

# Traditional Hindu Values in R. K Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*

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## ABSTRACT

The Paper highlights the social perspective and daily life of his characters. It is drawing on the many cultural differences. The paper deals the character Mali, the son of the protagonist leads towards a more cultured the world for his own growth leaving the responsibilities of his father. Mali can be measured to be the modernized characteristic, and his father is someone from traditional India. The Novels enhances the tension between old and young India is the backdrop against which a father and son clash. It portrays the orthodox Hindu society and Narayan saw the depressed dilemma of women locked up within the confines of houses. It portrays Jagan's deep connection to his tradition values and modern culture; it is highlighted throughout the novel and this also influences Mali.

**Keywords:** Tradition, Religion, Modernity, Social, Cultural, Portray, Hindu, Values And Philosophy

## INTRODUCTION

This latest of Narayan's novel came out in 1967. It is the story of Jagan, a sweet-vendor. He is religious minded and has been considerably influenced by The Gita. He is also a staunch follower of Gandhi and tries to live up to the Gandhian way of life. He wears Khadi and spins Charkha. However, he is very careful about money and keeps two account books to avoid paying income tax. He is devoted to money, and he is also devoted to his twenty years old son, Mali. Indeed, it is Mali who does not care much for his dotting father. One fine morning he quietly announces his decision to give up his studies so that he may write a novel for a novel competition and win a prize of twenty five thousands rupees. However, the father soon discovers that no novel is being written, his darling son is merely wasting his time. Further, he comes to know from a cousin that he intends to American to learn short story writing there, and that he has already got a passport and booked his seat. To his great shock he discovers that this has been done by stealing ten thousands rupees which he had so painstakingly saved.

Jagan makes the best of a bad bargain, and proudly tells the people that his son is in America. He fondly shows them his letters. But he receives, another shock of his life, when in one of his letters his son tells him that he has started taking beef, and that they, in India, should follow his example. He receives a further shock when Mali returns home, not alone, but with his American wife, Grace, later, Jagan learns, to his great grief, that they are not actually married, but have been leading an immoral, sinful life. Mali now wants to set up a factory for manufacturing story. Writing machines, this is to be done with American collaboration, and as his share he needs two and a half lakh rupees. He presses his father to give him the money; for he is sure he has earned that much of money by selling sweets at exorbitant rates, and avoiding the payment of income-tax. The idea that stories can be manufactured by electronic device is affine piece of satire on the modern craze for machine. Jagan is now a frustrated man. First, he brings down the price of sweets and thus offends other sweet-vendors of Malgudi. Then he decides to hand over his business to his son, and himself to lead a retired life in an ashram across the river.

Jagan, the main character in *The Vendor of Sweets* has been portrayed with great concentration. He is an interesting study in paradox and antithesis. He is such a hostile bundle of simplicity and shrewdness of candidness and fussiness, which he can be other worldly and this-worldly at once. Jagan, the biggest sweet seller of the town, asks people to conquer taste in order to conquer self. The self styled Gandhi has perfected the art of living on nothing, yet his need for money is great. He preaches that money is an evil, yet he takes great care to keep his daily earning as free cash. The charm in Jagan's character springs from Narayan's delicate comic treatment of these paradoxes.

Jagan emerges as a living character on account of the minute care with which Narayan brings into relief his eccentricities and oddities such as drinking only four ounces of water a day, using twenty drops of honey per day instead of sugar,

brushing teeth with margosa twigs, using only ten-watt bulbs in the house, and so on. Jagan's son Mali is also a well drawn character. Mali, a motherless son, is spoiled by his father's great love and care. He cultivates his own ideas and at last he decides to leave college and be a writer. He also declares that he is writing a story for story of competition advertised by a popular magazine. There is little communication between father and son. After some months Jagan finds that he has written nothing. Failing to make any distinguishing achievement at Malgudi, Mali goes to America in search of the new knowledge, and later returns with Grace, who is with American in search of new knowledge, and later returns with Grace, who is half-Korean and half American. He also wants to get rid of her. Mali leads a licentious life and is arrested for the illegal possession of liquor. Jagan authorizes his cousin to take necessary steps but adds significantly. A dose of prison life is not a bad thing. It may be just what he needs now. Mali embodies the modern spirit of rebellion against established social and moral code.

