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A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS IN THE FICTIONAL WORKS OF R. K. NARAYAN

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO SAURASHTRA UNIVERSITY, RAJKOT FOR THE AWARD OF Doctor of Philosophy IN ENGLISH

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2005
STATEMENT UNDER UNI. O. PH. D. 7 :

I hereby declare that the work embodied in my thesis entitled as

"A Critical Study of the Autobiographical Elements in the Fictional Works of R. K. Narayan", prepared for Ph.D. Degree has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University on any previous occasion.

And to the best of my knowledge, no work has been reported on the above subject.

And the work presented in this thesis is original and wherever references have been made to the work of others, they have been clearly indicated as such and the source of information is included in the bibliography.

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Surendranagar

Audrey E. Barlow
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Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION
Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION

R.K. Narayan, an Indian of the purest Brahmin stock who spent his life in the city of Mysore in South India composing fiction in English can be read as the chronicle and the embodiment of the state and the history of the English language. New movements in literature are new uses of language, and this is true of R. K. Narayan in the last century. The new mind requires the new voice, and the new voice is discovered by the writer's genius for intimately registering the idiom of his own world.

It is this new voice in English literature which I recognize in the work achieved in India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. If Anand is the novelist as a reformer, Raja Rao the novelist as a
metaphysical poet. Narayan is simply the novelist as novelist. R. K. Narayan, now no more, has produced a sizable body of work – more than a dozen novels and several collections of short stories – which makes him one of the most prominent novelists in the British Commonwealth. Over a period of forty years of composition he had built up a devoted readership throughout the world from New York to Moscow. The location of his novels is the South Indian town of Malgudi, an imaginative version of Narayan's beloved Mysore, which is as familiar to his readers as their own suburbs, and infinitely more engaging. His writing is a distinctive blend of Western techniques and Eastern material, and he has succeeded in a remarkable way in making an Indian sensibility at home in English art.

R. K. Narayan was born in 1907 to a Brahmin family, his family, like that of most Indians, settled ultimately from a village, Rasipuram. His family had long been established in the city of Madras. Tamil, the language of the province of Madras, was the one spoken at home. His earliest memory was of himself sitting half-buried in sand with a peacock and a monkey for company in his grandmother's house, No.1 Vellola Street, Madras, where he lived with her and a maternal uncle, a student of the local college. The large rambling house had been
partitioned and rented out as offices, shops and apartments except for a
minimum reserved for the Narayan's family. The grand mother was
largely dependent on the rents for her living:

"The house was built around an enormous
Indian – style court yard….. Its doors were
thick teakwood slabs four feet wide and six
or seven feet high, covered with studs and
ornaments, and flanking the doors were
matching smooth pillars crowned with little
brass figures of monkeys, elephants, eagles
and pigeons."1

Being brought up else where than in one's immediate family was
not uncommon, even among the middle-class, in a society where family
bonds, however extended, were very strong. Narayan was brought to
Madras as a young child so as to leave his delicate mother to care for the
younger children. Narayan's father was in the Government Education
Service, a headmaster, likely to be switched from school to school and
place to place, sometimes at immense distances. Living with granny was
altogether a more suitable and, a much to be preferred arrangement for
Narayan. Narayan's uncle was a zealous photographer who made young
Narayan constantly pose as his rigid and unblinking model. He was frequently taken together with his friends the monkey, Rama, and the boy Narayan discerned with delight at a marked facial resemblance between himself and the monkey in his uncle's photographs. He hoped that others would detect the likeness too. His grandmother was horrified at the superstition that having his photograph taken shortened the subject's life.

Photography, pets the peacock and the monkey were succeeded by a kitten with a bushy tail, a mynah, a green parrot, and a little hairy puppy bought for one rupee from a butler serving in a European house—and above all, the local streets, figured largely in Narayan's early experiences. Whether he walked them as a small boy hand in hand with his uncle, or a little later on his own, sneaking out of the house unnoticed, the streets offered boundless material to this precociously alert observer, nutrition for the imagination, education for the feelings, provocation to wander, as well as reminders of the harshness of life and the proximity of death. Already, the instinct for story telling was starting to form. We can see how this is compounded to sharpness of sight, free play of imagination, curiosity and expressiveness. One day, for example, his uncle marched him along the streets on the way to the shops.
Narayan's attention was caught by the lamplighter, with his bamboo ladder, going from lamp-post to lamp-post. He was an old man dressed in Khaki coat and blue turban and as well as the ladder he carried a box of matches, rags, and a can of oil. He mounted his ladder, opened the tiny ventilator, cleaned the lamp and wiped it with a rag, filled it with oil, lit the wick, closed the shutter, descended, took up his ladder again, and so on:

