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Family Nexus as Means to Jagan's Attainment of *Samprajnata Samadhi*

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Narayan once said to Ved Mehta in an interview, "To be a good writer anywhere, you must have roots – both in religion and in family." Narayan was rooted in both. His novels are imbued with these two aspects of his personality. In his novel 'The Vendor of Sweets' Narayan juxtaposes these two institutions of family and religion extensively in order to evolve the character of Jagan on the spiritual paradigm. Jagan's relationship with his family, especially with his son, Mali, drives him to progress on the spiritual path and thereby help him reach the state of intense concentration or more specifically the stage of *Samprajnata Samadhi* as has been described in Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutra*. This research paper attempts to trace the development of Jagan on the yardstick of Patanjali's *Ashtang-Marg* comprising of *yam*, *niyam*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. Jagan is a merchant, a house-holder and a widower yet he is able to attain the *Samprajnata Samadhi* of the *savichara* kind. He achieves this because he possesses the *ekagra* type of mind. Jagan has been able to fix his thoughts on the accessory of non-violence which is one of the two major components of *yam*, the other being truthfulness.

As the novel progresses 'Jagan's trial on the scale of this strict discipline becomes gradually difficult and complicated. Jagan, however, remains resolute and finally overcomes all obstacles that restrict his further progress on the spiritual plane. The novel successfully demonstrates the reconstruction of pure cultural values of the ancient times in an India which has been significantly altered with the passage of time.

Yoga philosophy views liberation as the transcendence of *Purusha* from *Prakriti* - a state attained by adhering to the *Ashtangamarg* of *Yoga*. Man is the architect of his destiny as he can rise above instinctive reactions and tendencies, control his impulses and finally escape the cycles of birth and rebirth through his own righteous efforts. That is how he becomes the master of his destiny. Quite a number of minute details about Narayan's characters reveal that through their actions they attempt to discipline themselves following the eight accessories of *Yoga* in order to master their destiny of liberation. These are:

;efu;ekluizk.kk;keizR;kgkj/kkj.kk/;kulek/k;ks."Vko³~xkfu(Aranya 231).

i.e. *Yam* (Restraint), *Niyam* (Observance), *Asana* (Posture), *Pranayama* (Regulation of Breath), *Pratyahara* (Withholding the senses), *Dharana* (Fixity), *Dhyana* (Meditation) and *Samadhi* (Perfect concentration) are the eight means of attaining *Yoga* (Aranya23). The three mental disciplines of *Astanga-Yoga* are *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. *Samadhi* is when the *dhyana* becomes so intense that even the self-consciousness seems to disappear and only the object meditated upon appears to exist, when the self is forgotten and the difference between the self and the object is effaced. Such fixity of the mind on the object is called *samadhi*(Aranya277-80). In Patanjali's terminology, *Yoga* denotes *Samadhi* or concentration of two kinds *Samprajnata* and *Asamprajnata* or seedless *Samadhi*. According to Patanjali, a mind habitually rests in one of the

five states-- *ksipta* (distracted), *muddha* (stupified), *viksipta* (restless), *ekagra* (one-pointed) and *niruddha* (Suppressed). When the mind remains steadfast and one-pointed (*Ekagra*) it can attain *Samprajnata Samadhi*. When through practice all thoughts can be shut out from the mind for a long time, the mind can be regarded as having reached a closed state (*Aranya 4*). It attains *Asamprajnata Samadhi*.

This paper attempts to focus on R.K.Narayan's novel *The Vendor of Sweets* and analyzes the character of Jagan in order to manifest his endeavor to gradually attain *Samprajnata Samadhi* of the *Savicharakind*. The title *The Vendor of Sweets* is significant as it fore states that the novel deals with a protagonist belonging to the merchant class. Jagan is a householder who has been tremendously influenced by the ideas of Gandhiji especially by the injunction of non-violence. He is a sweet-seller; yet he never tastes his own sweets. For him all the sweets taste the same. As a step further, he relinquishes salt so as to conquer the self. The novel opens with his comment: "Conquer taste and you will have conquered the self". It is the philosophy underlining the life of Jagan. It simultaneously, reflects the philosophy underlying the novel, that for a vendor of sweets what could be more difficult than to conquer taste. Jagan has already conquered taste and he is on the path to conquering the 'self' through the logic which he extends for his statement that "our sages advise us so" (*Narayan7*). Jagan is a thoroughly religious man who not only reads the scriptures daily, even at his shop, he has a copy of Bhagwad Gita, which he reads continually, but he also practises what he reads from these scriptures.

