

**ETHICS, MYSTICISM, AND INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS IN THE
FICTION OF MANOJ DAS****Deepthi Singh**

Research scholar

Department of English,
School of Education and Humanities,
IFTM University, MoradabadEmail: deepthi10.angel@gmail.com**Dr. Monika Jaiswal**

Asst. Professor

Department of English
School of Education and Humanities
IFTM University, MoradabadEmail: monikajaiswalmjp@gmail.com**Abstract**

This paper examines the interplay of ethics, mysticism, and Indian philosophy in the fiction of Manoj Das, highlighting how his stories transcend simple narration to explore deeper moral and metaphysical concerns. Rooted in India's cultural and spiritual traditions, his works blend realism with the supernatural, transforming ordinary experiences into reflections on human existence. Ethical inquiry in his fiction is presented as a dynamic, evolving process shaped by personal consciousness, moral dilemmas, and lived experience, with characters undergoing significant inner transformation.

The study also analyzes mysticism as both a narrative and philosophical tool, where supernatural elements like visions and divine interventions symbolize psychological and spiritual truths rather than fantasy. It further situates Das within Indian philosophical traditions such as Vedanta, Advaita, and Buddhism, showing how concepts like *karma*, *maya*, *dharma*, and *moksha* are seamlessly integrated into his narratives.

Through narrative technique, characterization, and thematic analysis, the paper demonstrates how Das bridges traditional spirituality and modern literature. His fiction ultimately promotes a holistic vision of life, emphasizing moral awareness and spiritual realization, while offering readers both aesthetic engagement and a path toward introspection.

Keywords:**Indian philosophy, Ethics, Mysticism, karma, maya, dharma, moksha, Indian English Literature, spirituality, narrative technique, characterization.****1. Introduction**

Manoj Das is a distinguished figure in the Indian English literature due to his philosophical insight and variety of style. He writes both in English and in Odia, connecting traditionally regional with traditionally national and at the same time, universal human interests. His tales are simple and mysterious at the same time, with lots of deep metaphysics, and they frequently turn the simplest things in the life into the considerations of the deeper ones. Das is a writer who explores the psychological, ethical and spiritual aspects unlike other writers who concentrated on social or

political realism, characters in his work experience inner change as a result of mysterious or transcendental events.

One of the main peculiarities of his fiction is a veiled moral investigation. Instead of demonstrating morality as a set of moral rules, Das considers it as an inner awakening that is driven by intuition and empathy. His characters usually encounter complicated moral issues which results in ethical awakening, indicating that ethical awareness is produced by spiritual awareness and not taught.

His style of narrative is mysticism and the supernatural. Things like visions, ghosts and dreams are not fantasy but represent symbolic statements of greater truths. These experiences drive characters to self-discovery, and mirror Indian worldview where the visible and the invisible coexist. In this way, mysticism turns into a philosophical instrument to doubt the reality.

Das is heavily influenced in his work by the Indian philosophical traditions such as Vedanta and the Upanishads. Ideas like Maya, Karma and Dharma are integrated in his narrations through lived experiences as opposed to abstract ideas. His tales depict a cosmic pattern in which spiritual consciousness determines human fate.

In Indian English literature, Das has contributed his unique voice by basing his work on the indigenous philosophical practices. He attacks materialism and rationalism and promotes the moderate approach where reason is combined with spirituality. His fiction finally proposes that the real human satisfaction is found in the unity of the moral consciousness and spiritual enlightenment.

2. Background and Context

Indian literary tradition is anchored on the spiritual and philosophical tradition of the country and it is based on a continuum between the ancient scriptures and contemporary literature. Indian literature has been a source of ethical contemplation, metaphysical questioning, and spiritual journey unlike in the West where literature and philosophy are generally distinct. The earliest works such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana are an amalgamation of narratives and philosophical teachings, which has set a precedent of stories answering some of the most basic questions of life, duty and reality.

Indian narratives have been greatly influenced by classical philosophical systems, in particular, Vedanta. The unity with the ultimate reality (Brahman) of the individual self (Atman) is stressed in Vedanta and is oftentimes manifested in self-discovery and spiritual awakening narratives. This concept is further elaborated by Advaita Vedanta that links with Adi Shankaracharya, which posits the world as an illusion (Maya) that is created by ignorance (Avidya). These ideas impact the world of literature by shifting the lines between reality and illusion and emphasizing inner realization rather than the outer success.

