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## Fusion Of Mythology In 'Man Eater Of Malgudi' By R.K.Narayan

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**Abstract---**R.K Narayan was a celebrated Indian writer with a considerable talent. He along with, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao has been precursors in Indian English Writing. He has set his works in the fictitious town Malgudi. He has been a master in mixing facts with myths, mythologies and fables. He has been acclaimed for his simple and modest writing style. Through his writing, he lets the readers peep into Indian culture, religion and mythology, and code of conduct. His subject matter is always based on the myths, the legends, the incidents from the Veda, the Puranas and the Upanishads etc.

Narayan does not preach philosophy in an abstruse way. He has written about the world he knows and he has lived in. He drew from his own experience and that is what makes his novels so convincing. His novels are depiction of felt experience of life. He is a poor artist uninvolved, uncommitted, and uncontroversial. His only commitment is to art rather than any ideology and dogma. His fiction is fact. His contribution to Indian English Literature is purely indigenous.

R. K. Narayan has given a profound message in Man Eater of Malgudi by blending the myths, the mythologies and the puranas. In it, there has been a conflict between virtue and vice. Man eater means troubling the men not eating them. I have tried to explore a conflict between good and evil and their mythological relevance in this paper. We find that the size of the evil and vice may be enormous but it is a diminutive figure before goodness and uprightness. At last goodness comes out victorious.

**KeyWords:** Diminutive, Repository, Fountainhead, Condescending, Highhandedness, Regimented, Verisimilitude, Clamorous.

**INTRODUCTION-** In the age of ultra- modernity, the word myth, shastra, puranas and mythology seem quite obsolete and unbelievable. With the advancement of science and technology, we don't prefer to listen mythical and mythological tales. The epics like the Ramayana, the Mahabharat, the Puranas, and the Shastras have been the fountainhead of Indian culture and civilization. These are the repositories of human values, sermons, preaches, ideals, and principles. The myths and mythology legends have given a profound meaning and direction to the human race. Their undying relevance makes the human life worth living. Indian society is replete with myth making heritage. The myth and legendary tales are the internal part of folk culture. The mythological stories and their message are deeply reflected in Indian literature. T.D. Burton points out—

"Mr. Narayan is a brilliantly subtle comedian. His typical art is an original compound of fantasy and realism."<sup>1</sup>

In Man Eater of Malgudi, the novelist has chosen a universal theme- good and evil or vice and virtue. I have tried to explore in this paper that how good or virtue emerges out victorious in one's life. The Market Road is the epic centre of the novel. The plot of the novel revolves around the life of central character named Natraj. He lives in a substantial house in Malgudi with his wife ( Deepa) and single child ( Babu). He leads a contented life. As he himself says-

"Actually, I am not a landlord and don't want to be one."2

He runs a Printing Press. He is a god-fearing man. Natraj's trouble is that he can't say "No" to anyone. His helping nature disturbs his own life. He treats Vasu (Taxidermist), a stranger and accommodates him a room in his Printing Press. In no time Vasu, a tenant becomes the owner of the room.

Vasu (devil) is amoral by nature. He is devoid of any sense of gratitude and sympathy. He wants to earn enormous wealth and status. He leads a zigzag life to achieve his nefarious goal. He kills his own guru Sulemaan to fulfill his aim. He is always in search of getting rich and powerful technique. Where ever he goes, he creates havoc with his demonic attributes. He exploits everyone whosoever comes in his way. Vasu does not regard the sanctity of old values, the Puranas, the Shastras, and the mythological legends. He is a condescending man. The journalist, the poet, Natraj's solo employee Shastri and the neighbours are fed up with Vasu's highhandedness. The novelist has depicted Shastri as a balanced character. He does not mince his words to say his points. He is a workaholic and regimented person. Even his employer Natraj has no authority to say Shastri. Natraj knows him very well. Since very beginning he does not like Vasu for his crooked and immoral ways. His frequent coming and going at Printing Press disturbs his work. He says--

"Every rakshasa gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond any law. But sooner or later something or the other will destroy him."3

R.K. Narayan is a master in using the allusions of myths, mythologies, puranas and epics in his novels. He knows that the values of life preached in our scriptures are still relevant to human life. Their references support us to lead a peaceful and meaningful life. Their profound meaning and lesson neither age nor die. The myths, the mythologies, the epics, the shastras have undying relevance even today. The novelist has expressed some mythological references in Man Eater of Malgudi. Man eater means troubling the man, not eating them. Man eater is a man not a tiger. He troubles others by his immoral and illegal ways. The novelist has presented two contrast characters Natraj (good) and Vasu (evil). Natraj is a considerate and unassuming fellow. He is good at heart. He is totally ignorant about Vasu's shrewdness. He is a law-abiding man. But his accommodating nature brings ruins in his life. He feels guilty having done no wrong. With the arrival of antagonist (Vasu) Natraj is beset with difficulties and apprehensions. His attic turns into Aladdin's cave.