Jagan is very sound financially, yet he is very simple in his life-style and unlike a typical business man with pot-round belly, Jagan's figure is slight with an "outlook of a disembodied soul floating above the grime of this earth" (*Narayan 8*). Apart from the bundles of the money on the loft, he has hardly accumulated any worldly treasures in his house-hold. The things he possesses are the barest necessities of life. This tendency of Jagan is in keeping with the yogic concept of *aparigraha* or abstention from 'avariciousness'.

The inherently docile and self-effacing temperament coupled with his fixity on Gandhian ideals of 'truthfulness' and 'non-violence' take Jagan a long way in his progress towards 'conquering self'. The novel showcases how a man like Jagan has a potential for the attainment of *yogic samadhi*. According to Patanjali's categorization of the various types of mind, Jagan's mind borders on the *ekagra* or the one-pointed kind. For the major period of his life, he remains steadfast on the injunctions preached by Gandhi. The steadiness of his mind is also sustained by his reading of *The Gita*. He is in his late fifties and has by now got rid of many of the *klistavrittis* in his nature.

Jagan practises the three constituents of *Kriya-yoga* of *tapas*, *svadhyaya* and *Ishwarpranidhan*. Jagan is austere for he has renounced all objects of sense enjoyment. He does not eat salt and sugar. He wears *Khadi* that too spun by himself. He keeps only two pairs of clothes. Jagan cooks his own food. It is made of few pieces of vegetables boiled with a small measure of coarsely ground wheat. This diet of Jagan has continued for a long stretch of time. It is devoid of fat and is frugal. Patanjali's diction says "Light food, keeping the stomach partially empty is frugality in meals. The *Yogi* should avoid articles containing fat" (*Aranya270*). He practises external cleanliness in the form of daily ablutions as well as the consumption of vegetarian food cooked by himself. The internal cleanliness constitutes of the removal of the seven evils of lust, anger, greed, arrogance, conceit, malice and jealousy. Jagan overcomes his lustful tendencies even before his wife gives birth to Mali--his son. "He felt fatigued by all the apparatus of sex, its promises and futility, the sadness and the sweat at the end of it all"

(Narayan166). He realized that "Nature had never meant sex to be anything more than a means of propagation of the species ... the essence of all achievement being celibacy and conservation" (Narayan166). Thus we can say he closely practices the twin accessories of Yam

vfgalklR;kLrs;czãp;kZifjxzgk;ek%(Aranya 232)

AndNiyam

'kkSplUrks"kri%Lok/;k;s'ojizf.k/kkukfufu;ek%(Aranya 237)

He is devoid of malice and jealousy towards anyone. Jagan does become arrogant and conceited, a little when Mali goes abroad and writes letters from there. These too are deflated on Mali's return to Malgudi. Jagan is not greedy though he is economical and frugal. Whatever traces of these passions lie in Jagan are gradually overcome by him through steadfastness of his efforts.

Jagan leads a life of contentment. 'Contentment' in Yogic terms implies not to possess any means at one's disposal more than one's immediate necessities. Jagan has no desire for possessing any luxurious item in the house-hold. His requirements are minimal. His habit of living frugally and hoarding money on the loft gives rise to misleading conjectures that Jagan is miserly and money-minded. But it is an inference based on slight evidence. Jagan hoards money on the loft not for his own use but to pass it over to his son, in case he required in future for running or expanding his business and also for business purposes. As a father it is obligatory of him to provide for the future businessman to continue his business on honest lines and as a proprietor of an established firm, it is obligatory of him to continue the flourishing business for the sake of his crew of cooks and servants at the shop.

