



ANIMAL WORLD AS PAINTED BY R. K. NARAYAN

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ABSTRACT

Biologically man himself is an animal, if we overlook the improved, polished and developed vocal faculty he has painstakingly acquired in the course of his evolution and his praiseworthy burning and thirsty mental qualities which he very cleverly has used to call himself civilized human. He calls the other lives on the planet as grocer animals, which very thinly differs in kind from the human beings. Man has never ceased to be an integral part of the surroundings he lives in. This is especially true to the enchanting animal world which encompasses the whole existence of humans. Animals are an inseparable part of human life and imagination. He has been made to live here with this world of animals and share the bounties of life. The presence of the animals in human mind and thought reflects itself in arts, culture, religion, literature, science etc. which is an example of indelible impact of animal kingdom upon human life and psyche. Literature in particular is a treasure house of the bond between humans and animals. Indian English Literature is rapt with direct and indirect references to the animal world. From the writings of Jim Corbett's 'Man Eaters of Kumaon', 'Jungle Lore' Rudyard Kipling's 'The Jungle Book', and Valmiki Thapar's writings like 'Wild Fire' etc. are an apparent example. These books and writings are devoted to animal world solely. Being an inherent part of the whole existence animals have been partners and friends of the Homo sapiens. Here in this piece of an article we will sincerely try to discover the physical and psychological impact and impression of animal world in the writings of R.K. Narayan In literature animals are represented as different and inferior to the human beings or the Homo sapiens. Dealing with the representation of animals in literary text is broadly termed as Zoo criticism, a branch of Ecocriticism. The term Ecocriticism implies the close study of the environment concerns in literature and the way literature treats the subject of environment. Zoocriticism brings before readers the novel and not seen before images of the animal world.

INTRODUCTION:

R.K. Narayan is chiefly known for his characters and their day to day lives like swami and his friends. He pictures day to day life in a brilliant way. His novel 'The Guide' has been



adapted for film. He created the town of Malgudi in his first novel 'Swami and Friends' which was telecasted on T.V. R.K. Narayan had a fascination for animals since his childhood. He was in the company of a peacock and a monkey when he had to put at his grand mother's, due to the transfer of his father's job. This flavour reflected in his creative writings, especially in 'A Tiger for Malgudi' a novel devoted fully to the story of a tiger. His other works in a way express his deep concern with the animal world. He has rarely been completely away from describing some sort animal story in his works. Probably his conscious always compared the difference between the humans and the animals. We have tried to portray the images of R. K. Narayan's animals in Indian context of the term. Narayan being the man of the soil was rarely away from Indian scenes. India has always preserved religious attitude towards animals. Though there has been cruelty to animals for livelihood and entertainment. Some animals and birds are also considered as bad omens. But we find animals being worshipped and adored like Gods in Indian culture and tradition. R. K. Narayan, being an Indian, had all these impressions and portrayed animal world with sympathy, love and kindness.

His novel 'A Tiger for Malgudi' is the story of a tiger told in the first person by the tiger itself. The tiger in the novel leads a life of rashness till he meets his master and is transformed completely and takes a course of peaceful and serene life. The tiger himself narrates the story of his life full of adventures facing ups and down like the lives of human beings. He had a family and lived peacefully, but had to loose his litter due to human interference. He then revenges upon by attacking the livestock of the humans. But one day he is caught and brought to a circus where he is tortured by the captain, the trainer, whom the tiger mauls and takes refuge in a building. Here he meets his master, who rescues him and takes him to the jungle. In the company of his master he experiences spiritual transformation and leads a life of serenity and peace. Doesn't it sound human? R. K. Narayan has taken the tiger to the level of human beings who understands his master's language. He has granted the same rights to animals as human beings. The tiger has acquired spirituality and has shed his beastly nature because of penance and repentance. After the death of his master he is brought to the zoo, where he awaits his own last moment paying tributes to his master.

The tiger's story reminds us of the spiritual transformation of Raju in 'The Guide'. 'The Guide' features no animals in particular. But we see Rosie wishes to see a king cobra for which Raju makes arrangements. Besides we have scanty reference to various animals in 'The Guide', this occurs when Raju and Rosie spend time in jungle. The reference to names of animals in 'The Guide' is in mode to show the negative traits of humans. Raju uses names of snakes to detail Marco's nature. 'The Man-eater of Malgudi' is a novel by R. K. Narayan which depicts the story of animal poaching and stuffing by the antagonist Vasu. Though it does not portray the lives of animals but it describes the ugly picture of animal skin trafficking and tells about their destiny. We have the temple elephant calf named Kumar whom the antagonist 'Vasu' intends to kill also. Kumar the elephant calf is nurtured and



protected by human as a member of the family. There is no real man-eater as the title suggests but a human character 'Vasu'- the villain is depicted as man-eater. Vasu goes on unrestrained hunting but by mistake kills himself. R.K. Narayan reminds us of Bhamasur myth in Shiv Puran – the story of self destruction by not following the ways of the all powerful Nature. The misdeeds of Vasu are leveled eventually. The eternal clash between the Man and the Nature is conspicuous.

'Naga' is a short story by Narayan which depicts the story of life of snake charmers. It signifies the permanent bond between man and animal. The father and his son in the story go on with their lives and daily business of snake charming. By luck, they find a monkey and train him, who increases their income. The boy is much attached to the monkey. One day the father runs away with a woman taking the monkey with him. The son is left alone in the company of the snake and continues his business in the absence of his father. The bond between them improves due to fact of same fate. As time passes the snake loses its charm and the boy thinks of some alternate business or work. He then decides to leaves the snake in the forest, which is not ready to come out of the basket. The boy returns home after leaving the snake but he sees a kite which might prey on the snake. The boy finally brings back the snake with him. R.K Narayan has contrasted the boy's behaviors with that of his father. The boy does not desert the snake like his father, who forsook his son for a woman. The story 'The Blind Dog' shows us the co-existence of human beings and animals in a mutual understanding and peaceful manner. The dog in the story becomes the guide and protector of the blind beggar even though the beggar mistreats the dog several times. This is typical thankless attitude of human beings towards animals. The dog shows qualities like honesty and faithfulness, which are rare in human society. R.K Narayan brings out the selfish nature of human beings. He stresses the human qualities which animals have and the human lack.

Furthermore 'The Tiger's Claws' as the title signifies has nothing to do with the animals in particular but presents the tale of an agent of Fertilizer Company, a talkative man who narrates his encounter with the tiger and how he cut the three claws of the tiger. His narration though doubtful, looks convincing. He narrates the story when the said tiger was killed by another man and its dead body was being paraded among the crowd. 'A Horse and Two Goats' is a short story of a poor man Muni, who one day takes his two goats for grazing and sits under the shade of a life- sized statue of a warrior on a horse. There an American approaches and wishes to buy the statue considering Muni its owner and pays hundred rupees to Muni who thinks he has sold his two goats to the American. While the American thinks that he has paid for the horse. The confusion arises due to the fact that the two men speaking in separate languages, neither understanding the other. Muni is surprised to see his goats find their way home. The story does not have animals as central figures but the title of the story suggests a lot about the role of animals in human life.



To sum up, animals are our fellow being and need our attention and care. Man being the head has the responsibilities to look after his fellow being with love, care and sympathy. R.K. Narayan has sympathetic feelings for animals and stresses the need for human kindness towards animals. He has painted them in his creative works at par with human being. Man has no right to exploit and torture them. Animals have the same right of existence on this planet.

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