*"The Vendor of Sweets* is thoroughly permeated with the Hindu religion and the Hindu way of life. It is not merely that Narayan describes in the novel Hindu gods and goddess or explains the Hindu philosophy as enunciated in the Vedas, Puranas or the Gita. The truth is that somehow the novel has caught the very flavor and atmosphere of Hindu way of life. It can be fairly said that the novel is veritable picture of Indian life, and Jagan, the un-heroic hero of the novel is spokesman through which this Hindu life has been exhibited" ( Pattanayak, 149)

R. K Narayan has Hindu life in almost all his novels. In most of his novels he gives a picturesque description of the holy rivers and the temples which invest the inhabitants with their aroma and flavor, he himself writes " You can't write a novel without Krishna, Ganesh Hanuman, astrologers, pundits and Devadasis." (122) most of his works have for their titles the religious names Gods, Demons, and others, The Ramayan and The Mahabharata. The Bhasmasur legends serve as the background for his novel The Man- Eater of Malgudi.

The Gita and the Puranas are often referred to in the novel as guide for our actions. The God and goddesses do not only serve as atmosphere but are often consulted for guidance and for the cure of barrenness. Jagan is not an orthodox Hindu. As a matter of fact, he has been ostracized by his orthodox relatives. Yet he is a devout Hindu and keeps with him even in his retreat his Charkha. He has short comings. He is not very generous and possesses a lot of free cash for which he does not pay income tax. His black money gives an ironic twist to his reading of the Gita. His ideals of charity are juxtaposed ironically with his avoidance of tax payment. However, in spite of these shortcomings his life is rooted in Hindu religion.

The flavor and the atmosphere of the Hindu religion have been created by the detailed description of the Hindu gods, goddess's scriptures, temples and sanyasis. The cousin says that he will not become a yogi and lose the taste for all. Jagan tells the cousin that the books must be treated respectfully because they are the form of the goddess Saraswati. Kalidas received inspiration from the goddess. He was an idiot until the goddess made a scratch on his tongue and then he burst into lyrical poetry and wrote the immortal Shakuntala. Jagan asks the cousin to offer a couple of coconuts to Ganesha at the Corner temple. Jagan, who is in the Puja room, before the gods, flowers grace about turning the rosary between his fingers. He tells grace that margosa is the embrosia mentioned in the Vedas. When he is hunted by grace he lapses into meditation before the gods. Grace creates the religious and cries "don't you believe now that I could have been a Hindu in my last life" (211)

Jagan in *Vendor of Sweets* is described as "a cousin, though how he came to be called so could not be explained, since he claimed cousinhood with many others in the town". ( Kumar, 129) A breach in the family tradition or disintegration in family life only brings disaster and disorder. Mali, Rosie, Balu and other characters of Narayan suffer because they rebel against family tradition.

Jagan remembers the heritage of the Ramayana and Bhagavad-Gita when he asks Mali not to blame India. When Jagan gets puzzled and is grieved on account of Mali and grace, the cousin asks him to go out on a pilgrimage to the temple and bathe in the sacred waters. Chinna Dorai mentions the figure of Hindu gods and goddess done by his master. the figure of shiva the destroyer, Vishnu the protector, Devi, who vanquished the demon Manisha with the dreadful weapons she bore in her eighteen arms, and the Dwarapalaka, gate keeps at the shrine, and the designs on the doorway and frenzies on the walls, were all alike done by my master, all over the South. The description of the temples given By Chinna makes Jagan regret that he had not visited any temple for long. The master of Chinna had dreamt of a five-faced Gayatri, the deity of radiance. Chinna describes a goddess thus: " This is where the goddess's hands come; she is ten-armed, and except for the one which indicates protection and the one offering a blessing all the other arms old a variety of divine articles" (143) while Jagan's dinner is cooking, he stands before the gods for a second with eyes shut. Chinna communicates to Jagan a thrilling vision when he describes the Goddess with five heads. Jagan tells Grace that if she reads Puranas, she will find that his wife's place is beside her husband whatever may happen.

The superstition associated with religion finds a place in the novel. The sister of Jagan tells him and his elder brother that they will go to hell if they hunt for the grasshoppers. The father of Jagan takes his son and daughter in law to the Santana Krishna temple on the Badri Hill to cure barrenness. The description sometime takes an ironic twist. Jagan's reading of the Gita is only a camouflage for inspecting his shop. As long as the frying and sizzling noise in the kitchen continues and the strays pass, Jagan notices nothing, his gaze unflinchingly fixed on the Sanskrit lines in a red- round copy of the Bhagavad Gita, but if there is the slightest pause in the sizzling, he cries out, without lifting his eyes from the sacred text, ' what is happening? 'He considers his free cash, the black money, to transfers, in due course of time to a casket behind the family gods in the Puja room. The father of Jagan, who grudges spending money for purchasing coconut on higher price speaks ironically " yes, yes it was written in the Vedas ten thousand years ago that you must be exploited on this pot of earth by this particular coconut woman" (109) then there are also references to Shiva and Buddha. All this shows that the whole novel is permeated with the Hindu way of life.

