cope with his wife's death. Most critics see *The Guide* (1958) as the masterpiece of Narayan. Told in a dynamic series of flashbacks, it's about a tourist guide who seduces a client's girlfriend, thrives, and ends up in prison. The novel received maximum literary award in India, and in 1968 it was adapted to the off-Broadway stage.

At least two of Narayan's novels have been adapted for the films, *Mr. Sampath* (1949) and *The Guide* (1958). Typically, Narayan wrote for an hour or two a day, writing rapidly, frequently writing as many as 2,000 lines, and never correcting or rewriting. Narayan's stories begin in the lives of a cross-section of Indian society, with characters of all classes, with realistic settings & everyday happenings. Fate or chance, oversight or blunder gradually transform mundane events into absurd events. The protagonist benefits from unintended tragedy as simple as unforeseen good fortune.

The characters embrace their destinies with an equanimity that signals to the community that things will turn out well somehow, whatever their own motives or acts. Development, mixed with hierarchical systems in form of Western-imported goods and practices, meets in Malgudi with long-held customs, values & ways of doing things. The modern world can never achieve a clear victory because, according to its own private rationale, Malgudi recognizes only what it wants. Anthony Thwaite of the *New York Times*, exploring Narayan's 1976 novel *The Painter of Signs*, said Narayan made "a world as lavishly human and unpredictable as Dickens's."

His next book, *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983), is described by a tiger whose heavenly ace attempts

to illuminate him. It got blended audits in with his fourteenth novel *Talkative Man* (1987). Narayan continued composing books in his 80s. He came back to his unique motivation, his grandma, with the 1994 book *Grandmother's Tale and Other Stories*, which *Publishers Weekly* depicted as "a praiseworthy assortment of letters from one of India's most recognized men." Donna Seaman of *Booklist* hailed the assortment of short stories that spread over 50 years of Narayan's composition as "a brilliant testing of his short fiction, typically con.

"Books can exhaust me, yet never individuals." Narayan got numerous honors and respects in a composing profession that crossed more than sixty years. These are the A's. The Royal Society of Literature's C. Benson Medal and the Padma Vibhushan, India's second highest civilian prize. He was also named for the Indian Parliament's upper house, *Rajya Sabha*. In *Malgudi*, the fictional characters of Narayan have their mooring. This town of *Malgudi* is a traditional one visited by Lord Rama, Laxmana, Sita, Hanuman and Goddess Parvati—the Buddha, Sankara and Gandhi legendary gods and goddesses—from the imaginary to the actual.

These *Malgudians* are inviting parallels to the *Canterbury* characters of Chaucer, the fools of Shakespeare and the rustics of Hardy. The rustics and fools of Narayan are regulated and governed by a system of values enshrined in their culture, tradition, religion and philosophy, while their interpretation of these systems differs from person to person, which adds to these characters a high degree of complexity. Based on P. S. Ramana, Narayan has first studied a character on the social order scale, i.e. in the sense of his family, institution and social environment, and second, he studies a character in relation to himself. Such comparisons are the foundation of Indian theory in character analysis.

The *Malgudians* strike the balance between their profession and religion, and in their lives they synthesize the ideas of *Purusharthas* and *Ashrama Dharma*. An study of their lives reiterates their key statements in the framework of moral and social meaning in India. The comic vision of Narayan illuminates several important themes—the role of women in a traditional society, the spiritual shortcomings of a materialistic way of life, and the implications of flouting agreed codes. His literature also explores the mental and ethical implications of certain Hindu principles such as ascetic purification, meditation, renunciation, non-attachment, *maya*, and cyclical life and death progressions.

Most notably, Narayan projects Karma's great Indian philosophy and he portrays in his novels minutely different paths to attain *Moksha* or self-realization. His fiction puts together growing facets of life and experience. K. R. S. Iyenger rightly points out: "Narayan's is the art of resolute and attentive

exploration; if he could, he could discover the inner lands of mind, heart and soul, capture the beauty of the normal, the tragic of the prosaic." Narayan believes in all rituals, ethos and abstract ideologies. His fiction speaks to of course his characteristic information on Indian way of thinking, old style writing, confidence, and morals.

His books are Indo-driven rather than Eurocentric, which soaks up the core of Indian culture, aside from the utilization of English language. Shanta Krishnaswamy sees Narayan as a decent gatherer of old ideas, an authority of request and custom. R. M. Verma additionally brings up that the ordinary manifestations of the creator seek after an only heading in the works of their tendency that is set apart out in the whole of Indian life—an amalgamation of over a significant time span, custom and innovation. V. S. Naipaul likewise holds a similar view and comments: "Narayan's books are less absolutely social comedies than strict books, some of the time strict tales, and seriously Hindu."