Buddhist philosophy is also a part of Indian literature thought as it places an emphasis on impermanence (Anitya), suffering (Dukkha), and non-self (Anatta). These concepts form the plot of transformation, sympathy and disengagement, typically expressed in a simple, symbolic storytelling tradition such as the Jataka tales.

Mysticism is a major part of Indian literary works, which harmoniously links human and divine. Supernatural things, visions, and divine interventions are not considered extraordinary but are natural manifestations of some deeper reality. These mystical experiences are usually revelations that are used to enable the characters to understand the ultimate truths rather than the material world.

This deep combination of philosophical, ethical and mystical ideas has continued to inform the contemporary Indian English literature. The authors such as Manoj Das use these traditions to give

them a new meaning in modern times without losing the cultural groundedness and at the same time, avoiding the problem of generalization.

3. The ethical side of the fictions of Manoj Das.

Manoj Das incorporates ethical questioning into the everyday life fabric, and makes morality a matter, not of rules and regulations, but of situation-based and highly personal. His tales put the characters in ethical situations characterized by competing values-self-interest versus compassion, truth versus convenience and material gain versus spiritual integrity where judgment is based on inner conscience as opposed to external judgment. His interpretation is that, as he puts it, true judgment is in the self and moral development is also a matter of experience and not codes.

One of the main peculiarities of the fiction by Das is his refusal of definite moral oppositions. Characters tend to be in grey areas, where outward virtue or vice is confused by ulterior motive and inner richness. Institutional justice in his stories is hardly in place, but rather a kind of cosmic or moral justice, the expression of higher philosophical values.

The notion of Dharma is at the centre of it, and it helps the characters to resolve the conflict between the internal desires and the obligation of moral duty. Instead of a fixed code, dharma is depicted to be dynamic and situational and it promotes growth and self-awareness. Likewise, moral responsibility is not only about an individual, but about the society, which is interrelated and the ethical implications of human activities.

The technique of narration used by Das is not didactic. He uses symbolism, irony and open-ended conclusions to stimulate readers to reflect on moral questions. Mysticism and supernatural elements also add to the exploration of morality, and unveil some secrets, tying the idea of morality to a greater spiritual essence.

On the whole, Das is a holistic view of morality that can be seen beyond the naive right and wrong and he calls upon people to reflect on it and emphasize the timelessness of ethical investigation.

4. Mysticism and the Supernatural.

Manoj Das uses mysticism and the supernatural not just to tell a story but to be an effective means of philosophical and aesthetic expression. His works employ ghosts, visions and coincidences to illustrate more profound metaphysical truths and moral issues as opposed to conventional supernatural fiction which works towards the evocation of fear. They are introduced in a rather subtle way having symbolic and reflective meaning.

The unreal and the real are intertwined in his work as one of its peculiarities. Das, influenced by Advaita Vedanta, depicts the supernatural as a continuation of reality as opposed to the supernatural being distinct. The unseen exists with the seen and the extraordinary is recounted in a soothing, realistic way, defying dogmatic rationalist views.

The use of symbolism is instrumental in developing his mystical stories. Supernatural events tend to be mental or ethical conditions- ghosts can be a symbol of guilt and miracles can be a symbol of divine favor or retribution. Such aspects correspond to Indian philosophical concepts like karma and maya when reality is stratified and does not necessarily manifest itself at first sight.

Mystical experiences often serve as a turning point with the characters and lead them to self-examination and self-change. These experiences interrupt materialistic or cynical views, and bring characters into moral and spiritual consciousness. This change is normally unobtrusive and does not focus on the outward action but change of the inner being.

The storytelling by Das is based on cultural and folkloric background as in the indigenous beliefs, the supernatural represents a normal aspect of life. His narratives have this cultural background that gives them an authentic touch and also connects the tradition and modernity.

Finally, mysticism in fiction of Das is a tool to discuss the way people perceive things and what reality is. With the blurring of the rational and the intuitive, he develops a literary realm in which the ethical consideration, spiritual searching, and creative narration intersect.

