

R K NARAYANA'S MR.SAMPATH AS A NOVEL OF LOVABLE ROGUE

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I deal with R.K.Narayan's novel, "Mr.Sampath" (1949). It is the story of an unscrupulous and cunning rogue, Sampath who is the victim of high ambition and over-confidence without adequate corresponding abilities. It is a didactic story giving warning to every over-ambitious man of the society who wants to soar high in the sky of success in a very short period.

Keywords: Dingy, frail, Kama, pauranic, rogue, satirizes, scriptures, speculations, squeezed and un-requested.

Introduction

Indian English Literature attained a distinct place in the literary landscape of India. Indo-English novel occupies the most important place in its quality and quantity. Its glory has risen with the rise of the 'Big Three' Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R K Narayan. Narayan is one of the few Indian-English fictionists who belong to first rate novelists of the world of the 20th century. He can be called the father of the regional novel in India and the great creator of the imaginary town Malgudi. He is a good story teller with an eye for the ludicrous aspect of life. The heroes of Narayan are never drawn on a heroic scale. He is the creation of the unheroic heroes. The heroes do not control the events but the events control them in the novel. One such novel is Mr.Sampath. It was first published in 1949 in London. Its American title is "The Printer of Malgudi". Its first Indian edition comes out in 1956, with the title 'Mr.Sampath'. Mr. Sampath, the living friend of the novelist has been the main source and inspiration behind the creation of the novel Mr. Sampth. It is the story of 'Lovable Rogue', who can face even the most difficult situations. Though the novel is titled 'Mr. Sampath', his name is not mentioned in the first 64 pages out of total 219 pages to man exists and going in and out of the pages. So the protagonist of the novel is not the title character but Srinivas, the editor of a weekly journal, 'The Banner'. Narayan's experiences as an editor lie behind the character of Srinivas.

Plot-Review:

The story of Mr.Sampath is interestingly told. Srinivas is aged 37 years and lives with wife and son. He is an unpractical idealist. He has tried many jobs and has rejected them all. He stays in his room, which is part of a joint-family home, and worries about drifting with time. His elder brother, a lawyer, looks after the household, including Srinivas' wife and son while

Srinivas idles away his time, reading Hindu scriptures. Then he suddenly decides to go to Malgudi and start a weekly journal “The Banner” which, he hopes, will be a source of truth and vision. The journal is like ‘The Spectator’ of Addison and Steele which has two-fold task to do: on the one hand, attacking ruthlessly pig-headedness wherever found, and on the other prodding humanity into pursuing an ever receding perfection”. Srinivas’ writing, however, is pretentious and full of unintentionally comic bombast. He lives in a small house rented from an old man who lives like a ‘Sanyasi’ or holy ascetic. Srinivas’ frail wife and young son arrive in this dingy, uncomfortable setting, and the protagonist finds himself burdened by domestic problems to compound his own financial and spiritual ones.

Srinivas’ restless ruminations about time, existence and fate increases his own anxieties but without diminishing his essential humanity. He befriends Ravi, a bank clerk who is ridiculously infatuated with a woman who does not know him. Ravi has artistic talent that is not fully realized so long as his love of the woman goes unrequited, so Srinivas tries to help in this area.

From chapter IV onwards, Mr. Sampath dominates the story. Problems proliferate. Mr. Sampath, the obliging owner of “The Truth Printing Works” is Srinivas’ journal printer. Srinivas edits the newspaper, while Mr. Sampath prints it. They work night and day to satisfy the increasing demands of their clamouring public of Malgudi. In rare moments of relaxation, Srinivas occupies his mind puzzling over the futility of human existence, while Mr. Sampath good naturedly shoulders all the financial burdens. Sampath is flamboyant and capricious and says to Srinivas, “I can do anything”. He saves Srinivas from all the worries of account keeping and credit. He promises anything just to keep people happy: He promises to help the landlord marry off a granddaughter, he promises to search Ravi’s dream-girl, and he promises to deliver on time all of his printing orders. He gives his most dedicated service to Srinivas. Owing to lack of funds, “Truth Printing Works” is forced to shut down. Then automatically the publication of the “Banner” is too stopped. Then Sampath persuades to write a film story for his new venture “Sunrise Pictures”. Sampath persuades the two rich persons of Malgudi, Sohan Lal and Somu to finance the film company. The ‘Burning of Kama’ or ‘The Bhasmasur-Katha’, a famous ‘pauranic tale’ is chosen for the film script for its supernatural appeal. A wide publicity is made and applications are invited from the stars to play the roles of Shiva, Parvathi and Kama. One V.L.G who claims to have done the role of Shiva in a hundred pictures- “I always do Shiva, no other part, I am a devotee of Shiva”-is booked for Shiva. Sampath brings in Santha Bai to play the role of ‘Parvathi’. She is very beautiful woman. Sampath calls her his cousin. But he is attracted by the heroine of the film Santha Bai. In his heart of hearts, he plans to make her his second wife. He openly ignores his wife and five children. He feels no tricks of conscience or moral compunction when Srinivas advises him to be faithful to his family. Ravi, a young artist is also in love with Shanta Bai.

