



EI and Indian traditions in R.K. Narayan's The Man Eater of Malgudi

Dr. G. Kiran Kumar Reddy¹, Dr. A. Kiran Mayee^{2,*}

¹Assistant Professor of English, Rajeev Gandhi Memorial College of Engineering and Technology, Nandyal, AP, India.

²Assistant Professor of English, Government Degree College, Putur, AP, India.

*Corresponding Author

Received: 30 Apr 2025; Received in revised form: 22 May 2025; Accepted: 26 May 2025; Available online: 01 Jun 2025

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Abstract— In the words of Albert Einstein “A man’s ethical behavior should be centered on sympathy, education and social needs without religious bias. Men would in fact be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death. Indian writers created the themes based on Indian History, myth and emotions. R.K. Narayan’s *The Man Eater of Malgudi* depict emotional intelligence and human emotions to portray the individual. It is a voyage of creature to creator. The work conveyed ethics and Emotional Intelligence principles to the modern generation to uplift and follow humanitarian principles, without which society would remain as a chaotic piece of human world. This present research paper is an endeavor to study, investigate and understand issues related to religion, Emotional Intelligence and humanitarianism sublime themes from the work of R.K. Narayan in the contemporary society. His narration focusses on the ways in which Vasu’s mental processes reflect a conflict between desire and possessiveness.



Keywords— Indian fiction, humanitarianism, human emotions, ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Humans possess a volley of emotions, they reflect how we want to be, create an impression for others. Perceiving emotions, regulating emotions bring change in our personality and life style. EI facilitates us to regulate our emotions. EI covers knowing ourselves, collaborating with others, managing stress etc. If we glance at the lives of people, some people cope well with bad situations, some are influenced. EI is a strong trait, conferred one, impacts our daily life, elevates our life style. Whether we are in professional place, home, to continue bond with peers, colleagues, family members EI is an essential one.

Emotions influence human beings, EI show great impact on others. Many psychologists claimed that EI can shape the lives, boost up our living environment. Some studies proved that Emotional quotient factors influence others such as circumstances, familial relationships, bond, peer group members relations. EI appears as a small subject although it affects our lives.

Vasu is a taxidermist, antagonist, lack of emotional intelligence, affects other characters in the novel. He behaves in an imbalanced manner creates problems to others. Nataraj, protagonist becomes victim in the hands of Vasu. Vasu appears in his press, persuades him to print some cards. Nataraj tries to send him to the adjacent press. But Vasu never listens to the words of Nataraj. He becomes emotionless and forces Nataraj. In another situation, Vasu accompanies forest officer, torments him with his words to print forest officer’s scripture, Vasu forcibly takes Nataraj to Mempo forest.

Physical and Mental Health : H Vasu, the taxidermist, who barges into Malgudi and disturbs the very good routine of life in this peaceful town is a six feet tall man. He appears slim, bull neck and hammer fist reveal his real nature. He has a tanned face, large powerful eyes under thick eyebrows.”

On seeing him to clean and brush his hair. From the beginning Nataraj is aware of his extraordinary strength.

Nataraj is scared of this muscular giant, though he tries to hide his fears even from himself.

Nataraj is the central character in the novel and the entire action runs through his eyes, but he is an unheroic hero. One who endures rather than a man who causes suffering to others. He allows others to manipulate him, who yields in the face of aggression, and this passivity and weakness portray him in a comic light. He allows Vasu to occupy his attic without his permission, rent to him. His mental weakness brings him into trouble with the forest department and with the Rent control officer. The poor man has to hire an adjournment lawyer to gain time and has to pay a heavy fee to him for his services.

He is overawed by the aggressive bully Vasu and this lands him into trouble again and again. When he is busy in his business, he allows himself to be taken away by the aggressive bully in his jeep only for a few minutes. He leaves him at Muthu's tea stall and drives up in his jeep to Mempo forest without caring the plight of Nataraj. Vasu, an emotionless man, bullies Nataraj in various situations in the novel. Vasu is a bully, who intimidates people, acts aggressively and has his way in everything uncertainties, possibilities and probabilities. He shoots animals in the Mempo forest illegally and stealthily and this brings him into trouble with the forest department. Nataraj was much agitated and regained his peace of mind only when he engaged the adjournment lawyer to gain time for himself. He had to pay a heavy fee to the lawyer, he lost not only his peace of mind as well as his money as a consequence.

Conflict finds its space in the inner layers of the human mind as the relationship cracks, and the perspective of the individual and the outside entity lies in contrast, owing to the fact of parasitism that operates and spreads its tentacles in varied forms of life. The conflict creates fissures in the psyche and uproots him from his comfort zone. It even prompts him to question his position in society, and the individual takes the path towards liberation, crossing the moods of introspection and analysis. Vasu never realises his behaviour and disturbs himself.