"I had numerous questions welling up within me, all sorts of things I wished to know about the man - his name, where he came from, if he slept wearing the ladder, what he ate, and so forth; but before I could phrase them properly, I was dragged along with my questions unuttered."²

But however useful the amiable uncle was in introducing Narayan to the streets, it was granny, whose jurisdiction was limited to the house, who was the deepest influence on his life. She is clearly the original of robust, dry, temperamental old ladies who flourish in Narayan's fiction, eccentric in her views – we remember what she thought of photography – and profoundly orthodox in religion, she it was through whom
Narayan inherited that Brahmin orthodoxy which itself had received a stiffening of Victorian ethics as well as a blanching of British gentility.

Grandmother was a devoted gardener, who grew more than twenty varieties of hibiscus, and several kinds of jasmine. One corner of her garden was kept for certain delicate plants native to the 3000 feet heights of Bangalore which she stubbornly tried to rear in the low, marine air of Madras. She wept over the dying plants and cursed the Madras climate. She was a key figure in the lives of many people a match maker, a reader of horoscopes, an adviser on marriages, much of this activity taking place during the spare moments spent in the garden with a pruning shears in her hand. People howling with pain from scorpion bites were brought in to be tended by her. She treated whooping cough and paralysis, convulsions and snakebite. She also fancied herself as a teacher. In fact, in Narayan's view this, rather than grand motherhood, was her proper vocation. Late in the evening after gardening she would change her clothes, chew betel-nut and leaf, put out an easy chair for herself with a stool beside it, fix a lamp to see by, and then begin a period of extra tuition for her grandson. She taught him to multiply, to recite the tables, the Tamil alphabet, Sanskrit prayers in honour of Saraswathi, the goddess of learning, and to sing classical
melodies. She kept methodical notes in a small diary of what lessons were being done. Narayan would get his dinner only after he had finished learning, however sleepy he was, and he frequently had to keep himself awake by dabbing his eyes with cold water. Later, when his uncle had married and had his own children, she took charge of them and proved an aggressive teacher whacking her pupils with long broomsticks. Narayan's cousin Najaki, a most conscientious pupil, took along a choice of broomsticks as well as her books when she went for her lesson! 'an extension', as Narayan says, 'of the non-violence philosophy, by which you not only love your enemy but lend your active co-operation by, arming him or her with the right stick.'

"An Indian child of this class and caste was introduced to the classical Indian tales, myth and Vedic poetry very early in life, in Narayan's case, at his grandmother's knee, 'in a cosy corner of the house when the day's tasks are done and the lamps are lit.'"³

"Like the non-conformist hymns of Lawrence's childhood, they became women
into the man's consciousness giving an ultimate shape to his life."\4

Learning to write itself was being initiated into a mystery and was accompanied by the appropriate religious ceremonies:

"After being made to repeat the name of God, I was taught to write the first two letters of the alphabet on corn spread out on a tray, with the forefinger of my right hand held and propelled by the priest. I was made to shape the letters of both the Sanskrit and the Tamil alphabets, Sanskrit because it was the classical language of India, Tamil because it was the language of the province in which I was born and my mother tongue."\5

