



ADITYA ENGINEERING COLLEGE

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND BASIC SCIENCES

Lecture Notes

AN ASTROLOGER'S DAY

1. Explain the Summary of An Astrologer's Day?

An unnamed village in India, an **astrologer** lays out his tools of the trade, a mix of **cowrie shells**, obscure charts, a notebook, and other such curios. They serve no purpose but to create the illusion of mysticism. The astrologer has also painted his forehead with sacred ash, wrapped his head in a turban, and seated himself and his gear beneath a large tree. All of these things serve to give him an air of wisdom, transcendence, and prophetic power, though the narrator is quick to point out that none of these qualities actually belong to the man. The astrologer has set up his little shop amidst a busy marketplace among people fencing stolen goods, presenting the same cheap food as a variety of gourmet delicacies, and auctioning off low-quality fabrics. The astrologer, quickly established as a fraud, is in the company of other fraudsters and spin doctors selling their wares and making their livings. The marketplace is lit by various shop lights and flares, the dancing shadows of which enhance the astrologer's mystical quality. He notably has no light of his own, but simply borrows that of the other vendors.

The astrologer had never had any intention of becoming one, but had been forced to leave his ancestral home and travel several hundred miles away with no plan and no money. Even so, he is a convincing holy man, using his own insights into human problems to offer vague but comforting advice to people in the market. He functions as a sort of therapist, offering self-affirming advice that he wraps in the guise of astrological wisdom. He is good at his trade; he tells people what they want to hear, and they leave comforted by it. Though it is not an honest living that the astrologer makes, it is still a well-earned one.

As the marketplace is emptying and the lights are being put out, a stranger named **Guru Nayak** appears. In the darkness, neither can see much of the other's face. Seeing the opportunity for one more client, the astrologer invites Guru Nayak to sit and chat. The stranger does so, but is instantly skeptical of the astrologer. He aggressively wagers that the astrologer cannot tell him anything true or worthwhile. They haggle over the price and the astrologer agrees. However, when

Guru Nayak lights a cheroot, the astrologer catches a brief glimpse of the man's face and is filled with fear. He tries to get out of the wager, but Guru Nayak holds him to it and will not let him leave.

The astrologer tries his usual tack of vague, self-affirming advice, but Guru Nayak will have none of it. The astrologer sincerely prays for a moment, and then changes course. He reveals to Guru Nayak that he knows he was once stabbed through the chest and left for dead, and that now Guru Nayak is here searching for his assailant. He even reveals that he knows Guru Nayak's name, something he attributes to his cosmic wisdom. Guru Nayak is greatly excited by all of this, believing the astrologer to truly be all-knowing. He presses the astrologer for the whereabouts of the man who stabbed him so that he can have his revenge. The astrologer tells him that he died several months ago, crushed by an oncoming **lorry**. Guru Nayak is frustrated by this, but satisfied that at least his attacker died terribly. He gives the astrologer his money and leaves.

The astrologer arrives home late at night and shows his wife the money he has made, becoming briefly bitter when he realizes that although Guru Nayak has paid him a great sum, it is not quite as much as promised. Even so, his wife is thrilled. As they lie down to sleep, the astrologer reveals to his wife that a great burden has been lifted off of his shoulders. Years ago, the astrologer was the one to stab Guru Nayak and leave him for dead, which forced him to flee his home and make a new life as a fraudulent astrologer. He had thought himself to be a murderer, but was now content that he had not in fact taken a life. Satisfied by this, he goes to sleep.

2. Define the theme of An Astrologer's Day?

A. Mysticism and Religious Hypocrisy

Indian author R.K. Narayan's "An Astrologer's Day" tells the story of a fraudulent astrologer who makes his living by selling cosmic insights to gullible villagers. Although he has no knowledge of the cosmos or actual spiritual insight, the astrologer exploits his customers' search for meaning and reassurance, robbing his lies in the vagaries of mystery and religion. Narayan's portrayal of astrology and holy men does not eviscerate or prosecute religion, but certainly prods at it

Guilt, Fear, and Identity

The astrologer is not truly an astrologer, but merely a man masquerading as one. He has taken on a new, fabricated identity to escape the just consequences of his attempt at murder. The astrologer no longer has any opportunity to practice authenticity; his livelihood, marriage, and very survival are all

predicated on lies. Narayan uses the astrologer to contemplate the ways in which fear and guilt can push an individual to live an unauthentic, self-deceiving

Modernization, Tradition, and Inequality

Throughout the story, Narayan intentionally contrasts the mix of ancient and modern, primitive and sophisticated that makes up modern India, particularly in the rural regions. Under British occupation, India was thrust into the modern world as the ruling class introduced technology and built infrastructure to suit their own tastes. Because of the speed at which this happened, as compared to the gradual progression of technology in Europe or America, much of the development happened unevenly.