As an honest businessman Jagan sells unadulterated foodstuff at the optimum price, which would help him maintain his staff as well as his barest needs. The money on the loft helps Jagan like a two-prong fork. On one hand, it helps Jagan to "maintain the tone of business" (Narayan103) in such a way so as to bring no harm to his fellow businessmen as by reducing the prices to the minimum, the others' who are running a big house-hold equipped with luxuries, would suffer. The extra-money, on the other hand, helps him to endure the corrupt sales-tax inspectors, the income-tax people, the health-inspectors, the food-control authorities and their minions rummaging through his books, ledgers and vouchers to pounce on any silly mistake committed therein. Therefore, Jagan cannot help this money growing like "the weeds flourishing in his back yard" (Narayan11). The "inexplicable uneasiness" regarding the tax slyly hints at Jagan's discomfiture caused due to the so-called honest inspectors who visit businessmen on various errands.

Practicing these austerities, in life has enabled Jagan to acquire the ability to withstand hunger and thirst, heat and cold. He can sleep on the floor as he does on the pedestal of the Lawley statue without getting pathologically inflicted. He has also developed the habit of sitting calmly for hours together in his shop-seat like a *kashtha* idol without much expression on his face

Noticing nothing, his gaze unflinchingly fixed on the Sanskrit lines in a red-bound copy of the Bhagwad Gita (Narayan12).

Jagan refrains from talking much and whenever he indulges in dialogues with his cousin, the topic invariably leads to the injunction of the Bhagwad Gita or to those of Mahatma Gandhi. It is as much to say, he practised verbal *kriya-yoga* of restraining from unbeneficial talks. Jagan devotes an hour daily in the morning sitting before the God and praying. He does his duties according to the instructions prescribed in the Holy Scriptures especially the Bhagwad Gita.

In spite of it all, Jagan is swayed by various emotions and passions. He is assailed by doubts, misgivings, panic and sorrow. It is because of his excessive attachment to his son. He has been able to conquer taste. He has overcome all other worldly allurements but his strong rooted passion for his son obstructs his further growth on the spiritual plane. It is stated in the *Yoga-sutra* that "attachment involves one involuntarily and unconsciously in the sense-gratification and then the senses lose the power to restrain desires consciously" (Aranya139). Jagan's attachment to his son leads him to spend money for extravagant purposes. He furnishes and renovates his house in order to please Mali who is returning from America. With the arrival of Mali from America, Jagan's life is once again thrown into turmoil. He learns that Mali has taken not only to eating meat and beef but also has brought along with him an American-Korean girl pretending to be his wife. Mali also entertains outrageous notions as of slaughtering cows for food and of writing stories through a story-writing machine.

Such a character of Mali, creates in Jagan the affliction allied to attachment, which is 'aversion'. He starts avoiding people lest they should cause misery to him by way of enquiring and commenting about Mali and Grace. He tries to console himself for his plight by saying, "One can do one's duty up to a point. Even in **The Gita**, you find it mentioned" (Narayan60). **The Gita** recedes into the background while Mali is abroad and Jagan receives his mail. It now regains a place of importance in the daily routine of Jagan. Narayan remarks with irony, "Now it was coming back, which showed that Jagan was becoming mentally disturbed once again" (Narayan69). With **The Gita** again on his mind it is possible for him to revive his spiritual inclinations.

Jagan successfully practices, harmless ways in his life facilitated by his circumstances. It is a well-known fact that intimacy with the family members is the inescapable breeding ground for violence, malice, jealousy, anger and affections. Jagan's circumstances have led him into getting detached from all his relatives. His parents and wife are dead. His brother and sister have ostracized him. His social connections too are very limited. Apart from the cooks, the servants in his shop, the 'cousin' and the proprietor of the Truth Printing Press, one rarely observes him mingling actively with others.

