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Figure of Speech in R.K.Narayan's *The Bachelor of Arts*: A Stylistic Approach

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Abstract:

This paper is intended to examine R. K. Narayan's use of stylistic linguistics as reflected in his selected novels. R.K. Narayan used pure and limpid English as well as stylistics, easy and natural in its run and tone. Narayan's use of stylistics was beautifully adapted to communicate a different and Indian sensibility. Narayan's language is extraordinary for its ornamental value, vividness and impact. He has tried to picturize the life of youth, through his protagonist Chandran, in *The Bachelor of Arts*, he has presented the problem of youth. He has presented the struggle for career, confusion, and complications of the youth after their deviation in life. The facts intended to be communicated are done in an effective way. The figures of speech such as similes, personifications, antithesis, and rhetorical questions used in *The Bachelor of Arts* elucidate vividly its various themes, characters, atmosphere and points of view.

Keywords: Simile, Metaphor, Personifications, Antithesis

Simile in *The Bachelor of Arts*

The similes used in the novel *The Bachelor of Arts* are very realistic and poetic. Narayan's characterization and their actions are presented in a very unique manner. The use of similes in this context aggravates the quality of his language.

In the beginning part of the novel we find Chandran as a college student, a good orator. When his examination knocks at the door, he sets a daily time table for his study. Chandran's father sees this and what he made out from this creates humour.

"Father came in and gazed at the sheet of paper on Chandran's table. He couldn't make anything of it. What he saw before him was a very intricate document, as complicated as a railway time table."(p.20)

The following use of simile is another example Chandran's college life and about his entertainment in the classroom.

"The bell rang. Gajapathi intended to continue the lecture even after the bell; but two hundred copies of Verity's Othello shut with a loud report like the crackling of a rifle. The class was on its feet."(p.25)

Another humorous situation was when Chandran's father became more alert for the flower thief.

“Father was very indignant. He behaved like a medieval warrior goaded by his lady love into slaying a dragon. Father dropped a hint that the flower thief would be placed at her (mother’s) feet next day, alive or dead.”(p.41)

Chandran fell in love at first sight when he saw Malathi by the river side. He just felt the passion for her even if he doesn’t know her name. He thinks her as Lakshmi.

“He wondered next what her name might be. She looked like one with the name of Lakshmi. Quite a beautiful name, the name of the Goddess of wealth, the space of God Vishnu, who was the protector of creatures.”(p.56)

The later part of the novel is about Chandran’s different appearance. He left his home and wandered like a saint or Sanyasi. The following simile speaks of his appearance.

“He was like a Sanyasi. Why ‘like’? He was a Sanyasi; the simplest solution. Shave the head, dye the clothes in ochre, and you were dead for aught the world cared.”(p.102)

Chandran got frustrated by his love Malathi. He realizes it in the second half of the novel. Now he hates Malathi and especially women.

“She had been playing with him, the devil. Women were like that, they enjoyed torturing people. And for the sake of her memory he had come to this. He railed against that memory, against love. There was no such thing; a foolish literary notion. If people didn’t read stories they wouldn’t know there was such a thing as love.”(p.112)

Chandran got disgusted even with his friend Ramu. He hates him and friendship for ignoring him and he says:

“Here was a person who didn’t care to communicate to a friend such happy news as the securing of a job. That was like Ramu. Friendship was another illusion like love, though it didn’t reach the same mad heights.”(P.117-118)

Chandran wanted to say about his story but he says to Mohan that-

“Mine is a long story. It is like Ramayanam. You will hear it presently. Tell me how you are prospering.”(p.121)

The following simile is about the whereabouts of Chandran’s friends:

“Some must have gone to England, some married and had children, some turned agriculturists, dead and starving and unemployed, all at grips with life, like a buffalo caught in the coils of a Python.....”(p.145)

Chandran returned home with a sickly appearance that his mother was greatly shocked at him. When she saw Chandran, she tells-

“Mother said, ‘You are looking like a corpse. How your bones stick out! What sunken cheeks! What were you at all these days?’”(p.115)

Thus the similes in the novel throw light on nature, theme and character.

