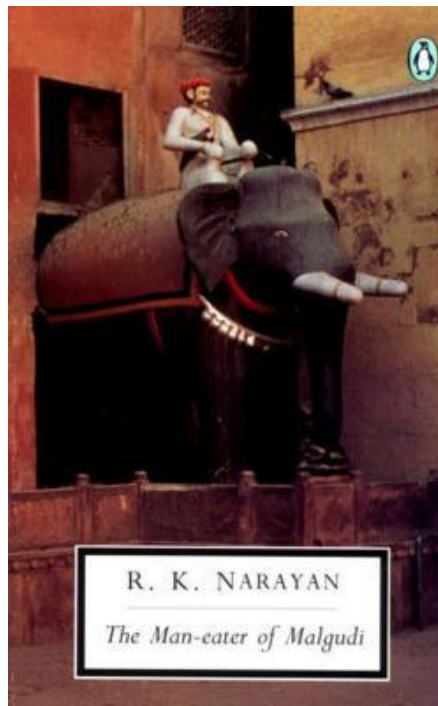




The Man-Eater of Malgudi

R.K. Narayan

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This is the story of Nataraj, who earns his living as a printer in the little world of Malgudi, an imaginary town in South India. Nataraj and his close friends, a poet and a journalist, find their congenial days disturbed when Vasu, a powerful taxidermist, moves in with his stuffed hyenas and pythons, and brings his dancing-women up the printer's private stairs. When Vasu, in search of larger game, threatens the life of a temple elephant that Nataraj has befriended, complications ensue that are both laughable and tragic.

The Man-Eater of Malgudi Details

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Author : R.K. Narayan

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From Reader Review The Man-Eater of Malgudi for online ebook

Daren says

This is the first full length *Malgudi* novel I have read - there have been a few novellas and of course Malgudi Days, but this one is a little different.

Narayan is able to spend some more time, rounding things out - or maybe dragging things out. The whole time I was reading this I felt like I needed to rush to reach a disclosure, or to get to an important aspect. It is only a relatively short book, and yet I felt compelled to hurry. Perhaps Narayan had too much time to tell his story?

While I enjoyed it (and gave it four stars) I perhaps didn't enjoy it as much as I hoped. I have set it aside in my shelf for a little over a year, watching and waiting, and finally read it, so perhaps I built up my expectations in this manner.

I won't spoil an interesting plot, other than to say, it was certainly not on topic as I had preconceived it. My preconceived expectation of 'the man-eater' was a story around a tiger, or some other ferocious beast, terrorising Malgudi - but no, it was not this. Instead it is the story of a taxidermist who comes to live in the town, and his effect on Nataraj, the printer.

I was interested to see that Narayan dedicated this book to Graham Greene - "to mark (more than) a quarter of a century of friendship", the man who wisely counselled Narayan to shorten his name to become more manageable for his English audience (from Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami, to RK Narayan).

4 stars.

Inderjit Sanghera says

There is a whiff of Wodehouse about Naryan; the dry, ironical sense-of-humour, furthermore the weak-willed and wimpy narrator is reminiscent a certain type of British humour. And herein lies my problem with 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi'-it's style and characters are too deeply-embedded within the conventions of British literature to really stand out, like it's narrator Nataraj, 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi' is nice if ineffectual, recycling the standard tropes, the bullish, bury blunder-head Vasu, the comical side characters and the languorous, lilliputian hero Nataraj.

That is not to say that 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi' isn't an enjoyable read. Indeed the prose and dialogue flow nicely, as the reader becomes slowly engrossed in the disagreement between Nataraj and Vasu, the toxic taxidermist who blunders into his life. Vasu's entry into Nataraj's life is seismic, he awakens Nataraj from his slumber with a collection of stuffed animals (usually predators), destroys the quiet of his sanctum and his daily conversation with his friends, the journalist and the poet and forces his rather irrepressible personality on his household. Indeed, you would be hard-pressed to state that Nataraj is sincerely disappointed by the entry of Vasu into his life. Instead Vasu allows Nataraj to gain a sense of self-confidence and strength as he looks to, in his own haphazard manner, stop his rather convoluted and nefarious scheme involving an over-excitable elephant, a boisterous crowd, a second-rate dancing girl and a gun.

'The Man-Eater of Malgudi' may not be a masterpiece, but not every book can be a 'Ulysses', sometimes the dry, ironic style of Narayan are as necessary as James Joyce.

Siddhartha says

A classic from R.K.Narayan. As usual very recognizable yet interesting characters. The protagonist is a typical middle class man with timid character, never being able to say "No" or stand up firmly against what he despised. The dilemma in his mind as to what is right and what he could do presents an interesting picture common in our lives too. On the other hand the negative character is extremely strong and generates a loathing in the reader. You cant help hating him for what he does and how he does it. Sometimes you might even feel irritated that why he has so much power over the others. Also the other characters like the poet, journalist, lawyer or the teashop owner paint a beautiful picture of the small town and its quirky nature. This is where R.K. Narayan succeeds in presenting a fantastic painting, varied in colors and emotion. A must read.