The opening ceremony starts even without the opener, the District Judge being held up in his court for some urgent work. Demello, the cameraman is more worried about the safety of his costly instrument than anything else. He takes special care of his instrument when they put flowers and sandal paste on it as a traditional Hindu ritual for an auspicious start. The shooting is started.

On the day of the final shooting everyone in the studio in a perfect frenzy, Shiva demands an additional amount of Rs.5000/- on the spot. The reason is that V.L.G. gets jealous of Shanti for better treatment given and extra money paid to her. Why, after all, should they discriminate

between Shiva and Parvathi. His refusal provides Sampath with the opportunity to do the role of Shiva. When the frantic shooting of the scene is in progress with Sampath as Shiva and Shanti as Parvathi, Ravi, an old lover of Shanti appears suddenly and knocks Shiva down. He embraces Shanti. This is followed by utter confusion and chaos. Ravi is arrested and sent to jail for his lunacy. Shanti becomes Sampath's mistress. Shanti and Sampath retire from this disorderly world to the secluded bungalow on the Mempi hills. On the advice of the exorcist, Ravi is taken for a cure to the holy temple at Sailam.

One day Shanti disappears in Malgudi and she goes to Madras, leaving a note to Mr. Sampath. Mr. Sampath returns to Malgudi but leaves the place soon for he owes huge amounts to financiers. We find Mr. Sampath on the last page walking rather forlornly towards the Malgudi railway station. Thus Mr. Sampath starts as a printer, becomes a producer-actor, finds disaster overtaking him and the film company and ends as a forlorn person whose real position is to be a printer. Srinivas has published all these events in his journal. 'The Banner' which gives a new lease of life to him. He feels relieved that he has escaped a further instalment of entanglement in Mr. Sampath's teeming speculations. The novel ends as Mr. Sampath bids fare well to Srinivas. His story ends with a sense of Karma- the Hindu doctrine of calm acceptance of fate. Everything Srinivas sees is now balanced as distress melts away and chaos is perceived as an illusion of reality. It is he who integrates the plot. V.S. Naipaul and other critics contend, the ending marks a division between Narayan's form (which implies concern) and his attitude (which denies it). One is reminded of William Makepeace Thackeray concluding 'Vanity Fair'. "Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out". Only, Mr. Sampath is too large to be squeezed into any box, and Srinivas, the philosopher has raised questions not easily put away.

Critique

Mr. Sampath is among R K Narayan's most colourful creation. Although he is introduced late- more than a quarter of the way through the novel- and is not the real protagonist, he is vivid. He is a living character in the annals of Indo-Anglian fiction. This story of an unscrupulous rogue has been written with delicacy and care. Mr. Sampath has its weaknesses and defects. But he is so obliging and so much prepared to take your worries on his shoulders'. So we love this masterpiece creation of R.K.Narayan. All the other characters in the novel are known to us in proportion to their relationship with Mr. Sampath. This is rather a didactic story giving warning to every over ambitious man of the society who wants to soar high in the sky of success in a very short period. It preaches us that an evil way always ends into misery and trouble. He also satirizes the tendency of extramarital relations in our society. "Mr. Sampath- The Printer of Malgudi" reflects the calm style and well-defined character, as well as some recklessness in its characters. This book cannot be called as a comedy as it unfurls some relationships of life that carry a lot of meaning as a whole. Sampath has learnt from his past mistakes and found his true niche in life at the end of this book. It has been filmed both in Tamil and Hindi. And despite some weaknesses, ranks very high in the world of Indo-Anglian Fiction.

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