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Towards Spiritual Liberation

Dr. Pratibha Kalani

Prof. English
SRJ Govt.College
Neemuch.M.P

Abstract:

The basic ideology underlying Narayana's fiction is a quest for the possibilities of spiritual renaissance and its further development into spiritual liberation. Reading Narayan's fiction in the light of Patanjali's Yoga-Sutra provides new perspectives of evaluating his characters who are constantly engaged in spiritual struggle amidst the clutches of never satiating materialistic hunger. This research paper attempts to evaluate the character of the Yogi of the novel. A Tiger for Malgudi who has taken to a life of an ascetic in order to achieve the goal of spiritual liberation and in this pursuit reaches the stage of asamprajnata Samadhi as expounded by Maharshi Patanjali in his Yoga-Sutra.

Keywords: Samprajnata concentration, Asamprajnata Samadhi, Kaivalya,

Liberation of the soul i.e. Kaivalya, is attained with the cessation of the function of the instruments of reception - senses, intellect and mind. In this state, "consciousness remains all alone for all time"(Aranya14). After having realized the ultimate truth about all knowable things through Samprajnata concentration, the mind is gradually brought to a state of being devoid of any latent impressions through Asamprajnata Samadhi. When it stops to form any further impressions and continues to stay in this state permanently, the consciousness is said to attain the state of Kaivalya. Narayan's characters Raju and the yogi of A Tiger for Malgudi through their dint of efforts reach the Asamprajnata state. The yogi takes a step further ahead by entering the phase of the Samadhi of the perpetually closed kind to attain Kaivalya.

According to Prasad "the process of realizing oneself through a network of socio-cultural institutions is the staple reality"(Prasad 71) of Narayan's novels. This process is distinctly seen in A Tiger for Malgudi, which can be analyzed, as a narrative, where Narayan attempts to delineate the next stage of attainment higher than that Raju has reached in The Guide. It is the attainment of Asamprajnata of the perpetually closed state of mind. The yogi of A Tiger for Malgudi is a step ahead of Raju, who has just entered the Asamprajnata state of concentration. He is able to close the mind only partially. In the latter novel, Narayan attempts to portray the powers, which can be acquired through concentration. In its last quarter the novel verges on occult and mysticism because Narayan has introduced his protagonist as a 'Siddha yogi' who apart from being the mentor of the tiger Raja is a pilgrim himself, in the sense that he is working his way towards spiritual liberation after having attained the state of spiritual realization. Narayan has described a Siddha yogi in the introduction to the novel:

He is one who has acquired one or many of the eight kinds of supernormal powers through certain yogic practices such as become invisible, levitate, transmute metals, travel in space, control animals and men, live on air and so on (Narayan482).

The yogi practices the rules prescribed by Patanjali. Following these principles he acquires the supernatural powers through samyama on various objects of concentration. Narayan, instead of fixing his focus on the external accessories that have been practised by the yogi, comes straight into delineating his mental powers and that's why he appears to be more of a sorcerer than a sanyasi - as is revealed in the statement of an on-looker: "Something uncanny about him ... unsafe to talk about such men, who may be saints or sorcerers"(Narayan 585).

The hermit is not a sorcerer or a hath-yogi for the powers, which he acquires through concentration, are used by him to promote well-being of other human beings as well as animals and not to inflate his ego. He applies these powers, not only to bring Malgudi to normalcy, or to mitigate the suffering of Raja but also to enable Raja to reach higher spiritual levels. It is said in the Yoga-sutra that these powers are inimical to further spiritual progress, as there is a possibility of the yogi's falling into the trap of 'ego'. Therefore those who are set on the path to spiritual liberation avoid displaying them, until it is very necessary.

The present yogi used to be a householder in his early life. He had flourished and prospered in the worldly manner in Malgudi. Jayaraj, the photographer of Malgudi recognizes the ascetic while he is passing through Malgudi with the tiger as a man who used to cycle through to college in his young days. He had actively participated in the freedom struggle - tearing the Union Jack and writing 'Quit India' on the walls as a non-violent soldier. Consequently, he had been to prison many times as a political prisoner. After India gained independence, he prospered through his job in a foreign insurance firm. During those days, he "looked like a fop with his tie and suit and polished shoes" (Narayan584) driving a motorcar. Similar information of his past is given by the yogi in order to relieve the tiger of his inquisitiveness:

I was a man of the world, busy and active and living by the clock, scrutinizing my bank book, greeting and smiling at all and sundry because I was anxious to be treated as a respectable man in society. One day it seemed all wrong, a senseless repetition of activities... I abruptly fled away from wife, children... (Narayan 590).

