

# An Astrologers' Day



The Astrologer



*B.A. First: English Language*

# R.K. Narayan



**Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami** was an Indian English writer known for his work set in the fictional South Indian town of Malgudi. He is famous in the for his novels and short stories. His stories belong to the Indian soil and are evocative of its culture. Mainly, they represent Indian way o life. They have Simple but captivating plot. Sparkling characterization, strict economy of narration and graceful simplicity of language are them main features of his short stories. ♡



# Plot

## Exposition

In the beginning of the story we are introduced to the astrologer. The crafty ways in which the astrologer transcends his work and endeared to his gullible customers is very well described.

"He was as much a stranger to the stars as were his innocent customer. But it didn't seem to matter at all. He said things which pleased and astonished everyone: that was more a matter of study, practice and shrewd guesswork".

# Plot

## Complication

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A sense of suspense is created about the personal life or past history of the astrologer. All that we are told in the beginning of the story is that he had not in the least intended to be an astrologer when he began life.

He had left his village stealthily without any previous thought or plan. He had to leave home without telling anyone and had to cover a safe distance before he could recollect himself and his life. We are also told that astrology was not his family business.

# Plot

## Rising Action

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An Astrologer looked up and saw a man. Then, an astrologer invited him to chat and predict his future life. They made a deal to tell the truth man's life. And an astrologer charged three pies per questions. This client was no usual casual client wanting temporary respite. He had specific questions about his quest for a man. He challenged the astrologer to provide answers about his search.

# Plot

## Climax

What the astrologer says hereafter takes the client as well as the reader by surprise. He was left for dead, a knife had passed through him once, he was pushed into a well nearby in the field. The effect is further heightened when the astrologer even gives out his correct name. Guru Nayak is completely stumped. When asked about the whereabouts of the man who stabbed him and left him for dead, the astrologer confidently tells Guru Nayak to give up the hunt because the assailant had died four months ago, crushed under a lorry in a far-off town. The astrologer also advises Guru Nayak to go home and stay up there and never travel southward again.

# Plot

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## Resolution (A Surprising Ending):

The story takes another twist when the astrologer reaches home and confides with his wife the reason why he had run away from home, settled here, and married her. All these years he had thought that the blood of a man was on his hands. This past incidence had happened when he was a youngster, got drunk, gambled and got into a quarrel. But now the man he thought he had killed was alive. Thus a great load was off his chest.

The story thus ends with an incredible twist: "a murdered man" turns up to consult his "murderer".



## Character-Sketch of the the Astrologer

The astrologer's name is never mentioned . He is a 'round character' with various facets of the personality. His character evolved with the development of the plot.

He appears to be a very heavenly man, in whom many people find solace and answers to their queries. He seems to have a special aura around him. It gives him an added advantage to attract clients.

*"His forehead was resplendent with sacred ash and vermillion and his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam" which his simple clients took to be prophetic light and felt comforted."*



## Character-Sketch of the Astrologer (continue..)

His dressing is also like that of a holy god-man in whom people repose their faith time and again. *“To crown the effect he wound a saffron-coloured turban around his head. This colour scheme never failed. People were attracted to him as bees are attracted to cosmos or dahlia stalks”.*

He is extremely smart, outspoken and knows the realities of life. He can very cunningly use them for his benefit. He is spectacular with his words and can easily make people believe in whatever he is saying. His talks endeared to almost everyone's hearts immediately.

## Character-Sketch of the Astrologer (continue..)

He knows his skills and completely uses them for his benefit. The only thing the astrologer didn't know anything about was 'Astrology' but he was intelligent and had his crafty ways to go about his profession. He had a working analysis of mankind's troubles and told the person before him, gazing at his palm:

"In many ways you are not getting the fullest results of your efforts".

"Most of your troubles are due to your nature.....Saturn.....You have an impetuous nature and a rough exterior".

He is unapologetic about the activities he indulges in. He is also unabashedly greedy for materialistic gains. He is also very street smart and knows what actions will reap what benefits.

# The Stranger: The Client (Guru Nayak)

He happens to be the person the astrologer had stabbed and left for being dead when they were youngsters. Therefore he is restless, furious and was searching for his assailant to take revenge. He seems to be someone who is very straightforward. He seems to be a nice person, who seems to believe in whatever that is told to him. He is not cunning and also not very smart. It is so because astrologer recognized him but he could not recognize his assailant in the garb of an astrologer.

