

**UNIVERSAL FATHERHOOD: STUDY OF CULTURAL DEVIATION IN  
R.K.NARAYAN'S NOVEL 'THE VENDOR OF SWEETS'****PROF. DR. CHANDRAKANT R. MANDLIK**Head, Department of English  
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*In the changing scenario of the world role of every individual being in the domestic life is important. When the issue of authorities comes for discussion we immediately turn to the two personalities like mother and father. One may underline mother's role in emotional life of her son or daughter. The role of father is equally significant. He is treated as the source of moral, intellectual and educational support. He shapes his children's life with great care. Despite all this the different life styles and attitudes lead to the conflict between the two. Through the father son relationship R.K. Narayan presents various themes like conflict between tradition and modernity and cultural deviation.*

**Key Words-** Father, Moral, Intellectual, Educational Supporter, Different Life Styles, Attitudes, Conflicts and Cultural Deviation**Introduction**

This world presently is advancing fast due to changes in different fields like politics, social life, economics, and science. All this greatly influences human life now and then. Human beings do not find time to spare for each other. They have become loving puppets of T.V. and mobile which do not allow them to think of themselves and people around them in the domestic and public atmosphere. In this situation human relations happened to change. Traditional norms, customs and moral values play significant roles in keeping relationships intact. But people under the influence of changing science and technology, economic conditions and commerce have begun to side them.

**Father in Human Relationships:**

What is the human relationship? It is the basic question. The answer of this question makes human beings to know importance and values of human relationships. Human relationship is not looked at from physical associations. It is considered on emotional, moral and spiritual levels. *Collier English Dictionary* states the human relationship in the words 'human relationship is the relationship between two human beings attached to each other intimately, emotionally, sentimentally, spiritually and intellectually.' (P, 467) The slogan 'Man born alone will die alone' shows his loneliness. But, between birth and death he undergoes from various types of human relationships. He has to maintain relationships with mother, father, wife and friends. The role of the mother in the life of a son or a daughter is sublime. The role of the father is also considered superior to the role of the mother. "If mother is the earth, the father is the sky who provides roof to everyone." (Singh, 2002:24) If mother is the source of



emotional support the father is the source of moral, intellectual and educational support. In Indian tradition father takes care of son's health, betterment and happiness. He tries to see his own future in his son's future.

### **Father in Creative Writings:**

The greatness of Indian writers is reflected in presentation of father's role in their writings. The story which is evaporated by the Indian writers in their literary products is different from English writers. English writers are confined on triangle of love, life and death. In the modern times human relationships have become badly affected by distortions and deformities.

Indian writers in the past presented human relationships with spiritual, intellectual and religious concerns. Toru Dutt's emotionalism is widely known. Sir Aurobindo's spiritualism in his writing tells various angles of life. Tagore's intellectualism and Sarojini Naidu's sacredness have a great help in human relationships in the past. Their thoughts of human relationship are free from confusion and complexity.

During Gandhiji's period we witness development in the literary field of novels. This period is mostly dominated by the novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K.Narayan, Manohar Malgaonkar, Kamala Markandaya and Bhamani Bhattacharya. These novelists have presented the most important segment like human relationship in their novels. They have different views and visions about human relationships. Mulk Raj Anand has social inclination. Raja Rao has intellectual and spiritual concerns. Mulk Raj Anand's novels like *Coolie, Untouchable, The Village, Across The Black Waters and The Sword and Sickle* are about the criticism and eradication of the evils. He attacks traditional values of the society. Raja Rao presents spiritual and intellectual journey of an individual in his novel, *The Serpent and the Rope*. He establishes an intellectual kind of human relationship. M.K.Naik says '*Anand is a novelist of social leanings and longings while Raja Rao is a novelist of spiritual fervour.*' (Naik, 1982: 22)

In R.K. Narayan's presentation of human beings like father, mother, husband, wife and children and grandfather is free from partiality. He takes into consideration the place and existence of an individual in the society. His novels *Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts, The Financial Expert, The Vendor of Sweets and The World of Nagraj* portray the character of father in relation to son. Mother is considered as more attached to her children than the father.

She is selfless, moral and ready to sacrifice her life for the best future of her children. The father's role in the life of children is also significant in shaping the children. Both father and mother dream to make children's life happy and prosperous. R.K.Narayan presents role of the father in his novels from objective point of view.

Narayan thinks a son in Indian family as a recognized figure who obeys certain conventions of family structure. As an individual child his relationship with anyone is pivotal. In this



regard William Walsh says, 'A child is an individual creature, unprophesiable, unlegislated for, enjoying spontaneously an unrehearsed autonomy.' (Walsh, 1982:7)

In *The Vendor of Sweets* the main focus is on the role of the father Jagan in relation to his son, Mali. Through their relationship R.K.Narayan attempts to dramatize conflict between East and West. He portrays difference between Indian styles of life and western style of life. O.P. Mathur says 'It is in *The Vendor of Sweets* that the East-West encounter is dramatized powerfully'. (Mathur, 32) R.K.Narayan presents the theme of conflict between tradition and modernity through the characters of Jagan and Mali.

### **The Role of Father in R. K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets***

Narayan treats the theme in '*The Vendor of Sweets*' of the father-son relationship which is presented through the characters of Jagan, the sweet merchant and follower of Gandhian philosophy and his son Mali who is fascinated by the western ways of life. It presents the theme of conflict between tradition and modernity. The novel presents the conflict between the old and young generation.