The yogi's wife comes seeking him in the forest. She admonishes the yogi for having deserted his wife and child. She feels he is worse than the robbers who stole away her belongings. The dialogue between the yogi and his wife throws light on his character in the early part of their life. His wife says:

I know you intimately. I have borne your vagaries patiently for a lifetime... Your inordinate demands of food and my perpetual anxiety to see you satisfied and my total surrender night or day when passion seized you and you displayed the indifference of a savage... (Narayan 597).

Her indictment of the ascetic reveals that he has conquered his passions rigorously in order to acquire the present spiritual stature. It is an evidence of what Radhakrishnan observes on disciplining of passion: "The control of passions does not mean their annihilation but their transmutation into spiritual energy"(Radhakrishnan155). The passionate man of Malgudi succeeds in acquiring a

stature of a genuine ascetic suggests that if a man is determined to follow the difficult path of austerity and renunciation, he can transform himself thoroughly.

The wife of the ascetic desires him to return to the normal course of life. The yogi has renounced his worldly identity completely and lives in complete anonymity. He does not want to return to the shackles of worldly life. To arrive at the present stage, he "trudged and tramped and wandered through jungles and mountains and valleys not caring where he went" (Narayan 583). He has no desire to throw to naught his achievement that has been dearly acquired. As a first check to a fall from the sublime, he addresses to the woman's husband as 'he' instead of an 'I' though he knows clearly that he himself is her husband. Then, he reminds her that she should be happy to be free from the dreadful clutches of such a voluptuous man, more so, as he "took nothing except a piece of loin cloth for all the wealth he had accumulated" (Narayan 597). He further assures her that her husband left her not because of any wrath but because an 'inner compulsion' had driven him towards this goal. The wife still feels anguished and cheated that the ascetic is not performing his duties as a husband. She little realizes that it is her own selfish desire of possessing his physical presence in the house. As a husband and a householder, he left after providing them the security of home and all means of life. As a father, too he had executed his duty of bringing up his child.

After renouncing everything, the ascetic underwent a complete change of personality, by obliterating his past and going into seclusion for prolonged meditation through which he acquired stability of mind and later supernormal powers. This can be inferred from the various instructions that he gives to Raja, in order to take him through the same yogic stage so as to uplift him on the spiritual level. When the ascetic comes close to the tiger in the headmaster's room, he suggests to Raja, "Understand that you are not a tiger, don't hurt yourself. I am your friend" (Narayan 578). When Raja attempts to strike the ascetic, he admonishes him lovingly, "Leave that style out. You won't have use of such violent gestures any more. It all goes into your past" (Narayan 579). The yogi has such a control over the tiger that Raja feels subdued and soon finds that there was something changing inside him. After an initial protest, the tiger starts following the instructions of the yogi.

At the bidding of the hermit, Raja trots behind like a tamed cat while during his circus life he refused to obey the captain irrespective of the whipping and lashing at his hand. The ascetic is able to tame it through his power which he has acquired by contemplating on the appearance of the body so that its perceptibility is stopped as stated in Yoga-sutra 21 of 'Supernormal Powers'. By practising samyama on the changes of characteristics of symptoms and of states i.e. causes and effects of objects, a yogi can acquire the knowledge of past and the future "(Aranya 212). By practising samayama on the effulgent light of higher sense perception knowledge of things obstructed from view can be acquired "(Aranya 328). The ascetic uses these faculties of his mind to miraculously put the headmaster on the loft of the room before the tiger enters it. Nobody realizes how the master reaches the loft in no time without anything to climb up. The yogi too ruminates "now the headmaster reached here will remain a mystery" (Narayan 58).

The yogi displays yet another supernormal power of controlling the mind of others through thought reading and thought-suggestion. The ascetic mesmerizes

Alphonso - the hunter, who intends to kill the tiger, after securing the permission of the 'Save Tiger Committee' whose job is solely to prevent the decimation of the tiger population. Alphonso is able to persuade the members of the committee into permitting him to kill the tiger on the pretext that it is a man-eater - a falsehood which he has fabricated on the basis of Raja's killing the ringmaster - the 'Captain' of the circus. But the ascetic comes to the rescue of the tiger. He persuades Alphonso to drink liqueur that makes him doze off immediately. The ascetic through thought suggestion similarly controls the tiger. The tiger later confesses, "His presence sapped all my strength" (Narayan 587). When the ascetic enters the room of the headmaster, the tiger attempts to hit him but his forepaw collapses like a rag on the floor as if drained out of his strength.

The yogi is also a polyglot, having a command over ten languages including Sanskrit and Japanese. He writes an affidavit in order to absolve the people present from any responsibility of his life or death in case the tiger attacks him. But he confounds the second honorary magistrate of the town by writing the affidavit in Sanskrit, which he considers to be the language of the Gods. He also possesses the ability of communicating with the tiger. He subdues it by persuasion through talks, as he goes on to explain to him on the futility of his violent gestures which according to him would go into his past for "violence cannot be everlasting sooner or later it has to go, if not through wisdom, definitely through decrepitude which comes on with years, whether one wants or not "(Narayan 579).