The real challenge, however presents itself in the form of Mali, whom Jagan loves deeply. His affections threaten to throw off the board all his non-violent practices. Especially after Grace's arrival, the insinuating circumstances which are causative of disturbances at various levels increase. These threaten to overturn Jagan's precarious equilibrium in non-violence. Grace is not only of different caste, but also of different religion and nationality. Jagan proves to be a true disciple of Gandhi when he accepts her as a daughter-in-law with full kindness and without any ado. However, Jagan soon realizes that the pleasing gesture of Grace is "a calculated effort to win the dollars" - some fifty thousand needed to start Mali's project of story-writing. In his reluctance to acquiesce to the extravagant demand, Jagan remembers, "Gandhi has taught me peaceful methods and that's how I am going to meet their demand ... He was going to meet the situation by ignoring the whole business, a sort of non-violent non-cooperation" (Narayan86). He is able to dodge them for two weeks but one day he is asked for money point-blank by Grace. Jagan now comes to understand that Mali wouldn't accept him as a father at all "if he didn't claim to be a wealthy father" (Narayan90). It emphatically dawns on him that "Money is evil". He has been hoarding money not for himself but for the future generation. Mali, however is not only unwilling to take up the family business but also is adamant on following an occupation whose foundation itself is full of deceptions. Jagan realizes that he has enough of money and enough of everything and that the whole humanity would be happier without money. He

ruminates, "It is enough if an activity goes on self-supported, no need to earn money, no need to earn money" (Narayan92).

Jagan grasps that though he has been following **The Gita's** injunction of doing one's duty honestly and without bringing harm to others as far as possible, yet the association with money and wealth causes mischief and begets malice and trouble. He immediately resolves to abstain from making more money. He has been following the principles of **The Gita** without much rational thought but Mali's deopment proves the futility of making money even by way of doing one's duty. This gives him the insight to the pain that has been caused and has to be removed by giving-up moneymaking completely. Thus a discriminative knowledge is born-in Jagan. It is said in Yoga-Sutra: "discriminative knowledge arises first from listening to the *Sastras* or scriptures. Then by reasoned contemplation it becomes firmer and clearer. Through practice of the different exercises of yoga it gradually develops" (Aranya223).

The awareness that 'money is evil' gives him much confidence. Jagan's next move is to refrain from making more money. He lowers the prices of sweets as a first step to see, how things would turn up, when he completely gave up his business. He decides to preach his servants on **The Gita**, instead of ordering for more sweets to be prepared, in the vacant hours. The servants find it irksome to hear his sermons and look for ways of escaping it. All these men flourished in "kitchen smoke and preferred frying to enlightenment" (Narayan69). It is a direct illustration of the fact that unless the person is willing one cannot guide him to the righteous path. It also indirectly explains the reasons behind the bundling of extra-money on the loft and not giving it as charity even to his employees.

He certainly has been trying throughout his business-life to carry on his business in the right spirit (that is just performing it as a duty which one ought to do) and through the 'right measure' - that is doing it with utmost honesty without using adulterated stuff and without selling at exorbitant profit. His bank-balance is extra-ordinarily good because of the simplicity of his life style. Jagan has become a very simple-minded person. He is unable to comprehend easily any sarcasm or taunt or indirect comment. Therefore, when the visiting delegation of businessmen question him with indirect implication as to "why they should continue in business" if Jagan intends to monopolize the whole of it by reducing the price. His action is being "interpreted in strictly commercial terms"(Walsh 63). Jagan is unable to grasp the taunt. He immediately answers revealing the thought that lies uppermost in his mind. He says, "Exactly what I have felt, but I keep it up more for the sake of my staff" (*VS 101*). The statement is an evidence not of deceitfulness nor of his foolishness but of his 'one-pointedness' because he has been for some time thinking of giving up money-making.