Fifty years old Jagan strongly believes in unchanging traditional values and the Hindu way of life. His son Mali is under the Western way of life which is changeable. Worshipping and singing sermons of Lakshmi and reciting *Bhagwad Gita* by Jagan represent him as a man who believes in God and religion. As every Indian father Jagan desires to make his son well educated and morally good person. Mali's decision to learn the art of novel writing in America is not approved by Jagan in the beginning. Like a typical Indian father he accepts his son's plan for his prosperous future life. His love for Valmiki's *Ramayana* indicates his great regard for the Indian culture.

Mali's idea of beef eating in order to solve the problem of food in India suggests his western attitude. Jagan wishes to teach spiritual values of cow to his son Mali and he writes him a letter about it which shows the influence of spiritualism on Jagan. Mali's return to home with a half-Korean and half-American girl shakes Jagan's faith in traditional values. Mali wants to enjoy modern life style. Consequently, Jagan decides to live the life of retirement in the forest. The relationship between Jagan and his son underlines that Jagan does not appreciate his son's Western ways of thinking and Mali has no respect for age-old Indian tradition and morals.

The rebellion in '*The Vendor of Sweets*' has been noticed as a cultural deviation, and is described through the characters Mali, Jagan's deviant son, and Grace, the Christian girl, Mali's wife. The novel is a story of ethical humiliation which takes place in Narayan's traditional and sacred society. It is seen through the notion of rebellion. One may observe a subjective relevance which is concerned with Jagan's conclusive renunciation. The young lovers 'Mali and Grace are the members of rebellious group. Narayan shows Mali's rebellion in his act of cutting the coupons from the library magazine in front of the librarian to "teach that librarian a lesson." (Narayan, 1967:45) The defiance of Mali reflects his strong attraction for the "aspirins." (Narayan, 1967:28) Lack of interest in the formal education leads Mali to leave the college. "I don't want to study, that's all." (Narayan, 1967:29) It is clearly his



noticeable defiance. One may observe Mali's negligence of sacrosanct tradition, Goddess Saraswati.

As an Indian father Jagan wants to educate his son in India. Mali's initial rebellion is witnessed in his dejection to continue his study in India and leaving to America for higher studies. His behavior with his father like a stranger has been realized as his defiance. He behaves against the will of his father as his notions of personal liberty clash with Jagan's traditional values. Narayan uses the American interlude as a technique to mark Mali's deviation as a firmly established ground for Jagan's renunciation.

In America, Mali's act of undergoing a course of writing a novel also notes symbolically rebellious notion. The novel writing machine is an example of satire and paradox of commercialization in art. India has great tradition of writing. '*The Ramayana*', '*The Maha Bharatha*', and '*The Bhagvad Gita*' are the products of India's remarkable tradition of writing. India's sacrosanct tradition of the art of writing is well emphasized when Jagan asks his son, 'did Valmiki go to America or Germany in order to learn to write his *Ramayana*. (Narayan, 1967: 51)

Mali returns to Malgudi with a girl Grace who is half-Korean, Half-American and she also adds one more dimension to his spirit of rebellion. But as a follower of a Gandhian principle of tolerance Jagan, Mali's father has to accept Grace as his daughter-in-law who is unable to deny their arrival in traditional home of Malgudi. Jagan takes her arrival as to fill the empty place in the house which is left by the death of Ambika, Jagan's wife. She stresses on Mali's cultural aberration and tender emotions of the old man for his daughter in law. Grace marks Mali's cultural aberration.

The east-west encounter is remarkably visible when Mali explains his father a plan to invest a large amount for purchasing the novel writing machine. Jagan's traditional view of life does not become ready to accept Mali's plan. Narayan presents Mali's modernity against Jagan's world of tradition. The crisis of values in the Hindu joint family life can be identified with the clash between the two generations: father and son. M.K. Naik comments, 'the allied themes of the clash of the two generations and east-west confrontation are handled too sketchily to yield significant artistic results.' (Naik, 1983:82)

Mali's thought of buying America-made novel writing machine shows the influence of modernity on him. The machine may be another option for the imagination. Being interested in the Goddess Gayatri, Jagan becomes ready to accept the sculptor's proposal to buy the place and turn it into seclusion. By doing so he would see the birth of Goddess of Radiance. Jagan's unwillingness for investing capital reflects his understanding of the spiritual investment rather than the material one. Narayan shows Mali's interest in the machine and Jagan's interest in Goddess Gayatri. There are two contrasting approaches, one is materialistic and the other is spiritual.

Mali's act of rebellion is seen once again. He is in police lock-up on the charge of violating the prohibition laws. He is found with half a bottle of alcohol in his car. Imprisonment of Mali puts forward the unavoidable enemy for deviant Mali. It also marks Jagan's decision of





going to 'vanaprasthashram' away from family complications and a bond of connections. I will seek a new interest different from the set of repetitions performed for sixty years. I am going somewhere, not carrying more than my shoulder can bear. All that I need is in that bag.' (Narayan, 1967:190-191)

Narayan is aware of 'Karma' consequence in the determined universe of Mali. His living with Grace as husband and wife without traditional Hindu marriage system provides a picture of enticement. It is anti-traditional. The orthodox and traditional society of Malgudi does not permit such type of marriage. Mali's American made novel writing machine is an unsacred act in the land of Saraswati, the Goddess of learning. Here, instead of giving capital punishment to the sinner he is afforded a chance to learn and realize. The encounters between the father's traditional and the son's westernized generation and the cultural differences between the two cause Mali's deviation in *'The Vendor of Sweets'*.

### Conclusion

Jagan and his son Mali are contrasting characters because their thoughts towards each other, life styles, values of life and their beliefs are opposite. The communication gap between them does not allow them to understand each other. Consequently Jagan is unable to understand his son's modern style of life and attitudes. Mali, Jagan's son has no respect for his father's age-old Indian tradition and convention. Jagan's spiritualism is contrasted with Mali's materialism and commercialism by the novelist, R. K. Narayan.

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