

Understanding of Children's Psychology: A Study of R. K. Narayan's Short Story "A Hero"

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Abstract

R.K. Narayan is one of the greatest writers in India. He treats childhood from different ways. He treats childhood as an idol (image) of love who loves to his family and fear from the unwanted and unnecessary dangerous task, which is the basic quality of a child, this primitive quality has been drawn by the writer in a proper shape the underlining the character of Swami, which is the perfect example of childhood. The paper attempts to reveal the psychology of a child through the story of Swami, the lead character of the story, "A Hero".

Manuscript

Children are instinctive, they have strong imaginations, vivid sensation; they see life as black or white, and bigger than reality, their enemies seem demons, their friends angels, their joys or sorrows absolute and eternal. (Cecil10)

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Ayyar Naranayanswami (1907-2001) is one of the greatest novelists and a short story writer in India. The greatness of Narayan lies in his presentation of social implication in terms of various kinds such as human relationship and childhood etc. He had a special inclination towards the subjects related with childhood. In most of his works he treated childrens his main theme, their thoughts, their achievements and their fears are the prime objectives of their

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novels and stories. “Forty-five a Month”, “The Birthday Gift”, “Dodu”, “A Hero” and “Leela's Friend” depict child as his main subject. Their thinking, their achievements bring one back to the world of children, happy, innocent, mischievous and sad with their little problem. Narayan seems to re-create the world of childhood with rare artistry, his compassionate and genial humor makes these stories utterly charming and he also creates the entire world of children which is as authentic as it should be, this world contains the power of childhood, their anxiety, courage, self-realizing power and the enthusiasm of being to accept the challenge from the world of matured people. He creates his child characters as the powerhouse to take the risk and provides the understanding to deal with the risk.

In most of his works he enhances the quality of a normal child, their behavior towards the fear, and the way he tackles with them. His concept is quite clear; he treats the childhood in a concise manner to teach people that a small child can also have thoughts of getting a pride from the society. He tells how a child can think, how he reacts with the situation, steps he choose for performing any action, their joy, their pride etc. which are the basic thoughts of their imagination.

The proposed paper is an attempt to study the treatment of childhood in relation to R. K. Narayan's short story “A Hero”. Childhood is the state of time of being a child, a state of immaturity. It is a state when a child does not have any experience about the society and the real world. This feature is the basic part of Narayan's works. He treats the various aspects of childhood in his story “A Hero”

such as courage, love, innocence, fear, juvenility and vivaciousness in terms of fear and enthusiasm.

“A Hero” is a part of his short story collection *Under the Banyan Tree* (1985), which in turn is a part of the *Malgudi Days*. Narayan wrote the story about a boy and his father. The character of “A Hero”, Swami was a student of second standard. The writer makes his reader recede back to his days of childhood and enjoy each moment of the story. The point of view of a child, his perspective and insight into things, his dwelling in an imaginary world when the world is divide into only good and bad; the good as angels and bad as demons. As other children of his same age, Swami also has some feelings towards life. He used to sleep besides his grandmother to be found himself safe. He also has his own world of fantasy, joy, carelessness and love. He lives like a normal child, but as the circumstances change he can cope with them according to his own style. In this story the writer presents the incidents to build a plot whereby a simple boy in the end becomes a hero because of his heroic act, which is the result of an unwanted and an unimpressive incident.

As a child, Swami is shown to be timid boy but successful hero. He explains his bravery in terms of fear, luck, enthusiasm and the contradiction of thoughts of a child and his father. His father says that courage is everything, and strength and age are not very important, but Swami is different from his father, “Swami disputed the theory, how can it to be father? Suppose I have all the courage, what can I do if a tiger should attack me?”(126)

Swami told his father that the news of the child does not belong to an actual child while it's a story of a matured person. From the point of view of a child, his mental status will tell how he feels about his father's false pride and an unwelcome demand. This perspective suggests that such expectations of elders from their children are only for their own esteem, they will never think about the feelings of their children. Elders never try to understand the mental pressure of their children. They only want to satisfy their false statements. In spite of their maturity they only want to fulfill their wishes from their children without understanding the real situation. All such conclusions are derived from Swami's thoughts, what he proves when he faces the situation to compete with the life when he forcefully placed alone in a dark office room.

