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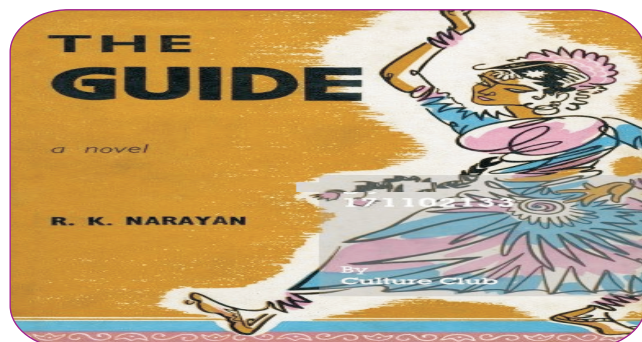
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THE THEME AND NOTION OF REVOLTER IN NARAYAN'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT :

One of the meanings of the word rebellion in the Oxford English dictionary is "Open or determined defence of, or resistance to, any authority or controlling power". As a natural man tendency, it seems to have its roots in the story of "Man's first Disobedience". Satan in the guise of the talking serpent seemed to have instilled the essence of rebellion into Eve's conscientiousness'. But apart from its Biblical roots, the idea behind the forbidden fruit has a universal appeal. The Narayan characters are realized through a preordained conceived world, have an acute Karma-consciousness and imbibe the pervading spirit of the cultural tradition. Rebellion against the accepted norms of their tradition appears meaningless. In fact, rebellion as such in the world of Narayan's novel is regarded more of a deviation than defiance. It is here that Narayan's presentation of his typical rebels may be considered as an interesting study of rebellion suggesting socio-psycho cultural implications. Swami in *Swami and friends*, though stands obviously as clear illustration of innocence, he is viewed as the eternal rebel. One is aware of the

innocent nature of his rebellion and therefore, he may in fact be conceived as the innocent rebel. And despite an extremely flimsy nature of his rebellion, he deserves consideration, because Swami is Narayan's first potential rebel.

KEYWORDS : Tendency, Consciousness, Rebellion, Illustration, Innocence, Flimsy.

NARRATION

He seems to have been realized through the novelist's dual perception of rebellion; rebellion as Swami's natural and instinctive trait and rebellion, in its symbolic connotation, born out Swami's illusive understanding of life. Putting it differently, although Swami displays certain revolting or defying, tendencies, in their mild realization perhaps, his rebellion in its entirety is taken as a deviation from the accepted norms.

Interestingly, Narayan's first protagonist, presenting himself as a typical rebel seems to be installing the rebels in the later Narayan's novels. Swami, the ordinary and average school boy with his instinct to play the rebel, finds himself inadequately equipped, having no guts worth the name, to translate it into action. His potential urge is paralyzed, every time, by his dominant cowardice in the face of challenge. It is not the middle class psychology of the boy that nullifies his desire to reach the fruit nor can he snap the ropes of the codes. But ultimately, even the innocent Swami has his day as he finds himself playing the biggest rebel of his life. But rebellion at what cost? This seems to be a million dollar question in Narayan Malgudi. It is here that several implications emerge out of Swami's rebellion.

To understand the nature of Swami's rebellion is, perhaps, to telescope the rebellious influences on him. Mani, the young hero's alter-ego and who, in fact, moves like his shadow, remains one lasting influence on Swami. Swamina5than cannot remain unaffected in the company of Mani who seems to be epitomizing and exuding rebellious tendencies. As a matter of fact the sensitive and impressionistic Swami comes to hero-worship Mani and keeps feeding his own fancy on the latter's heroic deeds.

He lands as the tempestual whirl wind in the quiet life of Swami's cowardice. Thus, Mani and Rajam seem to succeed in instilling the windy spirit into the young hero. Some instances may be underlined to telescope Swami's action; we may recall Swami as he finds himself in the company of the patriotic crowd on the day of the Hartal carried away by the mob psychology, he refuses to enter into the school, despite the Headmaster's repeated appeals to get back the classes. Instead, he executes his first real defiance thus; "He uttered a sharp cry of joy as he discovered a whole ventilator, consisting of small square glasses in the Headmaster's room, intact! He sent up a stone at it and waited with cocked up ears for the splintering noise, as the piece crashed on the floor. It was thrilling". The second act of Swami's rebellion in fact follows as the consequence of the first. As the Head master, determined to teach Swami a lesson for his devilry gives him six whacks of cane and orders him to stand on the desk, as acts fast. "He jumped down and grasping his books, rushed out muttering, "I don't care for your dirty school". His third and final act, however, becomes more pronounced. Standing fully exposed to the Head master of Board School for bunking drill practice, Swami sensing the imminent punishment, gets alerted' " He hardly knew what he was doing. His arm shot out, plucked the cane from the Head master's hand, and flung it out of the window".