5. Indian Philosophical Influences

The fiction of Manoj Das is thoroughly based on Indian intellectual and spiritual tradition, especially the Vedanta and Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism. Instead of introducing philosophy in an abstractive way, he turns such concepts as karma, maya and moksha to the lived experiences in the ordinary stories. Karma is manifested as a moral law that seems invisible and determines fate by influencing by subtle and usually delayed effects, and maya emphasizes the non-reality of the worldly attachments. His stories do not view moksha as distant transcendence but as an awakening that takes place in the inner world, through self-realization. Incorporating such concepts into real-life contexts, Das renders the depth of philosophy and makes it relatable.

His writing is more of a philosophical synthesis than observance to either doctrine, incorporating non-dualism of Vedanta and Buddhism concepts of impermanence and compassion. Symbolism, irony, and allegory lure the readers to the more profound meanings without enforcing strict meanings. His stories lead readers to contemplation and not straight philosophy.

Das is stylistically both simple and deep. His plain, chatty prose frequently has a hidden, symbolic significance, to both the general reader and the academic. Being influenced by folklore and oral story telling traditions, his stories are characterized by linear plot, archetypal characters, and the settings rooted in the culture, particularly, village life. This gives a sense of authenticity and at the same time maintains philosophical richness.

His technique revolves around allegory and low-level irony, which discloses the disjunction between the appearance and the reality and consolidates the themes of illusion and human insufficiency. His pacing of the narrative is gradual, leading to revelations, which tend to be open-ended and do not provide a conclusion, but evoke reflection. This is further augmented by a restrained, semi-detached narrative voice that puts forward ethical and philosophical problems without being didactic.

On the whole, the style of narration by Manoj Das incorporates form, theme, and philosophy into a whole. His narratives turn into a source of ethical reflection and spiritual enquiry that calls upon readers to see beyond the reality on the surface and explore deeper realities of human life.

The use of characterization in the fiction of Manoj Das indicates a distinctive way of using realism and symbolism blended in a single character that makes his characters real and philosophical. He dwells on the common people: villagers, clerks, teachers and marginalized people and stresses that spiritual awareness and moral development are not reserved to saints, but can be experienced in our daily life.

The mixture of the mundane and the extraordinary is one of the main characteristics of his characterization. The mundane and the sacred coexist and simple characters tend to have mystical events or moral dilemmas. This blending indicates the notion that significant insights can be obtained by the mundane experiences.

His characters are characterized by moral and spiritual transformation. Most of them experience a gradual inner transformation brought about by suffering, moral dilemma or supernatural experiences. Such changes are the reflection of the self-realization in Indian philosophical thought. Another figure used by Das to catalyze change is that of sages, mystics, and seekers. They may not always be the focus, but they lead or challenge others to thought and still be down-to-earth and human. Meanwhile, his characters, such as greedy, proud, and ignorant, are psychologically drawn,

but with moral flaws. Instead of moralizing, he demonstrates the way their actions have consequences, which in some cases, may result in redemption, and in other instances, tragic ignorance.

His characterization is also enhanced by use of symbolism. Characters can be viewed as levels of enlightenment-- materialistic ones embodying attachment to maya, and reflective ones implying a change towards truth and liberation. This stratification of style unites personal experience with general philosophical motifs, and his characters are so life-like and so full of meaning.

Table 1: Types of Characters in Manoj Das's Fiction

Character Type	Description	Narrative Function	Philosophical Significance
Ordinary Individuals	Villagers, clerks, teachers, common people	Ground the story in realism	Spiritual potential in everyday life
Seekers/Protagonists	Characters undergoing inner conflict or transformation	Central focus of narrative progression	Quest for self-realization
Sages/Mystics	Spiritually enlightened figures	Guide or influence other characters	Embodiment of wisdom and higher truth
Flawed Individuals	Characters driven by ego, greed, ignorance	Create conflict and moral tension	Representation of human weaknesses (maya)
Supernatural Figures	Ghosts, divine beings, symbolic presences	Introduce mystical dimension	Agents of karma, transformation, or revelation

Table 2: Stages of Character Development

Stage	Characteristics	Trigger/Event	Outcome
Initial State	Ignorance, materialism, moral complacency	Ordinary life situation	Limited self-awareness
Crisis/Encounter	Confrontation with ethical dilemma or supernatural event	Mystical experience or moral conflict	Disruption of beliefs
Reflection	Introspection and questioning	Realization of consequences	Growing awareness
Transformation	Acceptance of deeper truths	Spiritual or moral insight	Change in attitude and behavior

