

RISE AND FALL OF HENCHARD AND FALL AND RISE OF RAJU FROM THE POINT OF FEMALE PERCEPTION

Dr. Shraddha Ashapure
Assistant Professor in English
Department of Humanities
IES IPS Academy Indore.
shraddhaashapure@gmail.com

Abstract

Henchard and Raju both suffered the same but in opposite sequence. Hardy made Henchard climb the ladder of success and then brought his unexpected but gradual downfall from zenith of the designation of Mayor to a forgotten lost death of Henchard. Narayan on the other hand raised his hero Raju from the nadir of a rogue to the pinnacle of sainthood. Thus both the male protagonists of these two novels named: The Mayor of Casterbridge and The Guide respectively share in common the same similarities of sufferings and solace, ecstasy and agony. I am awestruck by the resemblances any reader irrespective of caste, creed, religion or region can draw with the rise and fall of these two make believe characters. Although the difference between both the writers Hardy and Narayan is that of a full century still their themes are universal and of timeless reality and relevance. I have made an attempt to diagnose the psychology of male characters through the female point of view which comes obvious to me. All my wise readers will agree with their rise and falls that leave an indelible impression on us that teach us and torment us at the same time.

Key words: protagonist, rise, fall, zenith, nadir, resemblance universal timeless, psychology, characters, indelible.

Henchard of Thomas Hardy and Raju of RK Narayan both are protagonists of the signature novels named The Mayor of Casterbridge and The Guide respectively.

The amazing difference between both the male characters is their rise and decline in their respective journey of life. In Henchard's case he rose to be the Mayor of Casterbridge by the stroke of fortune but met his downfall due to ill luck and fate and Raju reached zenith after witnessing many downfalls and setbacks in his life. He grew from sinner to saint and became a spiritual guide. There are so many contrasts and similarities in both the characters. Being a female I will try to observe these without getting judgmental or biased.

In the present research paper I will try to analysis the male psychology and penetration into their fears and fun. Although both the characters in question Henchard and Raju belong to different authors, regions, religion and time but the foundation of my comparison is their male psyche and their rise and fall. What delights and surprise me more than anything is that

the creators of both the characters happen to be males! that add more curiosity and quest to my research on them. My conviction says this is the first ever paper of its kind being written by a female where the characters as well as authors both are male. I am sure my findings will justify with the title as I may be a female but have very close quarters encounters with males of all the age groups and relations who are part of my social and private life. Their intensified observation and survey will definitely contribute in the growth of my insights on the current paper.

To begin with one of the similarities is both the characters grow and die in the lap of the favorite milieu of their creators that is the novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge: The Life and Death of a Man of Character* is an 1886 novel by the English author Thomas Hardy. One of Hardy's Wessex novels and *The Guide* is a 1958 novel written in English by the Indian author R. K. Narayan. Like most of his works the novel is based on Malgudi, the fictional town in South India.

Hardy tries to represent Henchard as a "man of character;" however, the effects of his morality and character remain vague as the novel grows. Michael Henchard, a man who has risen from his low status as a hay-trusser to the top of society as the mayor of his town. Throughout the entire story of Henchard, it is clear that his morality is debatable and that his ethical uncertainty is essential in the development of the plot of the novel. Similarly 'Railway' Raju, by virtue of vocation a 'guide', is a captivating character in RK Narayan's "*The Guide*" (1958)-- and the central or main theme of this novel is his transformation from a rogue and scoundrel and con-man, to a sage and 'sadhu' or wise man/saint.

Michael Henchard and Raju both are a mysterious character in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Guide*. Their motives and actions are of the utmost immorality, yet they are done with seemingly good intentions. Henchard and Raju appear to have pretense of a man of character. It is evident that they strive to impress their peers with the way they carry themselves day in and day out. On the other hand, their foolish sense of confidence and fake exterior of an honorable man may be a result of a lack of true character.

Both Henchard and Raju are THE CENTRAL FIGURE the whole theme revolves round them. They dominate from the beginning to the end of the novels. They are the only source of all incidents and events in it. Henchard appears before us in various forms before us as- hay-trusser, drunken, auctioneer of his wife and baby daughter and later a mayor so does Raju as -a railway guide, railway Raju, a hermit, a lover, a fraud and a criminal. Thus the novelist has named this novel after him. It is Raju who is the guide.

Both the characters are of complex characters. It is very difficult to understand their character. They are dynamic, intelligent and shrewd. In them we find the craftiness, dishonesty and credulity. Both of them faced a tragic life. Henchard who from a drunker transformed into a mayor and Raju who grew into a saint from a sinner.

