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**Tiger as Symbol of Innocence and Unalloyed Simplicity of Indian Culture in R. K. Narayan's *A Tiger for Malgudi***

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**Abstract**

R.K. Narayan's fictitious tale *A Tiger for Malgudi* is the description of a tiger told in the first person by the tiger himself. The tiger leads a life of thoughtlessness till he comes in contact with his master and is changed completely and takes a course of peaceful life. The tiger himself narrates the incidents of his life like the lives of human beings. He lived peacefully but had to lose his debris due to human intervention. He then revenges upon by striking the livestock of the humans. But one day he is gripped and brought to a circus where he is ill-treated by the trainer whom the tiger attacks and takes shelter in a building. Here he meets his master who rescues him and takes him to the forest. Under the guidance of his master he feels spiritual change and leads a conscious existence of peace. It sounds human. The novelist has granted the same rights to animals as human being. He has taken the tiger to the heights of human being who understands his master's language. The tiger has achieved spirituality and shed his beastly natures because of penance. After the demise of his master he is brought to the zoo where he awaits his own final moment paying tributes to his master.

**Keywords:** Tiger, Human, Social Systems, Emotional Connections, Animal World.

Narayan was deeply influenced by the environmental imbalance. In *A Tiger for Malgudi*, he shows the importance of human animal affinity in the modern world where the modernized commercialization of the Indian economy is influencing the fiber of present India society with rapid altering opinions. Narayan narrates the autobiography of an enlightened tiger- Raja who talks like the animals in the Panchatantra. The introduction to the novel *A Tiger for Malgudi* shows the theme of the novel which is based on the actual episode of the Kumbh Mela festival where:

.....amidst that ocean of humanity also arrives a hermit with his

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companion, a tiger. He does not hold the animal on a leash since he claims they were brothers in previous lives. The tiger freely moves about without hunting or scaring alone.

(Narayan 7)

This absorbing event shows Narayan's artistic quality where animals behave as human being:

.....the other creatures may also possess ego, values, outlook and the ability to communicate though they may be incapable of audible speech.

(Narayan 8)

*A Tiger for Malgudi* was first published in Great Britain in 1983 by William Heinemann Ltd. London. Raja, the tiger tells his own tale from cubhood and wild-life in the forest and later life in confinement as a circus star. The spiritual awareness of Raja, with a soul under the guidance of a saint further proves Narayan's reliability as an author of Indian sensibility. The appealing tale of Raja is laced with sympathy, emotion, penitence, amusement and a great reminiscence of conscious existence.

*A Tiger for Malgudi* shows:

The harmony that is possible and the self-awareness that could be visualized when the human and animal words once viewed as a simultaneous order.

(Rajendra Prasad 100)

Raja, the tiger freely shares his element of honesty without concealing any fact of his wild-days. Narayan celebrates the best quality of Hindu culture, based upon the unmatched principle- the world as one family. Raja tells his past life as a cub living with its mother in a cave in the jungle of Mempi Range. His mother leaves Raja to fend for himself. The realization of his power culminates in his authority over the animal kingdom and he accepts the place of the Superman Lord of the Jungle. He became the husband of wild tigress and fathered four cubs. But the tigress with her four cubs into human occupation proves lethal and they all turn plain prey to the bullets of the poachers. The uncommon intervention of men into the wild-life and the intense passion for avengement for the vicious murder of his family, excited Raja to come out of the Mempi forest and attack on people of the village and their pet animals. The Government machinery fails to rectify peoples' difficulty about the wild tiger. But the captain, the master of the Grand Malgudi circus caught Raja to subdue and trained to use his presentation for his circus. Gradually Raja resigns himself to his luck in the circus until Master utilizes the mental gadget to satiate the caprice of the snobbish film director, Madan. The tiger fails to determine his mood and kills the

Master accidentally. After protecting his emancipation from cage-life of circus, the Tiger moves into streets of Malgudi and eventually rests in the office of the school headmaster. The terrified people seek the assistance of the hunter Alphonse to shoot Raja with his double-barrel gun:

....but an ascetic who appears on the scene protects and adopts it as a companion.

(Narayan 8)

He takes it under his soporific spell. The resistance of Raja is trained spiritually and rendered assistless. The tiger obeys his new ascetic Master to Mempo Hills to mature life in the spiritual discussions on the instructions of the Bhagavad Gita. With the passing of days they are away from each other. The saint now; feels that the time has come to get his samadhi, so he determines to hand over the tiger to the care of Zoo, so that it may lead its conscious existence without any attack from hunter or other animals. Their emotional separation ends with an optimistic note to encounter again in the next life. Thus the theme of *A Tiger for Malgudi* explores the enlightenment of the tiger from a man-eater to a vegetarian. The novel narrates the tale of tiger presenting four stages (asramas of) conscious existence- brahmcharya (bachelor), grahasthya (householder), Vanaprasthya (detached life) and Sanyasa (renunciation), Tiger passed through all the stages and got the perfect spiritual individuality in selfless soul equal to his owner. The novel has been presented with a theme of Hindu ethos befitted to the entertainment of the Malgudi men. Narayan brings the tiger to Malgudi and evaluates the Hindu Culture in the view of its connection to animals- Raja and saint union is popular saying of Panchtantra which aims at revealing the world in one family Raja is provided the title *A Tiger for Malgudi* and not *A Tiger of Malgudi* because Narayan sent it from Allahabad.

The confluence of three rivers Ganga Yamuna and Saraswati.