When he comes to know that his enemy is already dead he feels regretful . But, like a child, he also shows 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 seems to be a strong built person who holds the astrologer strongly and demands for an instant answer. He feels physical power can win over other things, but he wasn't aware of the cunningness that people apply in the general world.

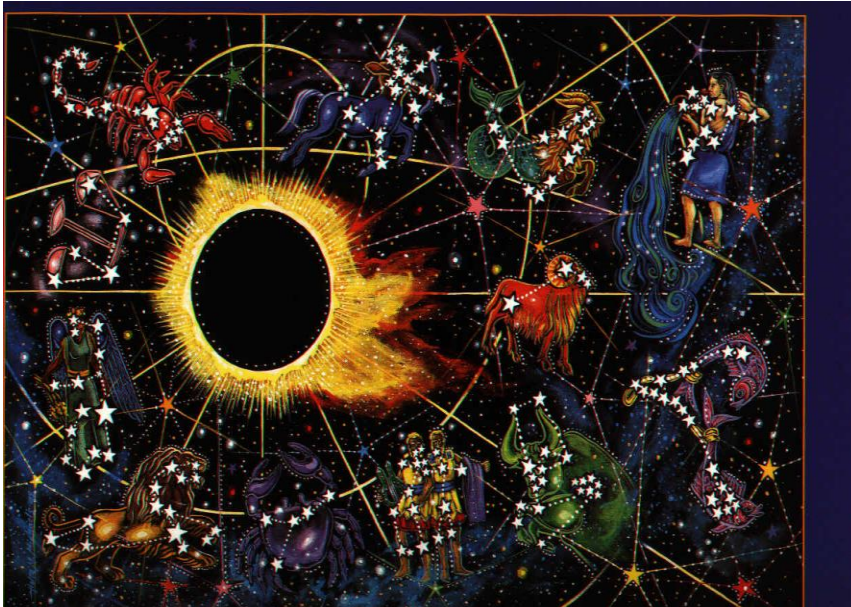
## Astrologer's Wife

Though a minuscule role, the astrologer's wife plays an important part at end of the story. She helps the astrologer take the great load off his chest.

The astrologer heaves a sigh of relief by talking to his wife about his past. Confiding and sharing his relief with his wife brings her characters to life.

# Theme: 01

## Beliefs Religion and Blind Faith



*"You call yourself an astrologer?" The astrologer felt challenged and said, tilting the other's palm towards the green shaft of light, "Yours is a nature ..."*  
*"Oh, stop that," the other said. "Tell me something worthwhile...."*

# Theme: 02

## Human Greed



*"All right. I will speak. But will you give me a rupee if what I say is convincing? Otherwise I will not open my mouth, and you may do what you like"*



# Theme: 03

**Guilt**



*You look  
worried. What  
is wrong?"*

*"Nothing."*



# Theme: 04

## Sense of Relief



*"Yes, in our village, when I was a silly youngster. We drank, gambled, and quarreled badly one day—why think of it now? Time to sleep," he said*

# Theme: 05

Fear



"Leave me  
today. I will  
speak to you  
tomorrow."

# Theme: 06

## Irony of Fate



*"Guru Nayak—"*

*"You know my name!" the other said, taken aback.*

*"As I know all other things. Guru Nayak, listen carefully to what I have to say. Your village is two days' journey due north of this town. Take the next train and be gone. I see once again great danger to your life if you go from home."*

# Irony

The astrologer is not a real astrologer and knows nothing of astrology. Still gullible people came to him for solutions and finding respite

"He was as much a stranger to the stars as were his innocent customers".

He merely wears a saffron robe and sacred ash and deceives people that he has religious and astrological knowledge.

"He knew no more of what was going to happen to others than he knew what was going to happen to himself next minute".

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The astrologer has put on this facade of an astrologer. He does so to escape from the alleged crime he had earlier committed in his village. He had assaulted Guru Nayak, whom the astrologer thought he had killed. He ran away from his village years back to escape being caught. Ironically, Guru Nayak himself comes to the astrologer asking for the whereabouts of the person who had assaulted him..

# Satire

The major portion of the story seems to be a satire. R K Narayan has explained how innocent, gullible people are fooled by such crooked, conniving and smart professionals. They can take advantage of people's beliefs to make quick bucks and materialistic gains. This satire has been done in a very effective way in this short story.

Thank You  
(For teaching Purpose Only)

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