Rawaan says

A printing press. A rogue taxidermist. An elephant in trouble. What more could you ask of a book?

Suchi Banerjee says

a most delightful read by all means!!!! i thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it!!!! narayan's magic lies in his simplicity!! the protagonists aren't doing anything extraordinary, neither are they 'important people'. these are simple men living simple lives whose worlds turn upside down the moment there is a slight change in their daily mundane routines!!! i implicitly agree with pico iyer in this!!! we all have encountered a vasu in one form or another in our lives and there is bound to be a bit of natraj dwelling in each one of us, hence we all can relate to this story at one level or another. its reality presented in fiction by the the tale-wizard rk narayan!!! kudos to the man!!! i'll treasure this book!

Rachael says

I read this a few years ago for a Uni class on Indian literature. It was one of the reasons I was glad I took that class. I found it very funny with the juxtaposition between Nataraj's 'put-upon' personality and the massive, bullying Vasu who rolls into town. A good read if you like 'odd couple' situations. I'm digging it out tomorrow for a re-read!

David Jose says

This book was a leisurely read, taking the reader through the simplicity and liveliness of the small city of Malgudi.

The climax of the story was humorous. I never expected the story to end in that fashion

Srinidhimatti says

One of those rare books which i could really relate to (being basically from a small town n all). Great read.Deals with how simplicity is such a a complicated thing.The characters are real,subtle in their humor and most importantly for me,Indian.

Karen A. says

This was listed as a read alike in Novelist for 'Number 1 Ladies Detective Agency'. It takes place in India. Its protagonist is a printer in Malgudi who has the misfortune of befriending a taxidermist. This man moves in above the print shop and takes advantage of the protagonists unwillingness to confront him or be impolite. It does fully immerse the reader in the country and culture of India but can be tiring at times. The plot meanders.

Andrew says

“Any recommendations on a first Narayan book?” I asked the owner of Focus Books in Pondicherry. Without batting an eyelid she picked out “The Man-eater of Malgudi” and thrust it into my hand.

Narayan created the fictional town of Malgudi in the late 1930s. The endless attempts to identify its genesis miss the point – Malgudi is India’s anytown.

Narayan later said the discovery of it was “earth-shaking.” It is at once intimate and universal – India in a microcosm. The railway-station, the streets, the backdrop of the town are painted with a wonderful economy of words; the characters’ ideas, thoughts and spirited attempts to make sense of things seem to elucidate something eternal in Indian village life.

This was his 12th, published in 1961. At its heart is the relationship between Nataraj, the owner of a printing press in Malgudi, and Vasu, a larger-than-life taxidermist who arrives in Malgudi unannounced and becomes an unwanted (and unpaying) house-guest in the upper storey of Nataraj’s home. What follows is tragi-comic, revealing both characters’ strengths and weaknesses. Nataraj’s gentle existence (which, until Vasu’s arrival, revolved around and a poet, a journalist and a single employee) is disrupted by Vasu’s ebullience and refusal to accept Nataraj’s feeble attempts to make him leave. Narayan creates an unexpected denouement involving the publication of a book of poetry and the attempted murder of a temple elephant.

The influence of Indian myths in all their playfulness is on show here – Vasu is a “Rakshasha” – a demon often associated with man-eating. But as with all Indian myths, slaying the demon is never as easy as it seems – and the reader is left wondering which of the characters has really got what they wanted.

An excellent introduction to Narayan.

Rishi Prakash says

I had a "tiger/lion" in mind when I picked this book so was quite excited to see how they catch it but it turned

out to be a "man" who has been termed as the Man Eater of Malgudi! And that is where half of my interest was lost! Having said that it is again a typical RK's story where you get to see how the characters develop in the mythical town of Malgudi :-)

It is a story which is a depiction of the eternal war between good and the bad; battle between goodness and evil where one character "The Man Eater" is a perfect picture of all evil you can think of in a human being! The character has been shaped so well that you have a real demon in your mind who is terrorizing almost the entire Malgudi.

His books are bound to mesmerize everyone in own special way and the narrative is so real that you can see the entire story like a movie. This is a common feature in all the books that I have read so far.

Although this book did not turned out to be as good as his previous ones for me and hence the low rating but like I said it can turn out to be very special for someone else because you never know what ends up touching and having an impact that would last.

Victoria says

I had to read this book in my first year of English at University. I hated it, almost all the way through, because it annoyed me how the Taxidermist was so dominant and did whatever he wanted to that sweet Indian man, who did nothing at all. After the end of the book, I thought about it, and realized how brilliantly the author made me loathe the characters. I think that's a true testament to this author, and overall it made me appreciate the story.

Kavitha says

This book is about looking beyond just the story. Its the philosophy behind it. RK Narayan is by far one of the best Indian authors and he happens to be my favorite. His stories are evergreen and suitable for all ages. This book is a modern day adaptation of the famous story about Bhasmaasura from the Hindu mythology.