Professional excellence: In his printing work, Nataraj is a shrewd business man with the assistance of Sastri, tries to impress the customers that the next door star press with a new Heidelberg machine from Germany, belongs to him. Nataraj runs his business with a single helper Sastri: he treats Sastri compassionately, considers him as his well-wisher, who set up type, printed the forms four pages at a time on the treadle, sewed the sheets and carried them for ruling or binding to Kandan four streets off.

It was by chance and accident that Vasu becomes a taxidermist. He informs Nataraj, "I was in Junagadh, interested in the art. I learnt art from Suleiman, he stuffed

a lion. His stuffings go all over the world. He was a saint, taught me his art sincerely. Vasu is an illegal fellow, kills animals in the Mempo forest and dogs in the neighborhood. He frightens the children, when the local people complain against foul smell. He treats the complaint with contempt.

Relationship Management: The parlour of Nataraj is frequented by two people- one a poet who composes the life of God Krishna in mono syllable verse and the other. Sen a journalist. Both are his close friends and daily visitors to his press. The poet recites his verses to him and Nataraj is thrilled by his recital of monosyllabic verse. Both the poet and the journalist are considerable and helpful. Nataraj lives in his large ancestral house, adjacent to the press, with his lovable wife and his little son Babu.

He shows affableness, provides books, toys, sweets, education at Albert Mission school. He gifts a new silk sari to his wife on every Diwali. He is a repository of the customs and traditions of Malgudi- Not only is Nataraj a deeply religious man, compassionate and helpful to Muthu and Kumar.

Muthu from Mempo forest seeks help and cooperation for the treatment of the elephant. Nataraj knows information about Joshi a veterinary doctor from Sen. Nataraj informs Muthu to bring the elephant to Malgudi and is adequately treated. It throws light on his humanitarian nature, for Muthu had helped him on an earlier occasion.

Vasu not only taxidermist but also womanizer. Rangi and other women visit attic dawn and dusk. He has no morality and decency at all. He plans to kill Kumar, the temple elephant, causing agony to poor Nataraj. Before shooting Kumar, he uses his hammer fist to kill mosquitoes on his head. Like Basmasura, he kills himself. Due to lack of control over his emotions, he destroys himself.

A.V. Krishna Rao states in *The Indo Anglian Novel and the changing tradition: A Study of the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, Kamala Markandaya, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao 1930-64*, Indian culture has been "wedded to eternity and spirituality."

In the words of Meenakshi Mukherjee, in *Realism and Reality: The Novel and society in India*, asserts that, being unified essentially as a religious community, Indians, till the late nineteenth century, recorded only their faith, which is timeless, and Indian writing represented only mythic time, which is cyclic; but, after exposure to other cultures through the study of English books and upon rediscovering Indian history in books written by British authors, they had to come to terms with India's past and the secularization of Indian society demanded that Indian writing record historic time, which is linear.

Indian Traditions: Indian traditions are integral part of our lives. It show impact on our daily lives.

Joint family: Nataraj lives in a joint family consisting of various members. He is an icon of Indian reverence, pursues traditions, honors elders. He never imbalances with his behavior. Indian meal tradition, all the family members sitting together and dining is portrayed very well. At one moment a scuffle takes place at diing. Nataraj's father reminiscences his wife could have avoided it. If she is alive. On the past festive day a small quarrel takes place between Nataraj's father and uncle. Nataraj's mother convinces her husband by saying sacred day. Do not leave food. Nataraj's father abides to the words of his mother and resolves his own problem. Here author depicts the joint family values, bond, relationship etc.

Indianness:

Nataraj believes Indian Gods, Goddesses, traditions and pursues the same . He hangs a portrait of Goddess Lakshmi in the parlor, attributes his prosperity , he goes to river Sarayu early morning to have holy bath. He often greets his friends and neighbors on the way, offers prayers to sun -god.

He is so much fed on religious myths that they form the only possible versions of reality to him. When he is apprehensive that Vasu might shoot kumar, the temple elephant, he is reasoned by the belief that God Krishna was really an incarnation of Vishnu, who saved Gajendra : he would again come to the rescue of kumar. He is very much pleased to see the idol of God well decorated in the temple.

Sastri asserts, "Satyanarayana puja must be performed in my house: My children and wife will be waiting for me at the door." Sastri is an orthodox -minded Sanskrit scholar narrates many stories to Nataraj from Hindu scriptures , myths and legends.