Personifications in the Novel: An Added Charm

There are only a few instances of the use of personifications in "The Bachelor of Arts". Here we can find some abstract qualities or inanimate objects given human status. These personifications in the novel build up the theme, decorate the text and exemplify the artistry of R.K.Narayan. A few examples are as follows:

"Destiny always worked that way. His well ironed chocolate tweed was sure to invite notice."(p.60)

"When the traffic of the town had died, they could walk together under the moon or in magic starlight."(p.65)

Likewise in chapter 14, a few personifications are used which are not only touchy but provides great significance to the theme of the novel. The personifications are as follows:

"At such moments he fumigated his mind with reflections: this is a mischievous disturbance; this is false ; these thoughts of Malathi are unreal because love is only a brain affection; it led me to beg and cheat; to desert my parents; it is responsible for my mother's extra wrinkles and grey hairs, for my father's neglect of the garden; and a poor postmaster is a shirt and a dhoti less on account of my love."(p.124)

The personifications used in the following sentences are also very passionate.

"There were still sights and sounds and hours which breathed, through some occasion or other memories of Malathi."(p.124)

The following line is from Chandran's Professor Raghavachar whose voice is personified.

"And you chose 'The Daily messenger', I suppose?" growled Raghavachar. His voice had lost none of its tigerishness."(p.146)

"The lantern threw a pale yellow circle of light around a central shadow."(p.157)

"All your interests, joys, sorrows, hopes, contacts and experience boiled down to group photos."(p.144)

"The sight of things spick and span excited him."(p.116)

"The sight of the gifts sent a spear through his heart."(p.111)

In addition to this, the following lines once again stand vital to the theme of the novel. The use of personifications highlights the physical condition of Chandran. The personifications are as follows:

"His cheekbones stood out; the dust of the gighway was on him; his limbs had become horny; his complexion had turned from brown to dark tan. His

looks said nothing; they did not even seem to conceal a mystery; they looked dead. His lips rarely smiled.”(p.108)

All conceivable things seemed to have incited Mohan to anger, gloom, despair, and defiance.”(p.49)

When Chandran made himself like Sanyasi, he wandered everywhere without any food. With much hunger he says-

*“He said to his stomach, ‘rage as much as you like. Why don’t you kill me?’”(p.108)
GanapathiSastrigal, the astrologer and family adviser of Chandran speaks about Krishnan Iyer, the father of Malathi.*

“Krishnan was rocked in a golden cradle when he was young, but became the foster son of misfortune after his father died. It is all fate.”(p.75)

Another personification used in chapter 13 indicates the loneliness or barrenness of Chandran.

“Long after the babble of the crowd on the sands had died, and darkness had fallen on the earth, Chandran’s voice was heard, in tune with the rumble of the flowing river, narrating to Mohan his wanderings.”(p.123)

Chandranand Ramu while in theatre saw Professor Brown with another girl. Here, eyes and tongues are personified:

“Must be some other girl, then. The white fellows are born to enjoy life. Our people really don’t know how to live. If a person is seen with a girl by his side, a hundred eyes stare at him and a hundred tongues comment, whereas no European ever goes out without taking a girl with him.”(P.15)

“Chandran returned a new man, his mind full of Susila, the fragrance of Jasmine and sandal paste, the smokiness of the sacred fire, of brilliant lights, music, gaiety, and laughter.”(p.164)

The Beauty of Metaphor in the Novel

Metaphors in “The Bachelor of Arts” are quite interesting. Those indicate the point of similarity or resemblance between two essentially different things but not directly. The similarity is suggestive and speculative. The metaphors in this novel throw light on characters and atmosphere.

In the first chapter the following metaphors are used to highlight Chandran’s character and Principal Brown.