Being an unassuming and honest craftsman, Narayan doesn't trouble his perusers in unique way of thinking or transcendentalism with pompous talks. Narayan's tale isn't a methods for social or political purposeful publicity, nor does he use it as a device for sifting into the content like Raja Rao in reasoning, yet his anecdotal works are oversimplified at this point down to earth life projections. A metaphysical overtone is created by Narayan's portrayal of characters and their relationships with each other.

In the light of the most considered universal concept of Karma, he introduces the characters as conceived by the Hindu epic *The Bhagwad Gita*. Nearly all the characters of Narayan exhibit the growing pains of frustration with their worldly lives. De facto, in their process of self-realization, this frustration arrives. The characters of Narayan achieve a fusion of flesh and spirit by viewing their own earthly practices philosophically. Katak correctly observes: "The irrepressible *Joie-de-vivre* that distinguishes these *Malgudi* men and women in their circumscribed lives, but manages to articulate them.

They think and live differently until they enter their flesh and spirit synthesis. "Almost all the main characters of Narayan undergo isolation and alienation. Throughout their lives, this isolation and dissatisfaction comes because they are unhappy with their lives. The time they spend in isolation and loneliness, however, is fruitful. Swami's long, tired nights in the forest help him to appreciate and understand his parents' love and affection. Likewise, Marco and Rosie suffer from separation and isolation in *The Guide* and *Krishnan* and

Sushila in *The English Teacher*, which teaches them to face the harsh truths of life.

Raju, the guide denounces material life and during his lonely hours in prison, he becomes religious and introspective. Raja, as he is tamed and removed from his wild manners of living and thought, the tiger also turns out to be a *Sanyasi*. Therefore, in his novels, Narayan projected the idea of separation to incorporate India's metaphysical dream. Many Indian scriptures have taught this vision by self-realization theory. In contrast, Narayan strongly believes in the life lived in harmony with tradition and philosophy and taking pain and discontent from it.

Narayan's human relationships in his novels came from Indian tradition and philosophy. The relationship between the father and the son— for example, Chandran and his father in *The Bachelor of Arts*, Swami and his father in *Swami and Friends*, Margayya and Balu in *The Financial Expert*, Gagan and Mali in *The Seller of Sweets* and Gopu and Tim in *The Nagaraj World* — does not have harmony and peace because the son has no sense of respect and reverence in these relationships.

This thesis undertakes to investigate R's novels. K. Narayan in the sense of Hindu philosophy, faith and morality in general and Karma theory, Moksha in particular the cycle theory of life and death. There was also an effort to examine the characters of Narayan in the light of four Ashramas (Bramhacharyashrama, Grihasthashrama, Vanaprasthashrama, and Sanyasthashrama) and four principles (Artha, Kama, Dharma, and Moksha) as well as duties of Purusha or man as conceived in Manu Smriti.

III. LITERATURE SURVEY

From a philosophical perspective, a nearby assessment of Narayan's books acquaints one with various traditional frameworks starting in India approximately 3,000 years back. Portraying Indian way of thinking as one framework is preposterous as it speaks to a rich assortment of philosophical reasoning. Indian reasoning's traditional frameworks called Darshanas are completely sorted into three explicit gatherings—the Orthodox (Astika), the Heterodox (Nastika) and the Indian Materialist (Charvaka). A universal framework acknowledges the Vedas' authority. There are six of these customary frameworks Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta.

Buddhism and Jainism are heterodox frameworks dependent on their prophets' definitive profound encounters. Charvaka is an agnostic who restricts a wide range of religion. Through his books, in the light of Indian philosophical structures, Narayan presents two particular kinds of characters. In the first place, there are Srinivas, Nataraj, Margayya, Jagan, Raju, Raja, and Jagan who are logicians in their very own

correct who are uncovering and advancing the Astika esteem framework. Second, there are those like Vasu and Mali who are offering protection from the Malgudians' request and congruity. They speak to the arrangement of the Charvaka. The primary structures were interrelated, Nyaya and Vaisheshika.