Resolution Failure)	(or	Either enlightenment continued ignorance	or	Final realization (or lack of it)	Liberation (moksha) or persistence of illusion
------------------------	-----	---	----	--------------------------------------	---

8. Conclusion

To sum it up, the fiction by Manoj Das is a unified combination of Indian philosophy, mysticism, and ethics. His tales are not just an entertainment, but deep reflections on the essence of human life, ethicality, and spirituality.

He appeals to the readers to look beyond the surface of reality by employing supernatural elements and mystical experiences. His incorporation of philosophical ideas like karma, maya and moksha gives his stories a moral and metaphysical dimension that adds depth to his stories.

His plain and yet suggestive narrative style, along with a combination of folklore, allegory, and irony, render complicated concepts easily understandable without being simplified. His characters are based on real-life events and they have significant changes which mirror human suffering and desires of the world.

Finally, the contribution made to the Indian English literature by Manoj Das is his skill of integrating both storytelling and philosophy with each other. His books are a transition between tradition and modernity that helps the readers not to forget about the timeless significance of human values and spirituality in modern life.

References:

1. Ratti M. Writing the village, becoming the nation: The work of Manoj Das. *J Commonw Lit.* 2018;57(1):18–31.
2. Mohanty K, Singh KP. Exploring the theme of compassion: An ethical perspective in the fictional world of Manoj Das. *Library Progress International.* 2024;44(3):1–10.
3. Pandey A. Spiritual concern in the works of Manoj Das. *The Creative Launcher.* 2017;2(5):309–314.
4. Mohanty P, Pattnaik M. Vivid pictures of Indian society and culture in the writings of Manoj Das and Ruskin Bond: A study. *TPM.* 2025;32(S8):2395–2400.
5. Dixit R, Singh JK. A comparative analysis of myth and folklores in R.K. Narayan and Manoj Das. *Integral Research.* 2025;2(12):55–61.
6. Jena D. Memory and indigenous trauma: Reading natural disasters in the select works of Manoj Das. *IJFMR.* 2025;7(2).
7. Hegishte SR. Indian rural culture in the select ghost stories of Manoj Das. *The Criterion.* 2023;14(4):8–16.
8. Das M. *Myths, legends, concepts, and literary antiquities of India.* New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi; 2009.
9. Das M. *Streams of yogic and mystic experience.* New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations; 2010.
10. Das M. *A Tiger at Twilight and Other Stories.* New Delhi: Penguin India; 2010.
11. Das M. *The Submerged Valley and Other Stories.* New Delhi: National Book Trust; 1986.
12. Das M. *Stories of Light and Delight.* New Delhi: National Book Trust; 1970.
13. Das M. *The Escapist.* New Delhi: Vision Books; 2001.
14. Das M. *Chasing the Rainbow.* New Delhi: UBS Publishers; 2004.
15. Samal S. *Manoj Das: A Critical Study.* Cuttack: Kitab Mahal; 1997.

16. Samal JK. A comparative study of Manoj Das and R.K. Narayan. *Asian J Multidiscip Stud.* 2015;3(8):90–94.
17. Behura M, Misra R. Displacement issue in The Submerged Valley of Manoj Das: A critical analysis. *Asian J Multidiscip Stud.* 2015;3(7):199–200.
18. Bera S, Gupta S. Socio-cultural flow in the fiction of Manoj Das. *Writers Editors Critics.* 2017;7(1):89–94.
19. Shukla HP. The social conscience in Manoj Das's fiction. In: Verma MR, Sharma AK, editors. *Reflections of Indian English Fiction.* New Delhi: Atlantic; 2004.
20. Aurobindo S. *The Life Divine.* Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press; 2010.
21. Aurobindo S. *The Synthesis of Yoga.* Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press; 1999.
22. Aurobindo S. *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol.* Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press; 1997.
23. Radhakrishnan S. *The Bhagavad Gita.* New Delhi: Penguin; 2009.
24. Narayan RK. *The Man-Eater of Malgudi.* Chennai: Indian Thought Publications; 1961.