Normally, a small child tries to avoid such situation when he has to be alone for the whole night; similarly Swami tried all possible tricks to avoid such an unwished desire of his father. The emerging excuses of childhood adopted by innocent Swami are described through these lines:

Let me sleep in the hall, Father, Swami pleaded. Your office room
is very dusty and there may be scorpions behind your law books.
And Can I have a lamp burning in the room? (127)

Swami tries such arguments to alter his father's decision. He said to him that he would sleep alone from the first of next month. He gives excuses regarding the scorpions in his father's office, getting lamp with him and other unsuccessful trials. These examples are full of innocence and childish nature that reflect his childhood. Swami was now compelled to do all that what he never wanted to do.

This expresses the view of the adolescent that he only tries to keep away from a drastic and a fearful situation. Similarly Swami tries to escape from all this. The writer creates a real life situation what a callow can deliberate from his heart. He portrays the situation from the perspective of the child.

The writer treats Swami's fear. Fear is a feeling of anxiety and agitation caused by the presence or nearness of danger. He explains the fear in expressive words which creates a picture in front of the readers. He treats his fear in the given line, "As the night advanced and the silence in the house deepened his heart beat faster. He remembered all the stories of devils and ghosts he had heard in his life" (128). In the above lines he describes the state of fear when Swami was alone in the office in the dark. All the stories of devils and monsters were dwelling in his mind. He treats Swami's childhood as the narrator, who tells his own mental status when he was compelled to face a situation which was tragic as well as dreadful for him. He explains the scenario when a boy accepts the challenge of his father to prove himself. Being a child's psychologist R .K. Narayan pictures the boy's fear and nightmares, his revolting behavior, unwillingness towards the task and his juvenility. The writer focuses on the child's behavior during the state of tension. How a child speculates the circumstances, and how he retrieves the result from his consideration.

Due to the stillness he feels the sound of all kind of noises such as ticking of clock, rustle of trees, sounds produced by the insects and so on. He was dying with the fear. Writer tries to show the perspective of childhood that a small boy

will have to face the drastic situation alone, his heart is sinking and due to fear he kept himself under the bench.

Ultimately we came to the conclusion that during such incidents sometimes a positive result will emerge as in the case of Swami. Under the unfavorable condition he got success to arrest the most notorious thief. This proves the courage which comes along with the fear. Courage is the attitude of facing and dealing with anything recognized as dangerous. Although he was frightful but his childhood compels him to protect himself from any drastic situation. And such a thought leads him to the path of success. Along with Swami's fear the writer explains his enthusiasm in these lines:

He realized that the devil would presently pull him out and tear him, and so why would he wait? As it came nearer he crawled out from under the bench, hugged it with all his might, and used his teeth on it like a mortal weapon. (129)

Whether it seems a coincidence to Swami's father, but he can't even think about the situation that has been faced by his own blood. This fearful courage explains the child's mentality, how they became brave when an unwanted situation comes on their way. Children have an ability to prove themselves during the time of enigma as Swami did.

Vivaciousness is full of life and animation; it provides a feeling of liveliness. Swami's vivacious nature seems at the last when he found himself proud after nabbing a notorious thief. It was his great achievement for what he was very happy, along with that there is again a second reason for which he was annihilated

is the reason that now there is no longer a need for him to sleep alone in any dark room. Already he proved his bravery as well as he successfully opt the challenge proposed by his father. His bravery makes him a hero in his school. These lines prove his pride:

Congratulations were showered on Swami next day. His classmates looked at him with respect, and his teacher patted his back. The head master said that he was a true scout. Swami had bitten into the flesh of one of the most notorious house breakers of the district and the police were grateful to him for it. (129)

This vivacious feature explains the esteem of a child when he had done a work of bravery or something up to the mark. There has been the feeling of giggling inside Swami's heart along with the feel of relaxation.

R. K. Narayan treats the childhood as pure as any holy myth, their thoughts are limpid and clear to describe their views, as like Swami told to his father that the news of the child does not belong to an actual child while it's a story of a matured person. Writer wants to describe the mentality of the entire class of children through the perspective of the main lead character of the story Swami, who is similar to the class of normal innocent child. His childhood is used for the symbol for this entire class. R. K. Narayan wants to deliberate their thoughts towards the immaculate behavior of Swami's character who is the representative of childhood. Here he points his lead character as a hero because his character wins over a dangerous situation from his valiant childhood. His courage is really sounding, which makes him hero. The writer wrote his script in such a manner to prove the

childhood in the juvenile manner. He treats a child's innocence with its literature beauty. He describes the situation when a kid becomes helpless in front of his father's demand. He tried all his tricks to prevent himself, all his practices were full of childish behavior, innocent acts and reflects a fear from the future condition what he might have to face.

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