Granny's instruction, however insistent and disciplined, was preferable to the succession of Madras schools attended by Narayan in the next several years. It was a mode of life broken by the annual eight weeks of vacation with his family after a laborious third – class train journey – Granny thought any other mode of travel, though the family
could afford it, gross indulgence which Narayan would undertake reluctantly, feeling the vitality and variety of the Madras streets poorly replaced by the hum drum provinces, which he would return from, on the other hand, sad at having to give up the warmth of family life for the more arid regime of a grandmother and an uncle, Narayan's scholastic career never shows him as having made any mark as a scholar and he clearly had pronounced deficiencies in this line. He went first to the Lutheran Mission School where he was one of the few non-Christians and the only Brahmin boy in his class. Scripture classes were devoted to lampooning the Hindu Gods and ridicule was poured on the Brahmins who, it was said, while claiming to be vegetarians sneakily ate fish and meat in secret and were probably responsible for the soaring price of those commodities. In the class-room English was the first language and taught by the best teachers. Sanskrit and Tamil, the one the classical Language of India, the other the Language of Narayan's province, were treated as minor subjects to be taught by the most useless teachers. English was taught just as it might have been done in England at the time. The first lesson came from a glossy primer which began with 'A was for Apple, B bit it, and C cut it.' To boys who were familiar with banana, guava, pomegranate and grape, apples were as foreign as the
language itself, so that as Narayan said, 'We were left free to guess, each according to his capacity, at the quality, shape and details of the civilization portrayed in our class books.' (Ibid., p. 121) The cane was much used in all Narayan's schools, even in the Lutheran Mission School where the headmaster was a kind and soft spoken man. It appeared too in C.R.C. High School where he went to next. The great God here was Baden-Powell, and the principal recreation soccer. Narayan felt he had arrived when he was admitted to the Christian College High School, a grand institution to which he came each day by tramcar with a packed lunch. It had a Gothic Chapel, well-lit classrooms and an accessible library. Narayan carried his lunch to a nearby bookshop and ate it behind the enormous shelves. Unfortunately his father, who had now been transferred to Maharaja's Collegiate High School in Mysore, sent for him and insisted on his leaving the Christian College despite the appeals of the headmaster, Dr. Anderson. Narayan began in Mysore missing the street life of Madras, his friends, and 'above all the snobbish glow belonging to the Christian College.' But the cooler climate of Mysore proved much more agreeable to him. Narayan began to appreciate the advantage of studying in a school where one's father was head. The teachers were more tactful with one, and anxious that the
headmaster's son should not disgrace them. In addition, a priceless privilege for someone like Narayan were the amenities he enjoyed both in his father's library crammed with Carlyle, Ruskin, Walter Pater, Wordsworth, Browning, Byron and Shakespeare, and in the school library, particularly during the summer vacations. He read any book that he liked and all the magazines, of which three seemed to be a copious supply, from 'Little Folks' to 'The Nineteenth Century and After : A Monthly Review and the Cornhill Magazine. Narayan said:

"After Scott I picked up a whole row of Dickens and loved his London and the queer personalities therein. Rider Haggard, Marie Corelli, Moliere and Pope and Marlowe, Tolstoi, Thomas Hardy – an indiscriminate jumble; I read everything with the utmost enjoyment."6

He crowned his school career by failing the University Entrance Examination and spent another whole year at home reading and, now, writing. He began by writing under the influence of events in his immediate surroundings. When his father lost a dear friend, Narayan wrote ten pages on friendship in flamboyant poetic prose. Usually his
pieces were neither poetry, nor prose, nor fiction, but a peculiar mixture of all. He passed the University Entrance Examination in 1926 and began his studies at the Maharaja's College. It took him four years to graduate, a year longer than usual.

When Narayan finally graduated – in 1930 at the age of twenty four – he toyed with the idea of returning to college to take an M.A. degree in literature and become a college lecturer. When he was going up the stairs of the college carrying his entrance application he met a friend half-way who turned him back, arguing that taking an M.A. would be a sure way to lose interest in literature. I accepted his advice and went down stairs, once for all turning my back on college studies. If not a higher degree, then, what was he to do? He made a half hearted effort to teach:

".....but Narayan's first experience as a teacher soured him on that profession for life. He was paralyzed with fear at the sight of the burly boys, was tongue tied during lesson, and was insolent to his permissive head master, who merely asked him to stay with the class, even when he had nothing to
say, for a full period, rather than dismiss it after a few minutes. Narayan also balked at joining the civil service, because he was sure he had not the patience, the presence, or the discipline - the triple necessity of official qualities."7

What Narayan decided to do, therefore, was to write novels and live at home, something which the joint family system at least made possible for one in his circumstances:

"On a certain day in September, selected by my grandmother for its auspiciousness, I bought an exercise book and wrote the first line of a novel; as I sat in a room nibbling my pen and wondering what to write, Malgudi with its little railway station swam into view, all ready-made, with a character called 'Swaminathan' running down the platform peering into the faces of passengers, and grimacing at a bearded face; this seemed to take me on the right
track of writing, as day by day pages grew out of it linked to each other. This was a satisfactory beginning for me, and I regularly wrote a few pages each day."8

Narayan was clear that the Indian sensibility was profoundly different from the western and his novels, although they were to be written in English – some thing which he did naturally and with complete ease - was to embody a wholly different mentality, another view of the world, other feelings and responses. He says:

"Our minds are trained to accept without surprise characters of godly or demoniac proportions with actions and reactions set in limitless worlds and progressing through an incalculable timescale. With the impact of modern literature we began to look at our Gods, demons, sages, and Kings, not as some remote concoctions but as types and symbols, possessing psychological validity even when seen against the contemporary background."9
Narayan observed when writing we attempted, to compress the range of our observation and subject the particle to an intense scrutiny. Passing, inevitably, through phases of symbolic, didactic, or over-dramatic writing, one arrived at the stage of valuing realism, psychological exploration and technical virtuosity. The effort was interesting, but one had to differ from one's model in various ways. In an English novel, for instance, the theme of romance is based on a totally different conception of man–woman relationship from ours. We believe that marriages are made in heaven and a bride and groom meet, not by accident or design, but by the decree of fate, that fitness for a match not to be gauged by letting them go through a period of courtship but by a study of their horoscopes; boy and girl meet and love after marriage rather than before. The eternal triangle, such a standby for a western writer, is worthless as a theme for an Indian, our social circumstances not providing adequate facilities for the eternal triangle. We, however, seek excitement in our system of living known as the joint family, in which several members of a family live under the same roof. The strains and stresses of this kind of living on the individual, the general structure of society emerging from it, and the complexities of the caste system, are inexhaustible subjects for us. And the hold of
religion and the conception of the Gods ingrained in us must necessarily find a place in any accurate portrayal of life. Nor can we overlook the rural life and its problems, eighty five out of a hundred Indians being village folk.

The fact that he was writing in English for an English speaking audience which was bound to be largely foreign seemed to have disturbed Narayan. He insists that the English of the Indian writer writing in English is not Anglo-Saxon English:

"The English language, through sheer resilience and mobility, is now undergoing a process of Indianization in the same manner as it adopted US citizenship over a century ago with the difference that it is the major language there but here one of the fifteen listed in the Indian constitution."\(^{10}\)

"He is convinced after using English as the language of his fiction for forty years that it has served his purpose of conveying unambiguously the thoughts and acts of a
set of personalities, who flourish in a small town located in a corner of South India."\textsuperscript{11}

At home, someone who simply stayed and wrote stories was regarded as possibly crazy. Narayan's father's friends, many of whom did not know the difference between a novel and a newspaper rebuked him for worrying his father so and asked why he did not join a newspaper if he wanted to be a writer:

"Unwisdom, unwisdom! one gentleman cried. 'You could write as a hobby, how can you make a living as a writer?' The notion is very unpractical."\textsuperscript{12}

That he could not make a living was an accurate prediction. His first year's income from writing was about nine rupees and twelve annas, in the following year, a children's story brought thirty rupees. But Narayan's decision was respected. He led a regular life, he had few needs, no plans, and luxuriated in freedom and writing. 'The pure delight of watching a novel grow can never be duplicated by any other experience.' In this first novel, \textbf{Swami and Friends}, he was conscious of the central character, the boy Swami, but of nothing else when he sat
down to write, and this flow was to be characteristic of his work and idiom:

"I reread the first draft at night to make out how it was shaping and undertook, until far into the night, corrections, revisions and tightening up of sentences. I began to notice that the sentences acquired a new strength and finality while being rewritten, and the real, final version could emerge only between the original lines and then again in what developed in the jumble of re-written lines, and above and below them."13

In a social system where boys and girls are strictly segregated, and a boy spoke only to his sister, Narayan's love life was made up of intense, one sided affairs with any girl his eye fell on, a girl in a green Saree with a pale oval face seen passing down the street, or a squat, lumpy girl glimpsed drying her hair, or a girl who smiled at him in the college, an English pen friend, or even the middle aged British woman doctor who came to treat his mother. The genuine thing occurred in Coimbatore in July 1933, when he was staying at his elder sister's. He
saw a girl drawing water from the street tap and fell in love immediately. Her father turned out to be a local headmaster, the families were known to each other, and the requirements of class, community and caste were all correct. The girl's father loved books and was interested in literary matters and glad to talk to Narayan about such subject. But Narayan crashed through all conventions by outrageously announcing directly to the father that he wanted to marry his daughter.