As the rebel lands in the no man's land, the mempi forest, as he undergoes the painful journey and finally is brought back to home, almost from the death-trap, providentially perhaps, Narayan seems to have added a dimension to the popularly understood notion of the rebellion. The young hero's rebellion may be regarded as the novelist's strategy to project the world of Swami's illusions considered thus, Swami seems have been misled, thanks mainly to his inflated ego nourished by the tempting influences of Mani and Rajam, making him blind to the reality of his self and consequently living the world of illusion. The rebellion in Swami and friends may be viewed as Narayan's strategy to underline the theme of illusion versus reality. His concept of rebellion, therefore, maybe taken as the protagonist's deviation from the accepted reality to the undesirable world of illusion. The treatment of rebellion is realized through the cyclic pattern of the hero's development. It also suggests the theme of the return of the native and stresses the influence of the tradition as the protecting and sheltering spirit.

It may be essential to consider the nature of the Chandran's Malathi obsession because it is basically through his romantic love for Malathi that he emerges as a rebel. Chandran's love at first sight and his open declaration of it remain unheard of in the Malgudi locale, his educated and liberal father notwithstanding, Chandran's declaration of marrying the absolute stranger sends a shock-wave through his entire household obsessed with the girl and having reached the mad degree of love, Chandran is often caught fantasizing: " Could he not just dash into her household, hide in the passage, steal up to her bed at night, crush her in his arms, and carry her away"?

Chandran's departure to Madras may be regarded as a rebellion because, however natural may be the feeling and Psychology of the unrequited love, Chandran, and in the first place fails to understand the illusory nature of love. Chandran's final rebellion occurs in Madras. The hostile city was to present Chandran with the most horrifying face to reality. Accidentally, the Malgudi youth runs into the most shocking company of a drunkard, Kailas, who takes the former, of all the persons, to a prostitute: " This was the first time he had been so close a man in drink; this was the first time he had stood at the portal of a prostitute house. He was thoroughly terrified".

Eventually Chandan finds himself At Koopal village and there he plays the last rebel and a Sanyasi simultaneously. But the rebel could not play the holy man for long. Finally, he realizes the nature of his fake Sanyasa. The conscience-smitten man, knowing fully that the rustics took his appearance for reality, decides to stop the fraud. But ironically enough, the rustics obliged him to stay on. Finally, feeling that he was feeding himself on the poor community's life blood, Chandran determines to cast off the borrowed role. Eventually he throws away the suffocating robes of a Sanyasi and returns to the loving and caring fold of Malgudi.

As one considers the concept of rebellion in the Bachelor of Arts one realizes that, as in Swami and friends, here too, Narayan seems to employ the stragery of rebellion to deal with. The themes of illusion versus reality and to underline the philosophy of acceptance. Narayan presents the illusory aspect of life through Chandran's romantic love and his playing the Sanyasi role. As for the romantic love realized through Chandran's

obsession for Malathi, it may be pointed out that Narayan typically conventional notion of man-woman relationship does not entertain the idea of love before the marriage says the novelist: "We believe that marriages are made in heaven and a bride and groom meet, not by accident or desing, but by the decree of fate, fitness for a match may be gauged by letting them go through the period of courtship but by the study of their horoscopes; boy and girl meet and love after marriage than before".

As for Chandran's fake-Sanyasa, besides symbolizing the illusory concept of life it has deeper ironic overtones. The Sanyasa also becomes illusory because it involves the cheating of the innocent rustics and Chandran's own deception of his self. By playing a Sanyasi he wanted to take "a revenge on society, circumstances, and perhaps, too, on destiny". In Chandran's Narayan presents a typically conventional rebel. In other words, although he is conceived as a modern youth his smoking, his romantic love, beneath the veneer of modernity, the Malgudi lad stands traditional. The city of Madras appears hostile and his confrontation with Kailas and later with the prostitute sends a shocking current in him and the tradition nourished young man feels terrified.

The novel abounds with the instances underling such perceptions, one may recall hour the chastened Chandran's view his old flame in the context of his new goddess of love: "Sushila, Sushila, Sushila. Her name, music, figure, face and everything about her was diving. Sushila, Sushila- Malathi, not a spot beside Susila; it was a tongue twister; he wondered why people liked that name". Besides the apparent irony, what possibly seems to have been suggested is the nature of human attitude. Chandran, perhaps, would have reversed his judgement, had the girl's also reversed their role. Needless to say one feels amused at the innocent rebel's reaction. In terms of characterization, Chandran is often regarded as a flat character, who, despite the painful experience in his first love and his equally restless Sanyasa-interlude remains incorrigibly romantic. In fact Chandran seems to have decided to imbibe the spirit of reason and commonsense in life. The narrator put Chandran's resolution thus: "Chandran settled down to a life quiet and sobriety. He felt that his greatest striving ought to be for a life freed from distracting illusions and hysterics".

