



AN ELEMENTS OF SATIRE IN R. K. NARAYAN'S WORKS

RESEARCH SCHOLAR – KALPESHKUMAR DHULABHAI PARMAR
ASST. TEACHER, VANTADA (KABOLA) PRIMARY SCHOOL, TA – MODASA, ARAVALLI, GUJARAT.
RESEARCH SCHOLAR, RAI UNIVERSITY, AHMADABAD, GUJARAT
CO-AUTHOR – DR. DEEPKUMAR TRIVEDI
ASST. PROF. OF ENGLISH, BHAKT KAVI NARSINH MEHTA UNIVERSITY.

SUBJECT:

R. K. Narayan, name is enough to know his popularity and fame in the field of Indian English literature. His full name is Rashipuram Krishnaswamy Narayanswami Ayer. He was born in Madras (now called Chennai) in 1906. His father was Rashipuram Venkatarama Krishnaswami Ayer was a school teacher in Mysore. His mother was Gnanambal was a house wife, his elder brother was a famous cartoonist R. K. Laxman – famous for his satirical political cartoons. R. K. Narayan was graduated at Maharaja College, Mysore. He married to Rajam in 1935. They had a daughter named Hema, but their happiness was short lived and Rajam Died of Typhoid in 1939. A number of female characters in his writing are based on Rajam. For several years after her death, Narayan could not write a novel. Only three novels publishing during his wife's lifetime were the first *Swami and Friends*, second *The Bachelor of Arts* and third *The Dark Room*.

R. K. Narayan's works are full of satire and irony with the charm of human mind's surfing of ideas. His works are mainly based on Indian culture, typically, they has the South Indian background. His most of novels are attacks on his contemporary period. His novels are loaded with satire and its elements. In other words, he was a reformer in form of writer. The contours of the ideas create the effect of immense satire and humor in his works. His characters and plots go through the ornament of satire created by his characters. However, they are the product of Narayan's innocent attempt to render the reality of society by making of satirical overtones in his works. Satire is a variety of literature and from time to time realistic and the stage arts, in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcoming are held up to laughter, preferably with the objective of shaming persons, corporations, government, or society itself into perfection.

Although satire is usually meant to be humorous, its greater function is often constructive social criticism, using wit to draw attention to both particular and wider issues in society. A trait of satire is well-built paradox or mockery – in satire, irony is militant but parody, burlesque, exaggeration, juxtaposition, comparison, analogy, and double entendre are all frequently used in satirical speech and writing. This 'militant' irony or sarcasm often professes to approve of the very things the satirist wishes to attack. Satire is nowadays found in many artistic forms of expression, including internet memes, literature, plays, commentary, television shows, and media such as lyrics.

The meaning of a satire

Satire is a literary form; it has tremendous power to improve human race as well as system. Satire as a literary form applied to Roman period to the present time. It is reform

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by times and it made a proper literary weapon. Satire is not only applied in literature but it applied in Media as well as in the films. Apart from this, satire is a pure literary form that used by writers. Satire is the mirror of society which indicates the minute follies and mistakes of a person. Indeed, satire is used to create the situation not run through on a smooth and simple path but its flow chooses the path of opera. The characters become victims of some specific triennial situation based on some conditions and from the very event of atmosphere, satire sprung like a traumatic enigma with humor, the cross situation has been created because the affected felt shame or problem while for others it has been created the intense happiness and humor. All the languages in the world are applied satire because of to control human behavior and political system. Satire is directly affected the living mind without harm and control them. The satire is not the newly created form but it is in use from the creation of the intellectual world of the human being. It is the presentation of the plainly insulting manner without hesitation of mind and tongue. It makes person helpless to protect from it or to prevent from the effect of it. The survival in this matter is not easily applicable by anybody or overcome its effect. It is the straight articulation of the attacks which make handicap the person apparently and sinks him into the deep auctions.

"Satire is the use of humor, irony and exaggeration or ridicule to criticize people's stupidity or wise, particularly in the context of contemporary political and others topical issues". (Oxford Dictionary)

As Lewis considered satire -

"It is a hybrid form standing midway between tragedy and comedy..." (Lewis)

In other words, satire is a targeted attack meant to expose human wise and follies in order to bring change. Satire is a way of making us realize, how silly or bad things are often making us laugh at them. There are some specific elements of satire as under:

1. Humor;

a. Exaggeration: The formalize walk of Charlie Chaplin, the facial and body contortions of Jim Carrey,

b. Understatement: Fielding's description of a grossly fact and repulsively ugly Mrs. Blipslop: she was not remarkably handsome.

c. Incongruity,

d. Deflation: the English professor mispronounces a word; the President slips and hangs his head leaving the helicopter, etc.

e. Linguistic games: malapropisms, weird rhymes, etc.

f. Surprise: twist endings, unexpected events."

