



**A SILENT COMPANION OF MAN: THE READING OF THE
CHARACTER OF DOG AS PORTRAYED BY R. K. NARAYAN**

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ABSTRACT

Literature is unimaginable without the presence of animals and birds as they are also the part of our life. From early scriptures to the modern literature, the portrayal of animals and birds is seen continuously in all kind of forms of literature. The animals and birds have been most trustworthy companions of mankind. From the time of Stone Age to till date, they have helped mankind in different ways. They helped mankind in surviving; some helped in war, the other to run our household. The role of animals and birds is very important in the overall development of mankind. Whether it is economical, emotional or social development, animals and birds have been there all the time. Today, the types of need have changed; machines have taken the place of animals and birds in most of the fields. But as we are socially turning into a nuclear family from extended family; man is in constant search of a companion. Whether man is from higher class, middle class or lower class; all of them are finding a true companion. It can be any animal, almost all types of animals and birds have been brought up and raised by man. Here the researcher is going to talk about the dog's relationship with man with the reference to select short stories The Blind Dog and Attila by R.K.Narayan.

Key Words: Companion, Man-Animal Relationship, Love, Loyalty, Freedom, Greed, Exploitation.

Introduction:

The Portrayal of Dog in the select short stories of R. K. Narayan

The Blind Dog is the story of a street dog named Tiger and a blind beggar. The story opens introducing the dog to the audience. The dog's life goes normal until the blind man enters. The dog plays, wanders with other street dogs and returns to the Market Gate. The Market Gate is the centre of his life. One day an old woman comes with the blind man at the Market Gate. She leaves him there, comes at afternoon with some food; collects the coins and again comes to bring him back; that was the everyday routine. The dog becomes the neighbour of the blind man; one day the blind man throws the handful of food to the dog; this was the beginning of their friendship. The dog is observing everyday activities; from it he learns that passers-by must give a coin to the blind man. The dog starts making efforts from

his side; it helps a lot to the blind man; the passers-by notice the presence of the blind man. The dog also saves the blind man from the ill-treatment of some passers-by.

One day the beggar comes to know that the old woman is now no more. The blind man lost all the hope and the only person who cared for him. On the suggestion of the ribbon-vendor the blind beggar ties the dog with the white cord. This is how the dog takes the place of the old woman. The dog has now corded freedom. With the help of the dog now the blind man starts moving instead of sitting at the old same corner. He doubles his income. He knew that sitting at one place is business of loss. Earlier begging was his need to feed himself, now it has become business for him; he has started lending money for interest. He treats the dog like a bullock. The relationship which had developed on the basis of morals of human values has now turned to inhuman. All the old neighbours notice that now this blind man has become greedy. They all feel that this dog must be free from the slavery of the tyrant. One day, when the blind man and the dog were passing from the regular way, one of them, the perfumer moved ahead and gave a cut to the white cord with the scissors. The dog is free now. At that time he was trying to get a bone, and finally he got the bone. The dog ran and went to its old places like the butcher's shop the tea-stall and the bakery. He was enjoying his freedom. On the other side the beggar's condition becomes worst without the dog. He is helpless and unable to do anything as he was dependent on him. All his activities are on hold. He tries to find the dog. He calls for help if someone can find his lost dog. He speaks to himself that he will kill him when he will get him again. All the old neighbours, the ribbon-seller, the novel-vendor, the perfumer and the fruit seller believed that the blind man deserved it.

The blind man and the dog both were not seen from many days. The neighbours were thinking that the dog would be enjoying his freedom and the blind man would have learnt the lesson. But suddenly they see familiar faces, the blind man lead by the dog. The ribbon-seller goes to the blind man and inquires about his conditions and asks that how he found the dog etc. The blind man tells the whole story in brief that he was about to die but "Last night, I slept in bed; he came and licked my face; I felt like murdering him. I gave him a blow which he will never forget again," said the blind man. He also added that he forgave him, after all a dog. It is real hunger that has driven it him back to me he further said. But now this dog will not leave him because this time he has tied it him with a steel chain. One can see that the

blind man is dependent on the dog but he does not feel that he is dependent instead of he believes that the dog is dependent on him. This is a pity that he cannot see or he does not want to see the reality. The blind man is blind not only physically but also mentally. He is also senseless as he has become greedy. In that case he is also emotionally blind. But still Narayan has given a title The Blind Dog intentionally as he wants to pass the message that those who are innocent and carries human values will be believed blind, fool, irrational etc. The story ends in a tragic way but it leaves a question that who is a blind; the dog in love with the blind man or the blind man in greed of money.

The next story is about Attila, a dog named after the “Scourge of Europe”. The family was in urgent need of a dog as there was a series of house-breakings and thefts in the neighbourhood. The family searches a lot and then meets a dog fancier. He helps them to find a dog that meets to their expectations. The family pays more than seventy-five rupees for the dog. They bring him at home. There is a big discussion on what name the dog should be given. Finally the family decides to name him as Attila the “Scourge of Europe”. The family expects that Attila should have the characteristics of a savior, but unfortunately Attila’s behavior was equal to all. That disturbs the mother of the family. She all the time keeps telling that this dog is of no use; he eats like an elephant; he eats of two watchmen; but there is the youngest son in the family who always defends Attila.

On one mid-night Ranga a gang coolie, breaks into the house. As he enters the house, Attila sees him. He thinks that this is the end now but Attila does not bark at him. Instead of barking he licks Ranga’s hands and rolls his eyes. Ranga is surprised with this kind of behaviour of the dog. Ranga befools Attila and starts his work. When Attila comes to know that the man is leaving the house he follows him. The dog has intense urge for freedom in his life. At this moment it looks possible that he would enjoy it. Attila leaves the house to live with Ranga. This made the mother clearer to speak against the dog in the house. Still the youngest defends Attila.

A week later, Attila suddenly becomes a hero. One day the eldest son of the family was going to the market. He sees Attila spying someone on the road. He calls Attila but Ranga misunderstands it and thinks that he is calling him as he has identified him as a thief, so he starts moving faster. Attila wants to reply call of the eldest but as it sees that Ranga is running to leave him, Attila decides to stop Ranga and then to reply the call of the eldest.

Attila runs so fast that he overtakes Ranga and clumsily blocks his way, and Ranga stumbles over him and falls. As Ranga falls on the ground a piece of jewellery flew from his hand. The eldest son who was also running behind Attila reaches there and sees the piece of jewellery, which was of his sister. He catches Ranga and sat down on him. A crowd gathered and police appeared on the scene. This is how Attila became the hero of the day. The mother of the house also started praising Attila.

Conclusion:

Whether it is the East or the West, the presence of animals and birds in life of human being is important. From above short stories one can observe that the presence of animals and birds make lives of mankind easy. The dog is an animal which has become the symbol of loyalty. But still it is all about finding a companion who can shower love without any bondage. No one can become loyal by sacrificing freedom and self-respect. Each and every living being wants freedom and self-respect. So not only men but also animals are in search of men who can love and give them freedom both at a time. Attila also needed love but he did not want to sacrifice his freedom. The same thing happened with Tiger in The Blind Dog. The second thing, a man most of the time, in man-animal relationship searches a chance of benefits. The other side, an animal is less polluted, more natural so for him, the relationship is above business.

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VIDHYAYANA

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VIDHYAYANA