Heramb says

The earthy fragrance of Malgudi continues in this classic. Amazing plot!

Petra X says

Its hard to rate this book. The writing, as always with Narayan, is exquisite, each sentence adds to the next and its always visual, like watching a film in words. The setting and the characters take front stage and the story seems to be just the vehicle for them. And that's what makes it less enjoyable, this slowness of plot.

Gorab Jain says

This had a bit of everything - Drama, Mystery, Comedy and a bit eccentric characters. And the signature simplicity of RKN on top of all this.

So this was yet another RKN buddy read with Arpit (his review) and we both loved it.

Meera Senthil says

I had glanced at this book many times in the shelves of bookstores but never actually bought it. Spotting it in my Anni's book shelf I lost no time in packing it to take it with me. And I liked it a lot!!

I've never read Narayan outside my school English textbooks and this book was wonderful. The humour is just amazing and I had a great time. The character of Vasu is the most interesting among all others and I think it is so well developed..we get curious about him even though he's not the good guy. The plot has a few lapses like Natraj worrying a lot about leaving fingerprints by touching stuff in Vasu's room but completely forgetting that he'd handled the man's gun the very previous night! The writing is simple yet it kind of draws you.

And Natraj irritates a lot of times but that's the way he is. The setting of the old Indian village when we were fresh out of becoming an independent nation is interesting to read now. Glad I read the book!

VijayaRaghavan S N says

For me this book is a let down. The enthusiasm with which I started reading the book, subsided with each turn of the pages. True. There were enjoyable moments in the book. But those moments were few and far between. Apart from two main characters, the author doesn't give much look into the other characters (there are a lot of characters by the way). Some characters were left hanging. I feel like the author didn't do justice to those characters. Their characters could have been molded to make the book much more entertaining.

Climax is disappointing. In fact, after giving a lot of build up to the two main characters, the way he ended the book was like a 'WTF' moment for me. The incidents from climax would occupy maybe 10 pages of the book max. He could have given a bit more description on the incidents.

Why did I still give a 4 star? Because I am like a guy who got recently dumped by his longtime girlfriend. I always admired R K Narayan for his works on 'Swami and his friends'. I am overly attached to him because of the way he takes me to the pre-technological era. And I can't believe that he disappointed me with this book. In spite of all this, I still love him. :(

Abhranil Dutta says

Quite a good book to read...!!

The writing is beautiful as usual, the characters looked real, in some parts of the book there is presence of humor..!

But not as good as 'Malgudi days'... :(

?r? says

I've read many of Narayan's works: *The Vendor Of Sweets* (<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>) and *Talkative Man* to a number of short stories. In reading *The Vendor of Sweets*, I had an experience of familiarity and nostalgia, much like Pico Iyer describes in his introductory essay to my edition of *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, "Midnight's Uncle." But my experience with this novel was rather different. Rather than focusing on the background of the stories, the fictional every-town of Malgudi, Narayan seems to go right into the complexities of the human mind.

Nataraj, the town's printer and the novel's protagonist, is a man who exemplifies in many ways the weakness of will that many people experience when confronted with the kind of distress that men like the unwelcome guest and taxidermist Vasu brings into his life. He reminded me of Bertie Wooster, accompanied by his faithful servant (the powerful and often-real-master Reginald Jeeves). Nataraj's Jeeves is, of course, his compositor and assistant Sastri. Perhaps it isn't all that coincidental that like Jeeves (whose first name was apparently not revealed for fifty-six years into the publication of those stories, and the *very existence* of which surprised Bertie Wooster the most ("'Hullo, Reggie,' he said, and I froze in my chair, stunned by the revelation that Jeeves's first name was Reginald. It had never occurred to me before that he had a first name." (Much Obligated, Jeeves, chapter four.)), Sastri doesn't have a first name either. Everyone who meets him calls him Sastri, even those much older than him, in a culture where that would be highly unlikely.

Narayan also weaves in Wodehouseian humour into every fibrous bit of his novel. In trying to find examples, I realised that quoting just would end up meaning putting together entire pages of text. Rather it would be more productive to talk about examples of such humour. The episode where Nataraj gets stranded at Mempi, and the expedition of his return home via bus in a soiled dhoti and buttonless shirt, or the situation in which Nataraj is forced to dodge a small boy whose grandfather he promised a dog for the one shot by Vasu, or the moment where he contemplates going back to the temple procession but fears that he'd be bundled off to the Madras Mental Asylum by the five o'clock express train—each of these is done with such craft that it is hard not to admire the quirky humour that Narayan brings to the table.

I can only imagine how entertaining a conversation with the author must have been, because as with *Talkative Man*, *The Man-Eater* is told in first person by the protagonist. I am tempted to imagine, especially because of the introductory essay's thesis that Narayan puts himself into each of his stories, that Nataraj, the Talkative Man, or a million other Narayan characters must have been reflections of parts of the author's own personality, like an image in the shards of a shattered mirror.

In conclusion, this book comes highly recommended. It's by turns hilarious and serious, weaving in a profound human psychology with the most absurdist humour.