3. Critical Appreciation of An Astrologer's Day?

R.K. Narayan, the winner of Sahitya Academy Award, is one of the most famous Indian writers in Indian English writing. He achieved international acclaim as a prolific and perfect storyteller. He wrote several stories which fascinated the readers throughout the world. An Astrologer's Day is one of them. This is the first beautiful short story in Narayan's anthology called *Malgudi Days*.

The narrator narrates the past story of the astrologer. Circumstances compel him to leave his small village stealthily without any previous plan. This creates curiosity in the minds of the reader. What has happened in his past? One day when the astrologer starts to pack up at the end of the day, an unusual client appears in the scene to consult the astrologer. The story takes a new turn when he compels the astrologer to answer his specific questions. The astrologer succeeds in bargaining and the interesting part of the story begins. The stranger is a smoker who uses the match stick to light his cheroot. The astrologer catches a glimpse of his face in that light of the match stick as it was darkness there. What the astrologer says hereafter is the subject of amazement. The astrologer then starts telling the past story of the stranger. He tells the stranger that once he was stabbed by one of his friends. That friend then pushed him into a well to die. It was the truth of the life of the stranger. The astrologer then calls his name - Guru Nayak. Guru Nayak is completely stumped. The stranger asks about the location of his enemy. The astrologer advises that he should give up his hunt because the assailant is now no more in the world. Four months ago, in a far-off town he has been crushed under a lorry. Nayak is pleased by this news. The astrologer also advises Guru Nayak to go home and stay up there and never travel southward again. If he does so, he will surely be killed.

The story takes another twist when the astrologer reaches home and after a nice dinner, he tells his wife his past story. He says that when he was a youngster, got drunk, gambled and got into a quarrel. He adds that in a fit of rage he stabbed Nayak and pushed him into the well and left him to die. Due to this he left his village, settled here, and married her. And this was how he could so correctly talk of Guru Nayak's troubled past. All these years he had thought that the blood of a man was on his hands. But now the man he thought he had killed is alive. Thus, he can sleep with a light heart now. The story thus ends.

In this beautiful story there are mainly two characters- the astrologer and the client. The character of the wife of the astrologer is a supporting character. The protagonist of this story is an astrologer. The astrologer's name has not been mentioned in the story. He is a 'round character'. He develops with the development of the plot. The appearance of the astrologer is very well described by

the author. The client seems to be a nice person. He is a very straightforward. He is not cunning. Like a child he shows his happiness when he gets to know that some harm has been done to his enemy. This child like attitude gives him a sense of innocence and virtue. He is a strong person who holds the astrologer strongly and demands for an instant answer. His name is Guru Nayak. It is revealed by the astrologer. He plays a pivotal role in the development and climax of the plot. The wife of the astrologer plays an important part in the denouement of the story. She is the listener of the past story of the astrologer. She is an ideal house wife and a caring mother. She believes in whatever her husband says. Simplicity, symbolism, simile, satire, suspense, surprise ending, irony, incongruity and catchy phrases are part and parcel of the style of this story. Each of these aspects plays significant role to form the entire plot of the story. The syntax and grammar conform to English conventions. Irony is notable. The author uses ironic comment on the astrologer's crafty ways of carrying out his profession. There are many instances where figurative languages have been used. In short, R.K. Narayan is a great artist who creates a perfect atmosphere for this story. It shows how fate changes the life of a man dramatically. The story is both exciting and moving.

4. Character sketch of An Astrologer?

The nameless protagonist of the story, **the astrologer** is not truly an astrologer, but a con man. He sets up shop each day beneath a tree in a market, wearing a priest's garb and face paint and posing as a holy man with cosmic wisdom. For a small fee, he listens to people's problems and offers what seems like sage advice, dressing his common sense and manipulations in an astrologist's vernacular. Despite having no actual astrological wisdom, he is quite perceptive and offers comfort to his customers by giving them self-affirming answers and easing their minds. It is revealed at the end of the story that the astrologer is in hiding, having fled his home and past life as a farmer after he drunkenly attempted to murder **Guru Nayak**. As far as he knows, he actually *did* take Guru Nayak's life, and feels a great burden at the thought of being a murderer. His burden is not borne out of pity for Guru Nayak, however, but of his own self-interest. Even when the astrologer meets Guru Nayak, he makes no attempt to atone for his crime. Although he is the protagonist, the astrologer is not the hero of the story. The astrologer has a wife and child, neither of whom know anything of his murderous past.