2. Irony: Literary device in which there is an incongruity or discordance between what one says or does, and what one means or what is generally understood.

3. Invective; name calling, personal abuse, etc.

4. Mock Eulogium; Praise which is only apparent and which suggests blame instead.

5. Grotesque: Creating a tension between laughter and horror or revulsion; the essence of all "sick humor; or black humor"

6. Comic Juxtaposition; linking together with no commentary items which normally do not go together; Pope's line in Rape of the Lock; "Puffs, patches, bibles, and billet-doux".

7. Mock Epic/Mock Heroic: using elevated diction and devices from the epic or the heroic to deal with low or trivial subject

8. Parody: mimicking the style and /or techniques of something else

9. Inflation; taking a real-life situation and blowing it out of proportion to make it ridiculous and showcase its faults

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10. Diminution: taking a real-life situation and reducing it to make it ridiculous and showcase its faults".

The elements of satire in R. K. Narayan's works:

R. K. Narayan's conception of humor is meticulously achieved in *The Guide*. We get a glimpse of the complexity of life in this novel through irony of motives, characters, situations, and ideas. Narayan behaves like Chaucer when the matter of religion arrives. Narayan satirizes the corruption of the sadhus through irony. Sainthood is reduced to a matter merely of external appearance when Raju thinks to compose his feature for his professional role and smooths out his beard and hair, and sits down in the seat with a book in his hand.

"He was hypnotized by his own voice; he felt himself growing in stature as he saw the upturned faces of the children shinning in the half light when he spoke. No one was more impressed with the grandeur of the whole thing than Raju himself".

Narayan criticizes sharply when Raju relates some principal of living with a particular variety of delicious food and he mentions it with an air of seriousness, so that his listeners take it as a spiritual need. Narayan had all respect for Gandhi and Gandhism but the Gandhi and use of fasting for self-purification is also satirized when a fraud is shown as being compelled to undertake a fast to bring down the rains. Narayan has full command over verbal irony for example Velan says to Raju, 'your presence is similar to that of Mahatma Gandhi. He has left a disciple in you to save us'. Raju, the protagonist, is a victim of the irony of life. His life which moves from birth to death, symbolizes the rise and fall of man in life. Though Raju detests Marco, the scholar ironically, he teaches others all his life. Raju is trusted by Marco, but ironically Raju seduces his wife. He hides Marco's book to keep his control over Rosie, but this act of deception ironically alternates her. He forges Rosie's signature, for greed and to keep her away from Marco, but instead he loses her, instead of a box of jewelry, a warrant for his arrest arrives. His attempt to hide Marco's generosity ironically exposes his deceit, and Rosie loses her respect for him. Ironically Marco, the scholar who studies "dead things" and is unaware of his surroundings, ends in out-witting Raju, the clever guide. Raju's pride over his role in Rosie's success ironically replaces by the realization that she is capable of even great success without him. Thus, he is a victim of irony at every step.

After his release from prison he wants a life of solitude but ironically he becomes a fake swami, he is surrounded by people and greatness is thrust upon him. They believe that a superior soul has come to live near their village. In order to appear wise, he tells the story of a man who fasted for twelve days to appease the gods. Ironically, he too has to have to fast to propitiate the rain-god. His own story rebounds on him and the fake swami has to fast to keep up the faith of the people. Once again, he is the victim of the irony when he tells Velan's half brother that he will not eat till they stop fighting. His aim is to get food, but ironically the message is distorted and the villagers come without food. It is ironical that his desire for food results in him fasting for life. In a desperate bid to save his life, he confesses to Velan in the hope that he will condemn him and give him food, but ironically Velan pardons him as the frank confession confirms Velan's belief in his goodness. Thus, the man who becomes a fake swami because of food becomes a true swami, once he renounces food.

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Thus Raju faces the unexpectations at every stage. At every stage, he gets what he rejects; he is denied what he wants.