Chandran's resolution may suggest his awareness of the illusory nature of life. In fact the subtly suggested growth in Chandran may be taken as the guiding principle of all the Narayan protagonists. To understand the notion of rebellion is in fact to focus on each agent's nature of rebellion in the novel springs from the marital disharmony, Ramani as it major contributor, stands out. At the outset it may be essential to point out that since Ramani represents the male chauvinism established by tradition, he does not have to rebel as such. In other words, the rebellion may be taken as a deviation in the context of Ramani.

Ramani is primarily projected through his absolute dictatorship at home and the slavish treatment he gives to his wife. Significantly enough, on the first page of the novel tyrant is seen violently snubbing Savitri because she tries to defend her son against the will of the dictator. Ramani shouts at her saying "Go and do any work you like in the kitchen, but leave the training of the grown-up boy tome. It is none of a woman's business". Although Ramani rebellious deviation is realized through several situations, primarily it is projected in the context of his most scandalous affair with Shantabai. The affair has many serious implications. At the outset, it may be taken as Ramani's flouting of the sacred family codes to be faithful and honest to one's wife. It may also be interpreted as Ramani's violation of the time-honoured social norms, as he gets involved in an extra-marital affair.

In Ramani, Narayan presents a full-fledged deviant, an inborn rebel to be precise. When his father hjad advised him to continue his studies after matriculation, the egoist snubbed him with. "I know better, what I must do". He also boasts if tendering his resignation if the company dared to dishonor his decision. As for the affair, Ramani seems to have continued it, even after the disquieting interlude of Savitri's disappearance from home. In the context of his children, one may say that he is never realized as a loving father. Significantly, Narayan seems to have offered a silver lining to the otherwise darkish portrait of the tyrant. It is exemplified in his playing a loving husband rarely though, petting and finding Savitri. One also hears from mentioning his buying Savitri a six-sovereign necklace at the beginning of his career and his suffering when had labour pains. At times he plays a good daddy. Most importantly, he always insists on his near ones to eat more, lot more.

As Savitri's rebellion, the basic and overall image she projects vividly shows her as a person failed

miserably to play a convincingly fully fledged rebel. In other words the emphasis in considering Savitri's rebellion may be on how rather than why she cannot play the rebel. Significantly enough, if Narayan builds up the case of Ramani's total rebellion, he also carefully presents the story of Savitri's acceptance. Suffice it to recall some instances underlining Savitri's negative rebellion. Savitri, even after fifteen years of marriage and three children, remains the epitome of the second sex. Faced with the constant bullying and humiliation by her husband, she has been left with only one resort; to vent her anger and suffocation in the dark room. In the early part of the novel, snubbed by her husband, Savitri is seen sulking in the "dark room". The "dark room" becomes a metaphor in the novel symbolizing "an externalization of her mental condition created by the stuffy oppressiveness, which, women of the orthodox Indian middle-class are destined to endure.

As Savitri steps out with the intention of committing suicide, she appears more pathetic than determined and angry. Her mind, instead of dwelling on her husband's inhuman treatment towards her, dwells on Yama's cauldron, symbolizing punishment for disobeying the husband. And when she finds herself just a moment away from the act of suicide, Savitri cries: "no, no, I can't die. I must go back home". Savitri, with the formidable impact of the religious codes paralyzing her mind, presents herself as the feeblest creature in the context of her suicide. In fact, her failure to commit suicide seems to prepare us for her final retreat. Her attempt to earn the bread by the sweat of her brow and her staying out all by herself at the temple find feeble, finally as she comes back home, Savitri betrays the typical middle-class psychology. The narrator says, "And she grew home sick. Nostalgia for children, home and accustomed comforts seized her".

Thus Narayan's Savitri, although raising our expectations for a Nora-like confrontation and unequivocal rebellion, ends up in a tame reconciliation. One may read Narayan's ironic intention in naming his heroine Savitri as she appears just a puny figure before the legendary Savitri in the Mahabharata. She stands dwarfish in the company of Aurobindo's divinely conceived Savitri and Raja Rao's symbolically realized Savitri. Narayan's Savitri basically seems to project the Indian womanhood realized through the idealized roles of mothers and daughters in the male-dominated society. It may, however, be pointed out that through her sacrifice and suffering Savitri's seems to have stopped the house from the fall. Her traditionally realized feminists, but Savitri has the consent of those who value human concern, besides, of course, the whole Indian tradition.

As for Savitri's characterization, although in her tame withdrawal one may view her as a flat unchanging character, there seems to be a subtle growth in her consciousness: she no more rushes to welcome the lord of the house. Despite her painful realization that a part of her being is dead, Savitri has said No when Ramani wanted her. And a gesture is all that counts in Narayan.

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