The novelist penetrates in Indian society to depict life like characters embedded in religion, myths and mythologies. The events narrated are as if they were the occurrences of real life. The Man Eater of Malgudi is a unique mixture of myth and reality. It is a veritable verisimilitude of Indian myths, fables and puranas. The novel is modelled on the Bhasmasura myth. Vasu has been compared with Bhasmasura. Being a tenant in Natraj's printing press, he meddles in every one's affairs. Although he is post graduate in two subjects, but he has no manner or etiquette. Vasu has an insatiable appetite for killing the both- human beings and creatures. Now he plans to kill Kumar, the village elephant. But the very next day, he is found dead. His death brings ruins in Natraj's life. His printing press becomes a place of investigation and interrogation. His usual friends avoid coming to press. Vasu's death tarnishes his reputation. Even his wife Deepa points out-

"You may close the mouth of an oven, but how can you close the mouth of a town."4

It is Rangi, Vasu's mistress who reveals the mystery of his death. She tells them that no one has killed Vasu but he himself. While trying to kill a mosquito settled on his head, he banged it with his full might and he killed himself. Vasu is a modern Bhasmasura with his immoral, unethical and illegal ways. He had kept aside all the customs, old values, teachings of Shastras and Puranas to gain his nefarious goal. Both met their ends by the strange powers of their hands. Shastri points out-

"Then there was Bhasmasura who acquired a special boon that everything he touched scorched...He made the humanity suffer. God Vishnu was incarnated as a dancer of great beauty, named Mohini with the asura became infatuated...was reduced to ashes that very second."5

The mythology, the myth, the shastras and the puranas are the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of a community's cultural life. They are like the light house to show the righteous path the generations to come. R. K. Narayan weaves his themes around Hindu myths and mythologies. He very brilliantly expresses his moral point of view by adding mythology with the theme. The novelist himself points out-

" I came across a theme which struck me as an excellent piece of mythology in modern dress. It was published under the title The Man-Eater of Malgudi. I based the story on a well known mythical episode the story of Mohini and Bhasmasura."5

In Man Eater of Malgudi, there has been a conflict between vice and virtue. In the end, virtue is rewarded and vice is punished. The novelist has shown that good and evil can not go parallel. Evil has a short time. The evil is always destructive and self-destructive also. The evil doer, Vasu, wants to cross all the rungs of the ladder very quickly but ultimately falls himself. Shastri points out-

"Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, that goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity."7

R. K. Narayan generally uses Hindu mythology to impart the pronounced meaning to the readers. He always proves his point by the time-tested myths, fables, puranas and shastras. Neither can they be ignored nor challenged as they are deeply embedded in Indian culture. Malgudi is not only a fictitious town but it possesses its own code of conduct. It is a microcosm of Indian culture, rituals and rites. The town has its own invisible chain of sacrament and discipline. Whosoever tries to cross these things, meets his untimely end. Vasu had become a conundrum for Malgudi for his unethical and immoral ways. He perpetually creates an ambience of fear in the town. He brings calamity in a peaceful town Malgudi by his corrupt ways. The people of Malgudi complained for this to Natraj. But Vasu didn't listen to them. Shastri points out-

"Ravana in the Ramayana, who had ten heads and twenty arms, enormous yogic and physical power and a boon from the God that he could never be vanquished...still he came to a sad end."8

Indian myths, mythologies, fables, puranas and ideals have prescribed an upright path to lead a harmonious and peaceful life. The ancient values accumulated in our heritage are accepted even today and will be acceptable in the future also. They have been a perennial source of inspiration to lead a meaningful and happy life. The Man-Eater of Malgudi conveys a crystal clear message to humanity regarding evil. The evil has a short validity. It expires very soon. The higher he (evil-doer) flies, the sooner he finds himself nowhere.

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