Narayan satirizes the thing through irony. In this novel he refers to lawyers-five year plan, red-tapism, postal services, efforts to eradicate mosquitoes etc, all expose the irony of life. The reaction of the government to Raju's fast is ironical, while special arrangement are made for the fasting swami and the pilgrims who throng to see Raju but nothing is done to help the drought effected villagers. The ignorant villagers, the government and the elite are also satirized as they affirm their belief in fake sadhus. Equally ironical is the interview of the American journalist. The final lines of the book, as Raju steps into the water for the last time, are both ambiguous and hopeful, and the complexity is once again achieved through the use of irony: Raju opened his eyes, looked about, and said, "Velan, it's raining in the hill. I can feel I coming up under my feet, up my legs,....He sagged down. It may simply be an illusion because of his physical weakness. Narayan very aptly exposes and ridicules human follies and weakness through irony. His irony arises from the bringing together the opposites and contrasting them.

Narayan's comic vision is ironical. His all embracing irony which includes the particular social context in his men and women who have their various transactions and the existential reality based on their particular experiences. The clash between the tradition and modernity in which Narayan's characters are sandwiched has ironical implications. In his novels modernity is a rash and impulsive force that disturbs the peaceful equilibrium of traditional life. The characters in the midst of this conflict emerge as comic and grotesque figures. He is "a pioneer in the tradition of ironic realism in Indo-Anglian fiction. In his novels, irony is not only ingrained in occasional episodes of the narrative, but is a built in phenomenon in plot, character and style." The basic comic situation in Narayan's novels is one of deviation from the normal and in the plots of his novels he follows the usual pattern of irony—order, disorder, order. The Bachelor of Arts presents a moment from the innocence of childhood to the recklessness and romanticism of youth. Chandran, the protagonist, sways between the innocence of the child and maturity of the adult.

A student of history and later the first secretary of History Association, Chandran suggests: "Historians should be slaughtered first" as the topic for the College Union Debate. This is highly ironical and suggests the shape of things to come. Chandran, a first rated lover, renounces the world in sheer disgust and becomes a sanyasi and then returns to the conventional family fold and leads the life of a devoted husband. The Bachelor of Arts first struck the significant note of ironic comedy in the character of Chandran, and with each successive novel it became an integral element in Narayan's comic fictional art. Narayan straightaway takes his readers to the hustle bustle of the college where his hero, Chandran is doing his final year B.A. in History. Characteristically enough, the novel opens in a humorous note with Natesan, the Secretary of the College Union asking Chandran to be the Prime Mover for the debate the following evening and move the topic that the historians should be slaughtered first. Chandran being a student of history is in a fit to move a topic debunking historians and earn the displeasure of his history professor, Ragavachar.

But Natesan, the Secretary assures him that he will not invite his professor. Chandran goes to the college Library but finds volumes and volumes of history but nothing

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concerned with slaughtering the historians. In his worry to prepare for the topic, he does not even pay attention to his lecture classes. Finally, he manages to muster some points and a humorous anecdote as footage for his speech. His speech is received very well. Even Principal Brown is said to have enjoyed his speech. At the end, the House with a majority of votes decides in favor of the proposal and Chandran feels quiet happy at the outcome. In *The Man Eater of Malgudi* the 'puranic' mythical pattern is suggestively used. It has ironical implications. Even the demonic character of Vasu, the taxidermist is noticeable for an element of the comical and the grotesque. Narayan's irony is free from the satiric spirit of condemnation and censure. His ironic vision is closer in spirit to Chaucer, Shakespeare and Dickens than to Voltaire, Swift or Thackeray. Narayan's closeness to Chekhov is striking—the same objectivity, the same freedom from comment, the same intricate alliance of humour with tragedy—the comic irony with age, as Greene puts it—and the same seeming indirection even with which the characters, on the last page, appear to vanish into life. Narayan's light vivid style with sense of time passing, of the unrealized beauty of human relationship so often recalls Chekhov's. Commenting on Narayan's irony and humour Jacqueline Austin observes: Narayan may share Faulkner's taste for the grotesque, but he keeps his reader's smiling—his grotesqueries are more folklorish than nightmarish. Vasu, Daisy, even Raju, the cuckold turned Guru (in *The Guide*) are all like Faulkner's people, creatures tricked by fate to become their fundamental selves—but their tragic flaws evoke a compassion of laughter, not a shiver of horror. Malgudi melodramas may share some motivating factors with those of Yoknapatawpha country, but the sensibility in charge is a far less tortured one. Endowed with a humanistic vision, Narayan observes the follies and eccentricities, the revolts and retreats of the people of Malgudi. The Malgudi folk cherish their favorite illusions but in course of time their cherished dreams and desires shatter; their deviations from tradition and society disappear. Finally the victory of traditions and society is assured.

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