“He was a born grumbler.”(p.7)

“He is a humbug, take it from me,” said Chandran. ‘He gets his thousand a month, and no wonder he is pleasant. Remember that he is a scoundrel at heart.’”(p.8)

Chandran's father was very much conscious about the flower thief. So he came to Chandran with an attacking mood. The following metaphors present Chandran's father's condition.

"There was the light of a hunter in father's eyes, and Seenu was bubbling over with enthusiasm."(p.41)

The following is a conversation among Ramu, Chandran and Veeraswamy. This metaphor says about Chandran's feelings.

"Veeraswami would talk all the evening as Ramu and Chandran followed him with the look of a sacrificial goat in their eyes."(p.47)

In the later part of the novel Chandran was introduced to Kailas in a hotel. Kailas was a drunkard and reckless youth. When Chandran told about his mother, Kailas becomes emotional and says the following lines.

"He remained reflective for a moment and said with a sigh: "As long as my mother lived she said every minute 'Do this. Don't do that' and I remained a good son to her. The moment she died I changed. It is a rare commodity, Sir. Mother is a rare commodity."(p.99)

Chandran recollects the memory of Malathi and realizes the fact of love and life. The following metaphor highlights Chandran's condition.

"At such moments, he fumigated his mind with reflections; this is amischievous disturbance; this is false; these thoughts of Malathi are unreal because love is only brain affection; it led me to beg and cheat; to desert my parents."(p.124)

It is thus found that the metaphors in the novel are related to nature and characters. They intensify the theme of the novel.

"Attending a night show was not an ordinary affair. Chandran was none of your business like automatons who go to a cinema, sit there, and return home." (p.13)

It is in the cinema theatre that Chandran experienced some moments:

"Then the lyrical opening: 'Nestling in the heart of the mid west, lauro city owed its tranquility to the eagle-eyed sheriff'-then a scene showing a country girl (Vivian Troilet) wearing a check shirt, going up a country lane. Thus started, though with a deceptive quietness, it moved at a breathless pace, supplying love, valour, villainy, intrigue and battle in enormous quantities for a whole hour."(p.15)

Other metaphors used in the novel are as follows:

"He would be unworthy of Malathi if he was going to be such a spineless worm."(p.68)

Effective Use of Antithesis

There are a few antithetical structures used in the novel "The Bachelor of Arts". The two clauses opposite in meaning throw light on characters, themes and artistry of the novel. A few examples may be taken into consideration.

Mohan, the poet friend of Chandran brings a bundle of typed sheets containing poems. He read them. The following sentences say about the consequences.

"All conceivable things seemed to have incited Mohan to anger, gloom, despair, and defiance. Some had rhymes, some had not; some had a beginning, some had no end, some had no middle. But most of the poems mystified Chandran."(p.49)

Chandran tries to read a little about Well's Tono Bungay. But the thought of Malathi disturbed him. The following lines indicate his condition:

"He had found the book gripping, but now he felt it was obtrusive. He was irritated. He put away the book and sat staring at the wall. He presently realized that darkness would be more soothing."(p.56)

In a similar situation, Chandran was found in a passionate state as evident in the following lines:

"He would stop a few years from her house. What a parting of sweetness and pain!"(p.65)

When Chandran came to know that his horoscope didn't match with Malathi's horoscope, he tried to write a letter to Malathi to ask her opinion. When Chandran gave this letter to Mohan, he thought it as a love letter. But Chandran said-

"It is not a love letter. It is a dry, business letter. You must see that it is somehow delivered to her."(p.91)

After the great disappointment with Malathi, Chandran left home and wandered aimlessly. He traveled several districts on foot without food. It is a kind of suicide way that he adopted. The following antithetical structure used by Narayan is very touchy.