5. Character sketch of Guru Nayak?

Guru Nayak is the man whom the astrologer tried to murder several years before the story takes place. Very little is said about Guru Nayak other than that he has left his village and gone searching for the man who tried to kill him so that he can strangle him to death. Guru Nayak is introduced merely as an aggressive stranger who is immediately sceptical of the astrologer and his supposed wisdom. Though he is standing in front of him, due to the darkness of the evening and the paint, turban, and long beard that the astrologer wears, he does not recognize his attacker. He eventually believes that the astrologer is a prophet when the astrologer tells him the specifics of his attack and even Guru Nayak's name. He is disappointed when he is told that his attacker died under the tires of a vehicle some months before, but satisfied enough that he promises to return home and never venture to this village again.

6. Explain the Irony in An Astrologer's Day?

Here are several examples of irony in "An Astrologer's Day." The most striking example of situational irony is the fact that Guru Nayak comes to the astrologer for help in finding the man who nearly killed him--and the astrologer himself is the very man he is looking for. Guru Nayak does not recognize him because the author has established that it is late at night and the lighting is very bad. Most of the vendors have shut down for the night and turned off their lights. Furthermore, the astrologer has changed his appearance considerably since his nemesis last saw him.

His forehead was resplendent with sacred ash and vermillion, and his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam which was really an outcome of a continual searching look for customers, but which his simple clients took to be a prophetic light and felt comforted. The power of his eyes was considerably enhanced by their position, placed as they were between the painted forehead and the dark whiskers which streamed down his cheeks....

In addition to the situational irony, there is considerable dramatic irony in the dialogue. The astrologer amazes Guru Nayak by seemed to know all about him through supernatural power, and this enables the astrologer to persuade his client to give up his search for the man who knifed him and threw him into a well. He assures Guru Nayak that the man he has been looking for is dead.

He took out a pinch of sacred ash and held it to him. "Rub it on your forehead and go home, never travel southward again, and you will live to be a hundred."

"Why should I leave home again?" the other said reflectively. "I was only going away now and then to look for him and to choke out his life if I met him." shook his head regretfully. "He has escaped my hands. I hope at least he died as he deserved."

"Yes," said the astrologer. "He was crushed under a lorry."

There is more situational irony in the fact that the astrologer is able to bring home a relatively large number of coins because he collected so much from the grateful and happy Guru Nayak. The man who had been striving for so long to find and kill the astrologer ends up paying him generously for his advice to give up his searching and go back to his native village. The astrologer's wife is happy because she will be able to buy some extra treats for their little girl. In a sense, the astrologer deserves the coins he has received from Guru Nayak because he has given his nemesis exactly what he wanted. Guru Nayak wanted satisfaction and closure. He wanted to put an end to his exhausting searching and stay at home for the rest of his life. The astrologer knows nothing about the stars, as the author explains at the beginning, but he is still able to give most of his clients the assurance and satisfaction they really want.

BADE BHAI SAAB (My Elder Brother)

Munshi Premchand

1. Explain the summary of Bade Bhai Saab?

In *Bade Bhai Saab* by Premchand we have the theme of innocence, pride, experience, education, sacrifice and connection. The story itself is narrated in the first person by an unnamed man who is recalling an incident when he was a young boy. It also becomes clear to the reader after reading the story that Premchand may be exploring the theme of innocence. The narrator is still afraid of his brother though not afraid enough to stop playing with his friends. If anything, the narrator sees very little value in studying, unlike his brother who spends every waking hour either in school or studying. This may be important as the narrator is still too young to look upon his education as being significant. Rather for the narrator studying and school is a chore. Something he does but does not like doing. Another interesting thing about the story is the fact that the narrator's brother speaks wise words to the narrator. It is as though he is speaking from experience. Which he is considering that he has failed so many times in school exams. The fact that the narrator's brother also draws on his parents when lecturing the narrator might also be important. If anything, the narrator's brother is trying to teach the narrator a lesson about life.

You can be intelligent and still be inexperienced. You can pass exams as the narrator does but still know very little about life. Though the narrator is intelligent and doesn't have to work very hard to pass his exams. The same is not true for his brother. The brother may have failed his exams but he still has a positive outlook on life. His priorities are in the right place. He is looking after his brother and is not or will not be embarrassed should the narrator pass him out in school. It is also ironic that when the narrator's brother is lecturing the narrator it is as though both are in the classroom with the brother being the teacher. He has genuine concerns that the narrator will throw away the abilities he has by not studying even though the narrator is fortunate enough to be academically bright. Another incident in which irony is used is when the narrator's brother first lectures the narrator. He goes on for a long time yet he wonders why he must write a four-page essay on punctuality. When what needs to be said can be said in one line.