The beginning of the novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* gives readers ample hints of the tragedy of Henchard. He in a broken drunken state, auctions his wife and daughter Susan and

Elizabeth-Jane respectively to a sailor Newson for 5 Guineas. Till the end readers witness many sheds of his tragic flaw and his powerlessness to triumph over his weaknesses. While trying to escape the shadow of his past, his attitude grows even tragic. Like a repeated cycle, in circles he keeps coming back to the same point in his life. Every time instead of trying to repair his mistake, he acts in impudence and loses. His first mistake is the heinous wrongdoing of his life. This one sin he committed follows him for life. As if a dark spell had been cast upon his life, Henchard remains unable to break out the penalty.

The central theme of the novel *The Guide* by R.K Narayan is the transformation of Raju from his role as a tour guide to that of a devout guide. The title of the novel, *The Guide*, has a double meaning, and Raju is in a sense a double character. As a tour guide and lover, he is impetuous immoral, and hedonistic. After his detention and after his makeover as a holy man, he is careful, thoughtful, and self-disciplined.

The Guide unwraps with the discharge of the protagonist, Raju from prison and on his taking shelter in an old temple on the banks of the river Sarayu. Unable to encounter the people of Malgudi, Raju hides himself to live in concealment. Before his imprisonment he was a public figure and because of his brilliant wit. He succeeded in playing several roles: a fraudulent tourist guide, an treacherous lover and a melodramatic crook. Having lived the life of a fortune-hunter he in due course sacrifices his life as a saint, a new hermit as the people around him say, for the wellbeing of a pastoral neighborhood.

For the rest of his life, he continues to grieve over his mistake and reprimand himself. Most of his disappointments have resulted from his inability to learn from his mistakes. He is caught in a ferocious loop of successes and failures. Trying to find a way out of his frustration and guilt, he succeeds to some amount nevertheless he fails to grab hold of every prospect to patch up his mistake. The nasty circle ends in his death and by then all he has accomplished in his life is destroyed. His one sin against his family has taken peace and joy away from his life. His death is in the same way miserable. Like an eagle he tries to soar to the heights where his wings deceive him and severity brings him down. His escape does not last longer because once his conscience is back, the countdown has begun.

Henchard's tragedy begins at the fair. His wife Susan is a poor counterpart for him. He carries her around, like a shackle around his neck. Susan is also just as exasperated with his approach. Marrying Susan brings the same mayhem back in his life that he had somehow cast away long back at the fair. Susan brings back the same weaknesses and emotional turmoil that leave him confused and frustrated as he was as a hay trusser. Once the confusion and turmoil have set back in, Henchard's failure begins. Susan again proves unlucky. She has all the same weaknesses that do not match Henchard's aspiration yet, for Henchard to leave her is as difficult as to keep her. He has found success by leaving Susan and when she returns, he has again captivated his misfortune. Her revisit is a bad premonition and Hardy seems to entail that striving men have to make capitulate to win.

Raju, the guide is predestined to be a guide by chance and disposition. He becomes a tourist

guide by chance when he is given charge of the railway shop, he buys papers and old books to wrap articles, he reads book and papers to pass away his time, gathers information about Malgudi, never says “no”, gives false information, cheats the tourists successfully and becomes famous as a tourist guide. In fact he tells Velan “It was not because I wanted to utter a falsehood, but only because I wanted to be pleasant.”

His role as lover and stage manager is very palpable. After his seduction of Rosie, he is dismissed by her because of her culpability and Marco’s awareness about them. Though he is infatuated by her, he does not hunt her. Rosie comes to his house on her own as she has been forsaken by Marco. His love for her motivates him to look after her corporeal and artistic needs. The shortage of money and Rosie’s devotion to dance compels him to arrange a public concert for her. As a result of her success and complete commitment to her profession, he becomes her manager and arranges her business associations. He lives on her, but also works hard for her. Rosie more or less forces him into accepting the role. Being a capable actor, he performs to role to perfection. Being an ignorant he does not understand the basics of dance, but he understands Rosie’s desire to be a dancer and thus financially he manages her dealings perfectly.

However Rosie’s fascination with dance results in distancing and loss of communication. Raju feels disorientated and lost. His love, jealousy and possessiveness motivate him to hide Marco’s book and fake Rosie’s signature. Basically he does not want her to realize Marco’s generosity. This choice of his, ironically leads to his imprisonment. In fact he is so used to playing such roles that he does not realize the extent of his act.

When he is sitting bored and lonely near a ramshackle temple a villager called Velan comes and tells him his problem. The simple peasant mistakes him for a “swami” because there is actually something virtuous about Raju’s form. He is sitting on a stone slab. As the story opens Velan gawks at Raju respectfully, chooses a seat two steps below the slab. Impressed by the saintly appearance Velan is encouraged to confess himself, looking for suggestion and guidance. Raju on the other hand is compelled to play the role of the swami because it was in his temperament to get drawn in other people’s interest and actions.