(Narayan 7)

Narayan has shown the unfilled human mentalities which thinks themselves as the uncrowned owner of all things in this world. Because of such thought they behave menacingly without having the least knowledge about the problems of others. In *A Tiger for Malgudi* Narayan talks about many serious problems but the problems of human imposed dread that reigns extremely upon the animal world has been highlighted artistically. The fast development, the violent nature man has changed the established idea of humans as civilized and non-violent in comparison with the ferocious nature of the animals. Hence the ascetic and researchers have always shunned violence thinking it unimportant presentation of

muscle-power over the assistless people. Humanized concept of Narayan is clear in his same dealing for the soul of the animals along with the human souls. So, he strictly raises his idea about the continuity of animal's right to survive with freedom and respect as their ancestral habitats were aimed by the illegal deforestation. The writer explores the actual aspects of this horrible trouble in the story where the tiger, the representative of the tortured animals narrates autobiographically his life-incidents. His treatment of animal allegory stands for his aim to highlight through the story of Raja possessed with the soul of conscious human being .

Raja, the tiger says about himself:

You are not likely to understand that I am different from the tiger next door, that I posses a soul within this forbidding exterior. I can think, analyze, judge, remember and do everything that you do, perhaps with greater subtlety and sense. I lack only the faculty of speed.

(Narayan 11-12)

The ascetic in the tale constantly rebukes the people for humiliating the tiger by labeling it a beast:

Never use the words beast or brute. They are ugly words coined by man is his arrogance. The human being thinks all other creatures are 'beast'; awful word.

(Narayan 118)

Narayan rejects all sorts of violence against all animals of nature as they celebrate same feelings irrespective of their species. The man's prejudice towards the creatures as the violent beasts who lacks the mixed feelings, was challenged by him through his central figure- Raja, the tiger:

We the denizens of the jungle can communicate, without words exactly as human beings do- we are capable of expressing to each other sympathy, warming abuse, irony, insult, love and hated exactly in the manner of human beings, but only when necessary unlike human beings who talk all their waking hours, and even in sleep.

(Narayan 14)

The peaceful conscious existence of wild animals is at risk due to illegal poaching which is carried out by the men to satiate their ferocious nature under the wrong image of their courage and the extra requirement of animals for modern snobbery of stuffed creature trophies and for amusement aim either in film industry or in circus. Narayan highlights the ugly side of modern culture of hatredness through the actuality display of the decaying of fauna and flower of the improving country due to hunting and industrialism. To dislodge the assistless wild animals from their ancestral living place

is the example of the full destruction of the mutual understanding idea between men and animals. In the name the killing the man-eater, the helpless creatures were targeted without any discernment of sympathy. The cruelties on the creatures can never be justified under any situations as it increases the cause of violence which turns man into an animal in the form of human. The entire family of Raja his spouse and four cubs were wiped out from this universe due to the poachers' inhuman act of violence. The tiger passed through a period of mental disturbance when he accepted the man's presence in the wild-society:

I cried in anguish and desperation – but silenced myself and crouched unobtrusively when I noticed for off in the valley down below a line of men passing, pulling and pushing an open-cart on which was laid out the cubs and their mother. The men were singing and shouting vociferously, and did not hear my cry, I had through till now that our jungle home was impregnable and unapproachable for human beings.

(Narayan 23)

The Hunters killed his family and Raja is mad for vengeance:

The sight of my family stitched out there filled me with fury. In those day I was still a tiger, an unmitigated animal, and the only feeling that was roused in me was fury rather than grief which I understand now. A blind, impossible anger stirred within me: I just wanted to dash up pounce upon very creature, bite and claw and destroy. I wanted to spring forward, pick up the cubs and carry them away.

(Narayan 24)

Narayan's picture about the actuality of cruelties of human upon the wild creatures further shown when Raja was encircled by the angry people of village. They attacked him to revenge the killings of their dead animals. The frenzy temperament of men was so dangerous that Raja, the violent tiger himself choked the approaching demise in the disguise of men.

The writer gives the clear instruction for the entire human race that taming of creatures would seal his own luck. There is divine contact between the men and animals with close reference to mythological culture of India. All creatures and nature are simply at her disposal. Lyn white says:

By gradual stages a loving and all powerful God had created light and darkness...the heavenly bodies, the earth and its plants, animals, birds and fishes. Finally God had created Adam and, as an afterthought. Eve to keep man from being lonely...And although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature he is made in God's image.

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(White 9)

R.K. Narayan is often called "a small town ironist".

(Naik 65)

Narayan presents it as fantasy. But it is a fantasy of a separate system. C.N. Marlove gives between the two types of a fantasy thus:

Two broad classes of fantasy may be distinguished: 'comic' or 'escapist' and imaginative fantasy. The line of division is simple enough: It is between fancy versus imagination, where 'fanciful' works are those carrying either no deeper meaning or one lacking in vitality.

(Marlove 11)

The tiger's flight from Ginger field after killing the Captain to his receiving shelter in the office room of the school headmaster is presented in forty pages. Patnaik correctly describes:

The allotment of this long textual space to one day's story time is made with the aim at showing the tiger's gradual change from a ferocious, violent animal to a being with a feeling of change coming over to him.

(Patnaik 104)

Narayan himself confesses that he has deliberately created the tiger his main character for man in his smugness never realizes that other living animal may also possess like himself.

#### Conclusion

To conclude animals too need our care. It is Man's duty to look after his fellow being with affection and care. Narayan presents sympathy for animals and stresses the requirement for human love towards animals. He has delineated them in his creative writings at par with man who has no authoritative position to harass them. Animals have the equal right of existence in human society.

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