There is also no disputing that the narrator's brother has a level-head and that his only concern is for the narrator. He is not jealous of the fact that that narrator is passing his exams while he himself is failing his. The narrator's brother might be academically slower than his brother but he is much wiser than the narrator. He sees the importance of education and this may be the reason as to why he never gives up when he fails his exams. He knows the commitment and sacrifice that his parents have made while the narrator in reality is so innocent of life that he thinks only of himself. In fact, that narrator has his lines rehearsed after passing his exams should his brother criticize him. If anything, the narrator is full of his own self-importance or pride and does not understand that he is fortunate to be academically bright. It is as though the narrator lives his life from day to day while his brother on the other hand has a plan for the future even if it takes him time to reach his goal.

The end of the story is also interesting as there is a moment of realization for the narrator. This happens when the narrator's brother catches his kite and flies it back to the hostel. For the first time in the story the reader senses that the narrator is making a connection not only with his brother but he is also understanding the advice he has been given. No longer does the narrator fear his brother or his

lectures. He knows that his brother has his best interests at heart and does not want him to end up failing his exams like he does. Though the narrator's brother never directly says it to the narrator there is a feeling that the narrator's brother does not want the narrator to throw away his intelligence on games. Something which has previously proved difficult for the narrator. Though some critics might suggest that the narrator is abandoning his playing in favor of his education. This may not necessarily be the case. There is every chance that the narrator will find a balance in his life. Learning to play and study at the same time. He may have drawn up a timetable that proved worthless to him. However, at the end he has his brother's advice and experience.

2. Critical Analysis of Bade Bhai Saab?

The story of My Elder Brother is about two brothers who have contrasting personalities and opinions. Over here, the younger brother is the narrator who tells us about life with his elder brother. The age difference between the brothers is five years and three grades. The story tells us about their lives and their relationship. It also tells us what the dynamics are between younger and older brothers. Moreover, it is a story that teaches us to listen to our elders. It states how no matter how equal we become with our elders; they will always have more experience. Therefore, it is not about the arrogance we as younger people should have. It is for giving them the respect they deserve. Further, it also gives a great lesson on not being too arrogant. So, we all must not be too overconfident and ensure to respect and listen to our elders.

The story begins with two brothers and how they are very different from each other. The younger brother tells the story from his perspective and lets us inside his life with his elder brother. The narrator is five years younger than his older brother. Similarly, the elder one is three grades ahead of the younger ones.

The brothers live together in a hostel and have very contrasting opinions. The elder brother is a hardworking fellow who studies hard. He wishes to build a strong foundation through his education. On the other hand, the younger one prefers playing all day long and doesn't give much time to his studies. Thus, the elder brother always scolds his little one to be more sincere. Moreover, he shows himself as an example of a disciplined student.

However, in a turn of events, the younger brother secures the first position in class while the elder brother fails. This makes the younger brother too proud of himself. Even then, the elder brother keeps trying to discipline him and make him work hard. The big brother works harder this time while the little one does the opposite. To everyone's surprise, the younger one scores first position again while the elder one failed again.

The little one got prouder while the elder one started working harder. One day, the younger one starts running after a kite when the elder brother gets angry. He scolds him for being too careless and gives him a lecture. The elder one tells him that even though the younger one may catch up to him in studies, he will never be able to catch up experience-wise.

The elder brother tells him that that grade gap can be erased but the five years age gap cannot be. The younger brother then realizes that his elder brother will always remain older to him. Thus, he will always scold him and help him get on the right path. Finally, the younger brother realizes the importance of his elder brother and they start running together after the kite.

Conclusion of My Elder Brother

This story teaches us that no matter how intelligent we become, we must not forget to respect our elders and listen to their scolding if it is for the right reason as they want our goodwill.

3. Character Analysis of the Elder Brother?

The elder brother is a tragicomic figure, a victim of colonial education. The elder brother used to spend much time on study and he was a hardworking learner. He is not jealous of the fact that that narrator is passing his exams while he is failing his. He might be academically slower than a younger brother but he is much wiser than him. He sees the importance of education and this may be the reason as to why he never gives up when he fails his exams. He knows the commitment and sacrifice that his parents have made while the narrator, in reality, is so innocent of life that he thinks only of himself. He tries to maintain his dominance and dignity over his outperforming younger brother while taking a momentous load of familial responsibilities over his young shoulders. He takes his self-appointed role as a guardian of his young brother very seriously.

4. Character Analysis of the Younger Brother?

The narrator is afraid of his brother though not afraid enough to stop playing with his friends. If anything, the narrator sees very little value in studying, unlike his brother who spends every waking hour either in school or studying. This attitude may be since he is still too young to look upon his education as being significant. For the narrator studying and school is a chore. But soon the narrator finds a balance in his life. The narrator learns to play and study at the same time. He drew up a timetable each time his elder brother admonishes him but does not follow it a single day. He respects his elder brother and he obeys his elder brother unquestioningly.