"For the first few days his system carved for coffee, to which he was addicted since his childhood. While one part of him suffered acutely, another part derived a satisfaction in watching it writhe and in saying to it : "Go on; suffer and be miserable .You were not sent into this world to enjoy. Go on; be miserable and perish."(p.107)

The following antithetical structure expresses Chandran's renunciation.

"He was different from the usual sanyasi. Others may renounce with a spirited motive or purpose. Renunciation may be to them a means to attain peace or may be peace itself. They are perhaps dead in time, but they do live in eternity."(p.108)

Later, Chandran's attire is viewed differently by the village people.

“They might not believe and feel that they were fooled and mob him and beat him to pulp.”(112)

A few notable anthetical structures used in the novel are as follows:

“Sometimes this quietened his mind, sometimes not.”(p.124-125)

“he was not a baby asking for a toy, but a full grown adult out on serious business, very serious business.”(p.68)

“He very much missed Chandran’s company in the after-dinner chatting group; he very much missed his supervision, though it had always been aggressive.”(p.80)

“When he was hungry and found none to feed him, he usually dragged himself about in a weak state, and enjoyed the pain of hunger.”(p.107-108)

“When a girl is ready for marriage, her horoscope will be sent in ten directions, and ten different persons will see her and approve or disapprove or they might be disapproved by the girl herself and after all only one will marry her.”(p.158)

“Ugliness and beauty is all as it strikes one’s eye . Everyone has his own vision. How do all the ugly girls in the world get married?”(p.158)

Use of Rhetorical Questions in the Novel

The use of a lot of rhetorical questions is observed in “The Bachelor of Arts” too. As it was in “The Guide”, such questions are asked by character either to themselves or to others, but answers to those are not made. Those are used to put points more fruitfully. Moreover, rhetorical questions in the novel too play a great role in highlighting characters, theme, situation and artistry. A few examples may be taken into consideration.

In the very first chapter, Chandran was given a task to deliver a debate on “Historians to be slaughtered first.” To this, Chandran asked himself various questions as follows:

“Historians to be slaughtered first. Who should come second? Scientists or carpenters? Who will make knife-handles if carpenters are killed first? (p.2)

Just a little later he once again asks himself such questions like-

“What am I to do? Where can I get a book full of jokes of a historical nature? (p.2)

In chapter 7, we find Chandran deeply in thought of Malathi, the girl he saw by the river bank. Chandran tries to discover the reason why he thinks of the girl so much. The questions are as follows:

“Why did he think of her so much? Was it her looks? Was she good looking as all that? Who could say? He hadn’t noticed her before. Then how could he say that she was the most beautiful girl in the world? When did he say that? Didn’t he? If not, why was he thinking of her so much? Chandran was puzzled, greatly puzzled by the whole thing? (p.56)

The moment Chandran saw Malathi, he fell in love with her. This passion led him so serious that Chandran even began to hate his parents for their conservative and orthodox nature. Chandran asked a few questions to his friend Mohan-

“Why should we be cudgeled and nose-led by our elders? Chandran asked indignantly.

“Why can’t we be allowed to arrange our lives as we please? Why can’t they leave us to rise or sink on our own ideals?”(p.71)

Chandran at first wished to go to England for higher studies and job but later he dropped the idea. He wanted to go to his uncle in Madras to work for Daily messenger. There he met Mr. Murugesam and Chandran, on seeing him asked many questions to himself.

“How did he pick up so much business knowledge? What did he earn? Ten thousand? What did he do with so much money? When would he find time to spend the money and enjoy life with so many demands on his attention?(p.134-135)

Chandran came to know that Malathi was going to get married to her cousin in near future. So when he thought of her, many questions come to his mind about Malathi’s condition. As Chandran thought of Malathi in this fashion:

“Ah, even at this moment Malathi was probably crying into her pillow at having a person she did not like. What sort of person was he? Would he be able to support her and would he treat her well?” (p.102)

This paragraph tells about Chandran’s infatuation towards Malathi. It’s at the same time that we find Chandran as loving and caring for his beloved.

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