Sankhya framework's most prominent commitment to human idea is its origination of Prakriti or quintessence that is the main driver of all universe physical elements. Prakriti's whole framework is developed from three gunas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. The other significant class in the Sankhya plot is Purusha or man. Narayan's books have interlaced these three gunas. Raju, Margayya, Raja—at first all carry on with the life of Rajasik. In any case, in their lives, otherworldly change drives them to Sattvik methods for living. The characters of Narayan are in their particular ways yogis. The YogaSutra of Patanjali is the fundamental wellspring of the way of thinking of yoga based on the focal object of "Chitta Vritti Nirodha Sa Yoga," for example "Equalization of psyche, that is Yoga." Sense of partition from every material thing and endeavors to accomplish fellowship with God as found in Raju, Krishnan and Raja who carry on with the life of Yogis towards the finish of the books. Vedanta or Uttar Mimamsa is the living and basic piece of the present Indian way of thinking rising up out of the perusing of the triple messages—the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Vedanta or Brahma Sutra. Master is had confidence in the Vedantic custom. The Vedantins comprehend the shortcoming of reason, since Vedanta is a fine case of an ideal blend of avocation and divulgence.

It was conceivable to follow the underlying foundations of Varna and Ashrama Dharma from the Vedantic school. Narayan's books likewise delineate these standards of Varna and Ashrama Dharma. Raju's penance for the Mangla individuals, Raja's penance of chasing wild creatures and his day by day examination, Jagan's disconnection from common issues, his recitation of the Bhagwad Gita and Margayya's last guidance to his dad all mirror their entrance into Sanyasthashrama, an Indian philosophical idea starting from the Vedanta. Narayan's books have imaginatively woven Moksha's thought. Adwaita by Adi Sankaracharya characterizes Nirguna Brahman as a definitive reality, the Jiva's personality.

With the one special case of Charvaka, Moksha's vision is key to all Indian philosophical structures and conventions. Every one of the frameworks are one in characterizing Moksha as a trial comprehension of Ultimate Reality that will be accomplished exclusively by an encounter portrayed as Prajanana, Kevalagnana, Anubhuti—a condition of extreme ecstasy, delight, or freedom. Narayan conceptualized Karma hypothesis as spoke to in the Bhagwad Gita, which unambiguously portrays a point by point perfect of

genuine religion and the perfect of ethical quality in its conceptualization of Ultimate Truth.

This most glowing philosophical ballad sets out the fourfold way of segregated activity (Niskama Karma Yoga), the way of information (Jnan Yoga), the way of commitment and devotion (Bhakti Yoga) to accomplish Moksha's definitive objective. Niskama Karma's rule, for example confined, caring conduct, is fundamental to any Bhagvad Gita talk. The Karma Yogi does his obligations in a withdrew manner, procuring a condition of detachment to delight or agony all the while. Through disengaging himself from the physical feeling of self-image, the Yogi, or adherent of Yoga's specific way, may rise above his fanciful passing and association with the material world and enter the domain of the Divine.

Raju is a Nishkam Karma Yogi as in by relinquishing his very own objectives and wants, he additionally bolsters the requirements, tastes and likes of others. He underpins Marco's work, Rosie's moving capacities, prison mates and locals ' prosperity, and in the long run forfeits his life for mankind's actual and all inclusive reason. Narayan's books additionally approve India's two most convincing wellsprings of profound, strict, social, political and moral lessons with the two Indian legends, The Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The Ramayana is an ideal reference book of old Indian sages ' information, especially of the Upanishads ' quintessential shrewdness.

Indeed, even properly, the Ramayana is known as Dharma Shashtra. As Sant Keshavdas says, "The Ramayana is anything but an unadulterated story in Ramayana's The Esoteric Context. The story we live in each snapshot of our lives. "(www.hinduism.co.za/ramayana.htm) The Mahabharata has regularly depicted the fifth Veda as catching about the whole political, monetary, good and strict history of old India. Frequently known as Arthashashtra, Dharmashashtra and Kamashashtra, this word reference of life and information on India. Human life's fourfold objectives Kama (pleasure), Artha (riches), Dharma (moral living) and Moksha (otherworldly joy), four Varnas speculations for example Brahmana, Vaishya, Kshatriya and expert in the Mahabharata.

Margayya's intense craving for cash, Raju's worries about Rosie and Raja's appetite and fury as portrayed in The Financial Expert, The Guide and A Tiger for Malgudi reflect Artha and Kama's beliefs separately. Fundamentally, these characters ' strict change mirrors the other two qualities, Dharma and Moksha. Indian morals additionally direct the regular man's conduct, frame of mind, and life theory in the public eye. "Dharma" signifies the ethical code of the universe in Sanskrit. Thusly, profound quality is co-related with any occasion of life in an Indian philosophical setting. The two extraordinary social and good masterminds of antiquated India, Manu

and Prasastapada, offered a definite talk on Hindu morals.