Jagan's decision of reducing the prices firmly establishes the fact that he is steadfast in his practice of truthfulness and non-violence and has thus taken a sure step towards redemption. But he still is in want of proper guidance in this direction. His life is at a turning point where he is unable to decide his next step. At this critical juncture comes the bearded hair blackener alias the stonemason. He is called ChinnaDorai. Dorai talks of his master or the 'Guru' in stone-masonry instead of sweet-making. To Jagan, he looks like a man 'possessed' as if by extra-ordinary powers. He asks Jagan for no rhyme or reason that, "we should not let the body deceive us as to the true nature of our being. One is not really bone and meat". (Narayan113). This incidence proves to be an apt elucidation of what K.P. Bahadur observes of Patanjali's *Ishvara*. According to him "Patanjali's *Ishvara* is largely the helper, patron and guru of yogis. He stands removed from the world but in a subtle way takes the struggling aspirant by the hand and guides him successfully on the path of yoga"(Bahadur 51). Jagan, who is a struggling aspirant floundering in

the waters of yoga, is timely helped by the newly developed acquaintance with the bearded-man. He is able to see things in broader perspective and gain an outlook, which assists him in putting Mali's antics in a different light. They now "seemed to matter naught" to Jagan. As Walsh rightly observes, "Now that he is freed from the pursuit of money, for its own sake, that the aesthetic, religious and moral tendencies surge forward for a new recognition and new interrelationship" (Gupta 27). Jagan ruminates, "The Gods must have taken pity on his isolated, floundering condition and sent this white-bearded man" (Narayan 122). Chinna Dorai draws Jagan out of his routine activities of life and takes him to the forest to show him the unfinished stone-images. Jagan observes that once within the precincts of the forest, the man became more and more authoritative. Jagan is so spell bound that he obeys his orders without offering any resistance. After showing various half-finished idols he takes Jagan to a blue-lotus pond, where lies a stone under water and asks him to assist him in lugging-out the stone. Jagan is apprehensive at this because the floor is slippery and he doesn't know swimming. A vague thought occurs somewhere in his mind, that the man might be conspiring to drown him. Immediately, pops-up the next contrary but positive thought, "Better meet one's fate in the hands of a sculptor" (Narayan 115).

The statement brings to the fore three things implicitly. One, Jagan is still dwelling on the same idea of giving-up moneymaking but now it has stretched to giving-up of life. He has no fear of death. Secondly, one is reminded of the Hindu religious belief that when demons meet their death in the hands of Gods, they are ultimately salvaged. Jagan has in his mind the excruciating circumstances he has been placed in by Mali which threaten to jeopardize his life and therefore thinks it is better to die in the hands of the 'sculptor', being a better soul than Mali's. Thirdly, the sculptor here implies 'God' when put in the context of Jagan's yogic development. Jagan and the sculptor lift the heavy stone out of the water and place it on the bank. After the ordeal Jagan feels terribly tired. Exasperated, he succumbs to the ground and lies down, whereas the sculptor goes about with his work showing no trace of fatigue.

Metaphorically, Jagan has attempted to transform himself into a worthy stone, if not a flawless one, through his own efforts. He has proved himself worthy of attaining divinity. However, to prove his stability and consistency, he is yet to face a final test, which presents itself in the form of Mali's getting imprisoned for driving under the sway of alcohol. The success in the final test would dissolve all problems of life for Jagan, but it requires bold steps along with strong will power. This is the import of the command given to him by the sculptor while lifting the stone out of the water, when he persuasively says, "If you could only make up your mind to lift it; it is only will power you lack ... I only want you to give me a hand, not lift it yourself" (Narayan 116).

As a moral boost and to show where his efforts would culminate, Jagan is led into a sweeping vision of the radiant *Gayatri* whose form the sculptor describes verbally. During the description, Jagan's mind trails away into intense concentration, to have a fleeting glimpse of eternity and to realize the infinitesimality and transitoriness of one's existence along with its problems. The engrossment of Jagan, which unfolds the vision of the *Svaroop of Gayatri*, is of the *savichara* kind reached through the meditative analysis of the subtle faculties of reception (sight, smell, sound etc.) that are revealed in the image of *Gayatri*. The image-maker paints *Gayatri* as possessing a

countenance with a radiance of *mukta*, that is pearl, and *hema*, that is gold, and then the blue of the sapphire or the sky, and then the redness of the coral ... Since she is the light that illumines the sun himself, she combines in her all colours and every kind of

radiance, symbolized by five heads of different colours. She possesses ten hands, each holding a different object... She combines in her divinity everything we perceive and feel, from the bare, dry bone to all beauty in creation... (Narayan119).