This was an unprecedented, appalling action. Narayan had very few prospects though he had just had a piece. 'How to write an Indian Novel,' western writers who visited India to gather material, accepted by Punch and referred to his literary connections when this subject was raised. But it was not his economic prospects as the much more fundamental objection that his horoscope and the girl's were incompatible:

"My horoscope had the Seventh House occupied by Mars, the Seventh House being the one that indicated nothing but disaster unless the partner's horoscope also contained the same flaw, a case in which two wrongs make one right."14
The evil of Narayan's stars was a matter of tense discussion but finally, a more favourable reading having been obtained from another expert, the marriage took place, 'celebrated with all the pomp, show, festivity, exchange of gifts, and the over crowding that my parents desired and expected.' His father had a stroke soon after the marriage and his mother spent most of her time with him. Rajam, the new wife, acted as her surrogate downstairs. She got on excellently with the family and they had a room in the house to themselves. They were idyllically happy.

To support his family Narayan became a reporter, gathering news for a Madras paper called 'The Justice.' The paper was dedicated to the rights of the non-Brahmin class, the Brahmins dominating in public life, government service, and education. The newspaper owner had no objection to a Brahmin reporter – indeed they relished the idea of having a Brahmin on the staff who supported the non Brahmin cause – and Narayan spent his days hunting out news from the bazaar and market place, the law courts, police station, the municipal building, doing his best to make at least ten inches of news a day before lunch. He rushed home and typed his findings – hardly scoops – on his ancient portable Remington, and got them off to the post office before 2.20. Murders
were his standby, he says, and he became a familiar in the mortuary. He always took care in his reports to sprinkle the word 'allegedly' generously. He was intimate with police officers, detectives and informers, and came into the closest contact with an immense variety of men and manners. It was work that he might have continued indefinitely except that once, when his payment was held up for three months, Narayan wrote to the editor to protest:

"I am a writer in contact with many newspapers and periodicals in America and England, who make their payments on precise dates; I am not used to delays in payments……. To which the editor replied, 'If you are eminent as you claim to be, you should not mind a slight delay on our part; if, on the other hand, you could realize that after all you are a correspondent eking out your income with such contributions as we choose to publish, your tone is unwarranted by your circumstances.' I resented the tone
of their reply, and decided to give up this
work as soon as I could afford it."15

This experience of reporting was of inestimable benefit in
supplying material for fiction and in deepening acquaintance with
human character, relationship, oddity, and suffering. In every corner he
found a character that he could fit into a story. Ideas were conceived,
developed, and sometimes lost, often recovered and burnished, during a
single morning's walk about the town.

It was just at this time that he sent his first novel, *Swami and
Friends*, to his friend Purna, who was at Oxford where Graham Greene
was living. Purna approached Greene, Greene recommended it to
Hamish Hamilton, and Narayan's career as a novelist began. It was well
reviewed but there were no sales, and Hamish Hamilton rejected the
option on his next novel, *The Bachelor of Arts*, which was published
by Nelson, again with the help of Graham Greene, thereby fulfilling a
fantasy Narayan had entertained many years before when a Nelson
representative called on his father to sell school books and was asked by
Narayan: 'If I write a book, will you ask your company to publish it?
"Undoubtedly," he said and gave me his card.'
Narayan's father died in February 1937, living, Narayan tells us, to the last day of the month 'as if to satisfy a technical need and died leaving us to draw his pension for the full month.' The family, that is the extended family, had hardly anything else to live on, since father Narayan had no belief in savings and very little property. Economic disaster was staved off – just. His older brother opened a small grocery shop called National Provision Stores, and he shared the household expenses with Narayan who had a scrappy, fitful income from various sources. He was also by 'now the father of a small, adored daughter. He arranged with his landlord who lived some distance away in Bangalore, to collect the rent in June and December when his royalties would come in. He was getting a few short stories published in India and elsewhere, and he forced himself to write a humorous article at ten rupees a time for the weekly Merry Magazine, a very painful experience for someone of Narayan's sensibility. He began and completed his third novel, The Dark Room, in which woman is the victim and man her constant oppressor. He thought deeply and wrote:

"I was somehow obsessed with a philosophy of women as opposed to Man, her constant oppressor. This must have been an early
testament of the "women's lib" movement. Man assigned her a secondary place and kept her there with such subtlety and cunning that she herself began to lose all notion of her independence, individuality, stature, and strength. A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society was an ideal victim of such circumstances. My novel dealt with her, with this philosophy broadly in the background."16