He narrates to Nataraj tales of Demons and states, "To deal with a demon one must own qualities of a hunter, the wit of a scholar, and the guile of a harlot." Vasu reflects rakshasa qualities , swollen with ego. He removed his silver rimmed spectacles and put them away in his shirt pocket. "There was Ravana, the antagonist in Ramayana, who had ten heads and twenty arms and enormous yogic and physical powers."

The first three avatars of god Vishnu Matsya (fish), Koorma (Tortoise) and Varaha (Boar) are all animals.

This has been interpreted as parts of the creation of myth , but the fact remains that it is to the animal kingdom that one has turn to allegorize the process. It is true that some of the Hindu gods have many foibles, like their Greek counterparts; for example Indra had a roving eye for which

he has to suffer more than once. Shiva was extremely gullible, and granted big boons without any regard for possible disastrous consequences. Thus he granted the demon Bhasmasura the power of life and death by a mere touch of his hand. The demon just said, thank you sir, and wished to test the efficiency of the boon by making shiva himself its first victim. The god then ran hastily to Vishnu, the divine trouble shooter. But it must not be forgotten that the Hindu Gods mostly have a firm underpinning of symbolism and philosophical thought.

Then there was Bhasmasura, who attained a special boon and created suffering to humans. God Vishnu incarnates as a dancer, named Mohini , with whom the asura became infatuated. She promised to surrender to him only if he imitated all the gestures and movements of her own dancing. At one moment in the dance, Mohini placed her palms on her head and the demon followed this gesture in complete forgetfulness and was reduced to ashes. Thus , Sastri hints at the self destruction of Vasu, who really destroys himself in the manner of Bhasmasura.

Nataraj had joint family consisting of Nataraj's grandmother, grand aunty, his parents , four uncles, their wives and children, and his two sisters, were all living together in his home. Joint family system prevailed , Indian culture shown great impact on people.

Nataraj friend, the poet had completed his poem upto the point where Lord Krishna meets Radha and their marriage is to be celebrated. The manuscript was ready and the poet was in great spirits. Sastri had printed the book and advised Nataraj that it was an apt occasion for celebrations. With the help of an astrologer they fixed a date about four week away. They printed appeals for donations and started collecting the money for the grand occasion in which at least about thousand people would be invited.

Procession is a common phenomenon one at temple. At about four O' clock , Nataraj reached the temple. Thousands of men, women and children had already gathered there and an atmosphere of festivity prevailed. Nataraj kept thinking about the crowd and the danger of an elephant stampede lurking them. He was in a state of anxiety and confusion. The Mayor gives speech, the poet respectfully presented the silk bound copy of the book to the priest. The story of Radha and Krishna was recited in a song form by a group of men with Rangi swaying and gesticulating. The effect of incense and chants made Nataraj drowsy and elated. He felt that Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu would come to the rescue of the elephant or people. In a state of drowsiness Nataraj let out a terrible cry, howling "O Vishnu! Save the elephant and save all the innocent men and women who are going

to pull the chariot. You must come to our rescue now.” He fell unconscious.

Proverbs usage is a regular one in Indian scenario. In the Eleventh chapter of the novel, Nataraj's wife suspects him. She told him that the whole town suspected him because of the rent control case. Nataraj asked his wife not to speak as it would further complicate matters. Nataraj shouted at his wife. But she quotes a proverb, “You can close the mouth of an oven, but how can you close the mouth of town?”

R. K. Narayan novels rely on theme of Malgudi and Middle class. In a realistic way Narayan weaves the story and characters. The printing press, The Nallapa grove, the Sarayu river, and the Banyan tree all create ambience of myth. In many novels like *Swami and Friends*, *The English Teacher*, *The Guide*, *The Man Eater of Malgudi* Narayan used breeze of Malgudi as the background. He used the myth Bhasmasura, self destroying demon in the *Man Eater of Malgudi*.

Nataraj, protagonist of the novel describes Vasu, the prince of darkness. Vasu fails to destroy the elephant, Kumar, that portrays the faith of Malgudi society. At the end of the novel, Vasu applies sacred Ash on his forehead which is offered by Shastri symbolizes in the ultimate success of Good over evil.

Death is inevitable to any creatures in this world.

In Aurobindo's words death is described

“A fire has come and touched men's hearts and gone;

A few have caught flame and risen to greater life.” (Canto I, 1:241-242)

The novel ends with the restoration of order-disorder-order.

CONCLUSION

Even as a busy printer, Nataraj always yearns to understand people thoughts, feelings and ideas. Being an empathetic father, he creates ambience among family members. His belief in empathy is the core element of the novel.

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