Henchard is not full of weaknesses only. He has some important strength that has helped him rise. An elegant, sturdy and candid organizer, Henchard makes every effort to administer his people’s trust in him. He is not someone who has found success without labor and he values his hard earned new identity. However, inside his heart he is weighed down with guilt. With his remarriage with Susan, the guilt becomes devastating. It is because he has not learnt from his mistakes and continues to commit them more than once. By the end, the situation has turned so clumsier. Like always he keeps running from his shadow. He is trying to escape everyone from Newson and Elizabeth Jane to Farfrae and the towns’ people. His displeasure is a tragic flaw that causes his wreck. It does not let him think clearly and choose wisely. In Farfrae, he tries to get a trustworthy friend but for someone who cannot trust even his shadow, it’s difficult to achieve things unwavering and eternal in life.

His entire catastrophe results from his instability. When he tries to hold his wife's love, he starts losing control of his life and business. Unable to balance, he takes himself to the trash and his sad demise resolves the complexity of his life. The stress on Henchard's spirit is so great that whenever he tries to get relieve of it, it ends up in replication. He commits the mistakes he is trying to avoid. When he lies to Newson about Elizabeth Jane's death, he knows he is trying to keep a father away from his daughter. His ethics would not allow him to do it but his remorse pushes him to. At last his past has overtaken him and with it, he has lost whatever hold he had on his life. In this way, Hardy proves that people who cannot mend their attitude cannot mend their fate.

Raju satisfies the command of villagers of Mangala. He feels perturbed by the attachment of the peasants, who believes that a finer character has come to live near their village. Paradoxically Raju's old habit of offering guidance to others when he was a tourist guide affirms itself when he wants to be sincere this time. The special consideration of the villagers makes him "feel uncomfortable" and so he wonders if he could device some means of escape from the company." His sphere of devotees unavoidably grows for the reason that he is believed to have worked a marvel on Velan's stepsister. Subsequently it becomes a daily custom of Velan and his member villagers to bring food for the swami and the result is that men, women and children come to worship him in large numbers.

The affection and devotion of the peasants convert Raju to such a degree that he believes the role of a spiritual guide: "His bearded now caressed his chest, his hair covered his back and around his neck he wore a necklace of prayer breads." He even assures himself that he has become a bona fide saint. Their fidelity to him was indisputable. As the storyteller tells us

Raju "felt moved by the recollection of the big crowd of women and children touching his feet. He felt moved by the thought of their gratitude."

The blind faith of the people of Mangala changes Raju into a tool of their will so that he feels unsurprisingly liable to fast for their continued existence. When he is called upon to observe fast by his devotees, and thus to bring rains to the scorched land,

he realizes that, "he had worked himself into a position from which he could not get out." He makes an attempt to confess to Velan all about his dishonourable past. But Velan's rustic obedience towards him is so deep that he declines to accept as true.

Then Raju become aware about the fact that something has changed within himself:

"If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?"

For the first time in his life he has made an solemn endeavour, for the first time he has learnt the ecstasy of full charity , outside money and love, for the first time he has done a thing in which he was not personally interested.. It discloses the saintly accomplishment of Raju. He is conscious that the whole countryside is now in a happy uproar because a great soul had agreed to go through the testing and he feels a moral obligation not to slur the villager's faith in him and so he becomes immersed into collective epitome. As a "Redeemer" he is expected

“to stand in knee deep water to look the skies, and utter the payer lines for two weeks completely fasting during the period-and so the rains would come down provided the man who performed it was a pure soul. Was a great soul”

Thus Raju spends his days saying prayers as a result of his unquestionable freedom from his ego, and it is exposed by his words-

“I am only doing what I have to do; that is all. My likes and dislikes do not count”- until on the eleventh day when he falls down with the visionary affirmation that it is raining in the hills. The novel thus finish offs “in the magnitude of his spiritual gain”.

The Tragic end of Henchard is same he chases power and position due to his pushy and zealous nature and eventually, he has become the mayor of Casterbridge town and a prosperous merchant. But this ascend has been dappled by the shortcomings in his character, and then, these have paved way for his descending. Conceivably our tragic hero was faced with the results of his “ethical blemish” .

Henchard’s Rise and fall in The Mayor of Casterbridge began to reflect what Henchard has gone through and the beginning of his end). There is softness and gentleness in the personality of Henchard regardless of his strictness and roughness but Henchard is incapable of balancing these uniqueness or he simply cannot abide the amalgamation of them. In the end, Henchard wants to extract absolutely from the theater of this world on which he has not been able to hold and to be out of spectacle. The testimony of Henchard is an amazing manuscript of a man who wants to make people disregard him. As if he wants to sever connections with his family, with society and even the nature,

He says as follows:

Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae be not told of my death, or made to grieve on account of me.