The Dark Room, again recommended by Graham Greene, was published by Macmillan in 1938, and once more favourably reviewed. He had now written three novels and had three publishers. And he made no money on the latest either. He was forced to sink his principles and accept a commission from the government of Mysore – his name came to these circles from Somerset Maugham who was asked when visiting Mysore why he had not met the famous author R. K. Narayan – and he travelled the length and breadth of the state armed with a railway pass, modest living expenses and letters of introduction. The result was rich in legend and short on accuracy, at least according to a friend who advised
that the book should be kept out of the hands of any intending traveller in the state Narayan was never paid for this work. Bureaucracy saw to that. 1939 was a devastating year for Narayan – as of course, it was for so many others. The war summarily disrupted the publication of his novels, and even in Mysore there was a blackout and food rationing. The shortage of paper and ink meant that even 'The Hindu could not take as many contributions as usual. But the shattering event was the death of his wife from typhoid after she had spent a holidays at her parents' home in Coimbatore. She died in early June 1939. The background and the events of this calamity form the substance of his novel, The English Teacher, where they are distanced, dramatized, and, no doubt, made psychically bearable. It meant to Narayan the end of life for him, but his friend Graham Greene wrote to him, 'I do not suppose you will write for months, but eventually you will.' Which, of course, he did. The powerful creative creature or daemon, which inhabits the artist, absorbs and is capable of making use of even so personal a tragedy as this. Narayan had not even remotely anticipated the death of his wife:

"...But now I had to accept her death as fact. One had to get used to the idea of death, even while living. If you have to
accept life, you are inevitably committed to
the notion of death also. And get one cannot
stop living, acting, working, planning –
some instinct drives one on. Perhaps death
may not be the end of every thing as it
seems – personality may have other
structures and other planes of existence,
and the decay of the physical body through
disease or senility may mean nothing more
than a change of vehicle. This outlook may
be unscientific, but it helped me survive the
death of my wife – though I had missed her
so badly while she was away at Coimbatore.
I could somehow manage to live after her
death and eventually, also attain a
philosophical understanding.”

Narayan's life as Graham Greene foretold, gradually fell in to the
pattern of that of the professional writer, and as the years passed, of the
successful professional writer. He developed a devoted readership
stretching from New York to Moscow. He became a great figure in
India, something for which, of course, he had to pay, in being expected to supply all and sundry with stories and articles, which were not by any means invariably paid for. Ved Mehta – the blind, gifted and extraordinarily observant Indian writer, who lives in New York – tells of an occasion on which having been invited in a letter larded with compliments to contribute to a special children's supplement and promised the modest fee of fifty rupees, even this, years after the submission has not been honoured:

"When no postal order has reached me, if I drop a line to the editor about the promised sum, he well immediately spread the word "Narayan is mercenary."18

At one time this casual sense of obligation to the writer persuaded Narayan to set up his own publishing firm in India. He even tried being on editor himself at one point, setting up a journal called Indian Thought which he started with a capital of 100 rupees. Although he was much helped by an uncle – a prosperous car dealer in Madras and heavy drinker, the model for all Narayan's dissolute characters – who proved a dexterous salesman for the journal, Narayan had in him neither the interest nor the drive to sustain the periodical:
"What the journal was in my anticipation was a readable light magazine, every page alive with style and life, profundity with a light touch. What it actually turned out to be was a hotchpotch of heavy weight academics and Woodhouse rehash – the sort of journal I would normally avoid."19

In 1948, after receiving from his landlord a notice to quit and having had to move when he did not want to, he set about building his own house. It was to be on the northern outskirts of Mysore with a splendid prospect. There was a marvelous Indian ceremony at the beginning with the distribution of sweets and puffed rice under the frangipani. It took five years, a limping five years, for the house to be finished, although Narayan's debts mounted much more speedily. Narayan used this house when it was finished almost as a studio, which he would visit to write. In spite of his inveterate habit of staring dreamily for long hours out of the window at the entrancing view, he disciplined himself to write at least a thousand words a day. His daughter married in 1956 and Narayan, for all the expense of building his own house, had saved enough to celebrate the wedding in the
grandest Hindu manner according to the scriptures, in 1956, too, he began his travels and became an habitual globe-trotter, and even when travelling he tried to keep to fifteen hundred to two thousands words a day as his literary stint. His novel The Guide was actually written in the United States on his travels. It attained such popularity that the Indian film producer Dev Anand wanted to acquire the rights of it for a film. Instead of making Narayan's fortune the film it appears, made no profits and drove him to distraction. He was not simply the author but the public relations man summoned to Bombay to dine with Lord Mountbatten, for example, in order to persuade him to invite the Queen to attend the world premiere in London. The treatment utterly ruined the story. Nor did Narayan have much better luck with the stage adaptation of The Guide by the American Harvey Breit, which Ved Mehta tells us opened on Broadway in March 1966 and closed after a run of three days. Mr. Sampath, or 'The Printer of Malgudi' as it was called in the United States was also made into a film with considerably more success and a much greater financial reward.