The Yoga-sutra 18-III discloses that by practising samyama on latent impressions, knowledge of the previous birth is acquired. When the thoughts are concentrated on the impressions, they are perceived with the idea of place time and cause of the incident concerned. Thus, the aspirant comes to know his previous birth. He can also similarly gather knowledge about other beings' previous births."(Aranya 320-321). The hermit - Master of Raja has acquired this power, which assists him in knowing his past life as well as that of Raja's. For this reason, he takes Raja into his fold as his protégée because Raja has not only practised the various restrains and observances but also has expiated for the sins he had committed probably in his past life. His Master reveals to him that he probably liked putting people behind the bars, that's why he had to undergo the ordeal in the circus. When a spiritually uplifted Raja feels exalted at the natural beauty of the forest desiring nothing more in life, and giving the expression of poetic joy.

Through samyama on various objects the yogi has reached that stage where he can construct or create minds with bodies, which can be used for the benefit of others. The Master of Raja has created his mind to instruct Raja on his spiritual upliftment. That is why Raja says that, "There was a haze in which he seemed to exist, a haze that persisted all through our association "(Narayan 581). The advantage of these created minds is that as they are not real they do not produce new latencies of impressions, which can drag the yogi down into new karmas.

At the later state, the yogi discloses to the woman-visitor that, "My past does not exist for me, nor a future. I live for a moment" (Narayan 597). The statement hints at his acquisition of the subtlest power of discrimination, which is acquired through samyama on moment and its sequence "(YS 32-III, Aranya 373). The acquisition of this power assists in the distinction between the I-sense and the Purusha the 'pure

consciousness' in the mind. This is the highest knowledge that can be acquired in the Samprajnata state. Thereafter by shutting out all other knowledge when one concentrates only on the knowledge of Purusha, he attains discriminative discernment. With this further acquisition of knowledge and thereby formation of latent impressions, though of aklista kind, ceases. The stoppage of acquisition of knowledge is Asamprajnata state. Thus the yogi can be said to already have reached the Asamprajnata state. As an Asamprajna, he tries to uplift the tiger spiritually. In the intervening periods between discourses, he continues to meditate, gradually prolonging its duration. Then, when he feels assured that the tiger has attained the highest state possible for him in the present body, he decides to go into deep meditation of completely closed kind of Asamprajnata that leads to Kaivalya.

Before entering the stage he fulfils the duty towards the tiger. The tiger has grown weak and old and can't even protect himself from other animals. So instead of risking the tiger's life the yogi contacts the keeper of a zoo, without ever moving out of the forest - through a 'created-mind'. He invites the benevolent keeper to take the tiger into his custody so that he could live well protected till the end of his life. The yogi all along his ascetic life was preparing his way towards the Kaivalya. He has to break his bond with the tiger as

No relationship, human or other or association of any kind could last forever. Separation is the law of life right from the mother's womb. One has to accept it if one has to live in God's plans.

The yogi through his own example persuades the tiger to orient his life spiritually. By delineating the relationship between the yogi and the tiger, the novel according to V.V.N. Rajendra Prasad:

Dramatizes the harmony that is possible and the self-awareness that could be visualized when the human and the animal worlds are viewed on a simultaneous orders.(Prasad 100)

The character Raju and the 'yogi' move farther than Jagan and Krishnan, in their goal of spiritual liberation. Narayan brings out the theme in the novel with a masterly deftness and dexterity.. In fact, the two characters 'Raju and the Yogi' are at the pinnacle of their spiritual attainment that can be attained through a human form. The final attainment of Kaivalya or liberation cannot be delineated for the simple reason that after attaining a closed state of Asamprajnata, the aspirant begins to release his hold on all aspects associated with the material body. It implies their communication and interaction with the external world is completely nullified. This accounts for the absence of any character in Narayan's oeuvre, who has attained liberation. In *The Guide* and *A Tiger For Malgudi*, Narayan has depicted two ways of reaching the state of Asamprajnata states. Raju reaches it without acquiring any supernormal powers. The yogi, however, goes for it slowly, after deploying his acquisition of supernormal power for the benefit of the rest of the God's creation. Eminent Indian critic C.D. Narsimhaiah's significant remark in relation to *The Guide* appears very pertinent even in respect of Narayan's craftsmanship in the novel *The Tiger For Malgudi*:

India's undying faith in God and goodness, holy men and miracles is here rendered quite credible by the novelists's art even to the skeptical and questioning mind. (Narsimhaiah 192)

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