Hardy’s account of chance is part of his general philosophical conception in the novel, the concept of nature is in many respects conventional as in its notion of man and fate. When nature does enter the novel, it enters as a force compliant and involved to a moral order whose rights and claims take main concern over man’s. Henchard is pitied, not in opposition to another man, but against something outside himself which is opposed to men of his aspiration and power. Michael Henchard creates his own fate, and cannot escape from it . He is the one who has committed these evil doings which are elementary to his sufferings and tragic end. He has auctioned off his wife and daughter, he has hidden the real identity of his stepdaughter from her father, he has placed dependence on counterfeit weather fortune tellers, he has delivered the letters of Lucetta to an untrustworthy man and has led to the death of Lucetta, he has showed rancorous manners to Farfrae and he has attempted to kill him and has showed cold and irresponsible behavior towards his stepdaughter. The thing which prepares the end of Michael Henchard is not the dark games of destiny but the dark powers in

the personality of Henchard which have devastated him. As pointed out by Hardy, character is indeed fate.

Thus Rise and fall of Henchard and fall and rise of Raju from the point of female perception is overwhelming and comprehensive. Henchard and Raju both were the victims of fate and chance. They went with the flow. They had opportunities to make or break their life. Henchard fall down from the higher position of a Mayor due to wrong people and decisions in his life and Raju rose higher in his life from a sinner to saint due to again right decisions and people in his life. But I believe that it is painful and agonizing to bear a tragic fall from a respectable public pedestal that is from a hero to a zero that is from zenith to nadir. Raju had experienced just the opposite hierarchy. He from nadir of a prisoner a crook rose to the zenith of a saint, a savior, a miracle maker.

Whatever may be the sequences of their fall and rise but one thing is common Henchard and Raju reside in each of us .We humans are of dual personality. We harbor angel and evil both in us. Wisdom lies in rising and not falling, working constantly for our spiritual growth and always wondering why are we here on this plane, on this earth. We must strive for the upliftment of mankind which will eventually lead into our liberation.

Works Cited:

- Edwards D. D. (1972). "The Mayor of Casterbridge: An Aeschylean Tragedy". *Studies in the Novel* 4/4 (winter, 1972) 608-618.
- Gatrell S. (2000). "The Mayor of Casterbridge: The Fate of Michael Henchard's Character". Ed. J. Wolfreys, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (2000). London.
- Hardy T. (2000). *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Hertfordshire 2000.
- Hardy T. (2008). *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Oxford 2008.
- Hornback B. G. (1971). *The Metaphor of Chance*. Ohio 1971.
- Kiely R. (1968). "Vision and Viewpoint in The Mayor of Casterbridge". *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 23/2 (Sep., 1968) 189-200.
- Lothe J. (1999). "Variants on genre: The Return of the Native, the Mayor of Casterbridge, the Hand of Ethelberta". Ed. Dale Krummer, *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy* (1999). London.
- Miller J. H. (2000). "The Mayor Casterbridge, the Persistence of the Past, and the Dance of Desire". Ed.
- J. Wolfreys, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (2000). London.
- Thomas Hardy, Dale Kramer (10 June 2004). [*The Mayor of Casterbridge*](#). Oxford University Press, UK
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mayor_of_Casterbridge
- William Walsh, R.K. Narayan : A Critical Appreciation, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1983,
- Narayan, R. K. *The Guide*. Chennai: Indian Thought Publications, 2006.
- Kumar, Gajendra. "R. K. Narayan's 'The Guide': A Search for Socio-Cultural Crisis." *Indian*

- English Literature: A New Perspective*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2001. 25-33.
- Paranjape, Makarand. ““The Reluctant Guru”: R. K. Narayan and *The Guide*.” *South Asian Review*. 24.2 (2003):
- Rao, A. V. Krishna. “Identity and Environment: Narayan’s *The Guide* and Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas*.” *Inventing Countries: Essays in Post-Colonial Literature*. Wollongong: University of Wollongong, 1987. 165-177.
- Sankaran, Chitra. “Patterns of Story-Telling in R. K. Narayan’s *The Guide*.” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 26.1 (1991): 127-150.
- Sen, Krishna. *Critical Essays on R. K. Narayan’s The Guide: With an Introduction to Narayan’s Novels*. Kolkata: Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd., 2004.
- Singha, U. P. “Patterns of Myth and Reality in “*The Guide*”: Complex Craft of Fiction.” *Patterns of Myth and Reality: A Study in R. K. Narayan’s Novels*. By U. P. Singha. Delhi: Sandarbh Publishers, 1988. 70-94.
- Yadav, B. S. “*The Guide—A Psycho-Philosophic and Socio-Ethical Study*.” *Indian Writings in English*. Vol. 4. Ed. Manohar K. Bhatnager. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1999
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Guide