Manu characterized a person's obligations as Sadharana Dharma, and Prasastapada proliferated the Samanya Dharma hypothesis and Vishesha Dharma idea. Under the classification of Sadharana Dharma or explicit obligations, Manu makes reference to ten obligations relentlessness (dhairya), absolution (kshama), application (dama), non-appointment (chouryabhava), neatness (shoucha), erotic craving (indriya-nigraha), information (dhi) perusing (vidya), honesty (satya) and resentment limitation (akrodha). Every one of these obligations recommended by Manu are significantly imperative to the accomplishment of the self-flawlessness of an individual. In Narayan's books, Margayya, Nagaraj, Jagan, Raju and different heroes shield and encourage their lives.

Gandhian hypothesis and thought has to a great extent decided the parameters of abstract and social talk in India's pre-and post-freedom period. Gandhism shapes a noteworthy piece of post-autonomous and post-pioneer talk in India, yet in addition in the Third World, and Gandhian reasoning and theory has affected a wide corpus of Indian writing in English throughout the years. In his particularly matchless style and way, Narayan soaked up the Gandhian way of thinking. The shrewdness of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagwad Gita, the Ramayana, and the Mahbharata reverberates with his fiction.

The setting and the district are the significant element of every one of Narayan's books. The two his books are set in Malgudi's anecdotal city, an indication of times long past, known for its previous history. Master Rama made the Saryu stream here by removing a bolt from his quiver and drawing a line on the water. It is where the message of equity was lectured by Gautam Buddha, Sankara focused on the Vedantic theory, Christian ministers advanced their confidence, Mahatma Gandhi showed his lessons of genuineness and peacefulness.

So Malgudi is definitely not a cutting edge stylish city, yet a town with moorings in the nation's old, verifiable past and a spot that gives a perfect setting or area for his characters ' scholarly, magical, otherworldly, moral and good exercises. This frontal area in India's old past through Malgudi's nonexistent city adds believability or legitimacy to Narayan's books. His characters emphasize or reprimand Indian philosophical idea, religion, good or social code at various degrees of the real world and conditions. In the Indian sense, theory isn't restricted only to the proliferation of unique information and intelligence.

Man's homocentricism and centrality is the suffering topic of Indian way of thinking, and it has

appropriately been found the middle value of that Indian way of thinking isn't only a perspective on life, however a lifestyle. Accordingly, for the heroes in his separate books, to be specific Srinivas, Nataraj and Nagaraj, Mr. Sampath, Malgudi's Man-Eater and Nagaraj's World hypothesis are operational in their lives as a lifestyle. Such characters have to a great extent assembled their way of thinking of life out of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagwad Gita and the two Indian sagas, in spite of the fact that the understanding and resulting utilization of theory contrasts as per individual needs, family or social conditions.

The characters of Narayan are partitioned into three particular gatherings dependent on their family and network encounters, practices, and duties. Initially, there are the main heroes who show explicit philosophical vision throughout everyday life and afterward uncover and advance the philosophical worth arrangement of India.

CONCLUSION

R. K. Narayan, one of the most admired and celebrated authors among the English-language Indian writing trio, deeply rooted in Indian culture, tradition and philosophy, represents the Indian spirit and mind in his work. His work imbibes Indian philosophy's quintessence in general and Karma's concept in particular. Nevertheless, with pedantic philosophical discourses, Narayan, an unassuming and unpretentious poet, does not burden his fiction. Narayan does not view his literature as a means of social, political or religious propaganda, given all the theoretical undercurrents in his novels. His fictional plays are a life interpretation that is simplistic yet realistic.

Narayan's uninitiated, imperceptive reader can often be seduced by the overt clarity of his thematic concerns marked by his characteristic comic narrative style. Narayan's daily life commonalities and the simplicity of thematic concerns give his fiction a nonserious voice. Within his literature, however, there is a strong undercurrent of philosophical discourse, inter-related with religion and ethics disciplines. In the first place, therefore, Narayan is a writer and not a philosopher. Nonetheless, in Indian philosophy, his fictional texts have a backdrop that could be partially attributed to his conventional context.

His philosophical dream, however, is largely indigenous, bearing the mark of his experience of ancient Indian history, culture and philosophy. Therefore, it becomes imperative to investigate briefly the Indian philosophical systems in order to compare Narayan's fictional texts with Karma theory in order to ponder the writer's metaphysical dream.

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