Throughout the novel the Hindu philosophy guide the action even though it may sometime serve as ironical comments for the characters, Jagan the vendor of sweets speaks out in the very beginning of the novel a universal truth enunciated in The Gita, " onquer taste and you will have conquered the self" (123). In the case of Jagan it is ironic because in his sweet-vending stimulates taste. The picture of Jagan sitting under the framed picture of the goddess Laxshmi hanging on the wall, and offering prayers is ironic in the sense that he worships Laxshmi, not sarswati money and not enlightenment.

He is never possesses, not even the time renunciation, the outlook of a soul, disembodied. Floating above the grime of the earth, He, however,, believe in the philosophy of the shastra that the killing of a cow is the worst of the five deadly sins, and condemns the beef eating of Mali in the context. He hopes to deal with the beef eating Mali and grace in the light of the philosophy of the Gita that one can do one's duty up to a point. He speaks out to Jagan the essence of Hindu philosophy that money is an evil but he does not discard money. The philosophy of the Gita si discussed when the delegation of the sweet-vendor approaches Jagan. Jagan says that it is not difficult to find out the pure stuff because Krishna says in the Gita that if you make up your mind, you will find the object of your search.

The saint explains the Gita as enjoying us to perform our duty in the right spirit and the right measure. When Jagan suffers because of his excessive attachment with Mali, the Cousin reminds him the philosophy of the Gita that one should not identity oneself with objects or circumstances. The bearded man, Chinna Doraji enlightens Jagan with the essence of Hindu philosophy in the following words, "We should not let the body deceive us as to the true nature of our being. One is not really bone and meat" (89) the cycle of life according to the Hindu philosophy runs into four stages, from the beginning to stage of sanyas.

Jagan speaks out this philosophy when he says, "yes, yes, God knows I need a retreat. You know, my friend, at some in one's lie one must uproot from the accustomed surroundings and disappears so that others may continue in peace. It would be the most accredited procedure according to our in their lives, leaving the affairs of the world to younger people" (104) Jagan at least is reminded of the concept of Viswarupa. When Arjuna hesitates to perform his duty on the battle field, god comes to him in the guise of his charioteer and then reveals himself in all his immensity. On one side, he was thousand forced. "I behold you, infinite in form on all sides, with countless arms, stomachs, mouth and eyes, neither you're and nor middle nor beginning I see...." (123) this then is the Hindu philosophy explained in the novel.

When Jagan goes in the company of Chinna Dorai to the garden with a pond in it, across the river and sees a god a god rise from a stone, he seems to be spiritually transformed. Watching Chinna, it is difficulties for him to belief that he was in the twentieth century. Sweetmeat-vending, money, and his son's problems seem remote and unrelated to him. The edge of reality begins to blur. This man from the previous millennium seems to be the only object worthy of notice. He looks like one possessed. Jagan thinks that he is on the verge of a new Janama. In his next life he wants to be born anyone except money making sweet-maker with a spoilt son. He thinks he is a different man now.

Although he still cares for the shop and the house, the contact with Chinna and the benign, mysterious nature has affected him profoundly. An internal transformation has taken place in him. He thanks God for taking pity on his isolated, miserable condition by sending the white-bearded savior. When he reaches home afterwards he himself a stranger in his own houses. He feels that he is no longer his former self.

But this spiritual awakening in him is not together a new thing. Jagan is a complex character. Even when he is worldly in the beginning he is somewhat spiritual and wonders at Nature's mystery. "He stood for a moment gazing at the stars, enthralled at the spectacle of the firmament" (109) thus we find the philosophy and the spirituality of the Hindu religion amply illustrated in the novel.

## **CONCLUSION**

The characters of novel delightfully imitate his conflict with his alienated son and how he finally leaves for rejection, besieged by the sheer pressure and monotony of his life. the climax of the interior action reaches in chapter ten with Jagan's discovery that Mali and Grace have tainted his ancestral home by living in sin. With this inward withdrawal the repressive self fully release itself; Jagan realizes his ignorance what the theorists have come to recognize that ignorance and knowledge, vested in character as an independent entity, are crucial to an understanding of narrative structure. It is a clash of the Indian and western cultures.

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