At the height of intense concentration, Jagan is "filled with awe and reverence at the picture that arose in his mind" "(Narayan119)". He becomes *Samprajnata* on the constituent subtle principles that the form of *Gayatri* embodies. He realizes that,

Pleasure, pain or obsession, that is derived from material objects is, but due to its gross properties, because there is variety in such grossness and it is the variety which causes varieties of feelings of pleasure, pain etc. (Aranya113).

As he gains the discriminative knowledge the impressions of nescience in him get destroyed. His agitated mind gets pacified, and he is able to analyze various situations of his house-hold with more clarity of thought. The experience is retained in his mind, which he recollects during his sundry activities. For instance, he recalls the vision while spinning, thinking of it as "a reposeful memory. The man had really communicated a thrilling vision when he described the Goddess with five heads" (Narayan122). He reflects, furthermore that, "one must not resist when pushed across the threshold of a new personality through the changes of circumstances" (Narayan124), Jagan extricates himself carefully from all the activities of worldly life lest he should bring harm to anyone through his resolution of going to the forest away from the regular routine of life. It is not a case of his running away from reality but contrary to it, on deciphering the illusory nature of all associations, he moves closer to the ultimate reality. His memory works on two levels. On one hand, he recalls the vision of *Gayatri* which he finds very appealing and comforting, on the other, he remembers his past days which have given him pangs of pain.

At this juncture, his cousin informs him of Mali's imprisonment. Jagan is a little shaken at the news. But the very next moment, he steadies his mind by thinking that a little punishment would be beneficial to Mali. On considering that Mali should be given an opportunity to improve after a mild punishment and not abandoned completely, he makes provision for his release by giving a cheque to the cousin. It is another demonstration of his non-violent gesture. He is devoid of any malice or ill-will towards anyone. He offers to give money to Grace as her fare in case she intends to return. His last words for her are, "She was a good girl" (Narayan185). There is neither resentment nor any grudge for her in his heart. Jagan takes his chequebook to the forest not because he is greedy or suspicious. He has handed over his business in amateur hands - to his cousin and his son who are still novices in it. If they ruined it or were unable to run it properly his servants would be thrown out of the job for no reason of their own. Till these people learnt to live without depending on him, he has to keep the reins in his hand though in a detached manner. For this reason he gives his address to the cousin so that he could contact him when needed. Taking the chequebook along with him is his compulsion. He cannot hand over everything to Mali for he is totally irresponsible and unreliable at present. Moreover, it would save him any further involvements by way of stepping in to the city for transactions of money when needed by others. It also must be borne in mind that Jagan is entering the *Vanprasthaashram* and not the *Sanyasashram* that means he can still have his associations with worldly duties.

His decision for renunciation is a resolute one. By inference, it shows that he has reached the stage of *Samprajnata Yoga*, for the knowledge he has acquired through intense concentration in company of the image-maker, remains fixed in his mind and is retained there forever. It can also be surmised that, this detachment, after fulfilling almost all his obligations, will eventually help him in eliminating latent traces of attachment and other afflictions from mind, leading it to a suppressed or the *Niruddha* state required for *Asamprajnata Yoga*. Jagan has realized, "his life or that part of it ... is complete. It has achieved whatever shape it is capable of" ¹⁴ during his interaction in the world of Malgudi. Now, he must live in a different world to liberate his 'self' completely from the cycles of incarnation so that he can see "a goddess come out of stone". Its implication may be fully grasped through the injunction of Plotinus: "Chisel away from the soul what is superfluous, straighten that which is crooked, purify and enlighten that which is dark and do not cease working at thy statue until virtue shines before thine eyes with its divine splendour, and thou seest temperance seated in thy bosom in its holy spirit". (Recovery 153).

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