In 1974 Narayan reported that his life had fallen into a professional pattern like books, agents, contracts and plenty of letter writing to known and unknown persons and thus his personal life had
become more interesting. He lived in Mysore and seized every excuse to visit his daughter and his grandchildren one hundred miles away. He developed an interest in agriculture, particularly of the armchair kind. He was fascinated by notes about farming in newspapers and he listened to the farm programmes on the wireless. He became an expert on getting rid of weeds and pests and even went so far as to buy an acre of land in Bangalore, some hundred miles from Mysore, which he tried to cultivate in an amateurish way. He was amazed by the economies of agriculture, which required him to spend 450 rupees in order to get a return of some 15. Narayan's notion of the agricultural life is a clue to the complexity of this mild, convinced, self-effacing, amiable and brilliant man:

"I felt it might be cheaper to buy my needs in the market, but that is a wrong, and even irreverent, line of thinking. Agricultural operations have to be conducted in a spirit of give – and – take, in the teeth of hostile forces engendered by men, seasons, and pests, which must be overcome with nonviolence and faith in one's ultimate
victory. The hustle of city life will not work in this area. Like the corn, agricultural problems must also be allowed to have their stages of rawness, ripeness, and withering away!"\(^{20}\)

This sense of balance and rhythm, of discipline, reverence and non expectation implied in Narayan's concept of agriculture, fits with his view of human life and of the place in human life of sex and growth:

'Somehow, for the working out of some destiny, birth in the physical world seems to be important; all sexual impulses and the apparatus of sexual function seem relevant only as a means to an end – all the dynamism, power, and the beauty of sex having a meaning only in relation to its purpose. This may not sound an appropriate philosophy in modern culture, where sex is 'fetish' in the literal sense, to be propitiated, worshipped and meditated upon as an end in itself; where it is
exploited in all its variations and deviations by movie makers, dramatists and writers, while they attempt to provide continuous titillation, leading to a continuous pursuit of sexual pleasure which, somehow, Nature has designed to be short – lived, for all the fuss made – so that one is driven to seek further titillation and sexual activity in a futile never – ending cycle.'21

The account which Narayan gives of his life in 'My Days,' an oblique and as unself – regarding a treatment as anything like an autobiography could possibly be, shows in particular Narayan's fascination seen so often in his novels, with the intricate association of sincerity and self deception in human life. How nimbly, how deftly, but with what forgiving kindness Narayan unravels this universal riddle of mankind, or the version of it lodged in the breast of a seventy – year – old Indian novelist.

How he came to be that is revealed casually, obliquely, in his engaging, ripplingly humorous memoir. We come to have so clear a sense of his individuality because the gifts that make his fiction so fresh
and humane are present here: in the first place the ability to communicate the representational surface of things, a creative accuracy of notation, in the second. Considerable deftness in the analysis of motives; and then, here and there, tactfully, cogently, a succinct and restrained poetry of reference when significant points of action or time are related to the ancient Indian myths. Perhaps the monkey with which his life began was Hanuman, the monkey God of wisdom and benevolence, while the peacock pecking away at every ant that came within range of its vision is the image of his alert, undeceived, and mocking eye.

Ever since Narayan had written *Swami and Friends*, he has been painting the Malgudi saga, novel after novel, strictly centering round the middle-class milieu. One cannot help musing over the fact that Narayan seems to be enjoying a writer's prerogative to select his material to the maximum. As for the novelist's middle-class milieu, William Walsh, focusing on the basics and the essentials of the class, says:

"Narayan's pre-occupation is with the middle class, a relatively small part of an agricultural civilization, and the most conscious and anxious part of population."
Its members are neither too well off..... not too indigent..... They may take their religion more easily than the passionately credulous poor...... It is the members of the middle class who are psychologically more active, and in whom consciousness is more vivid and harrowing, that Narayan chooses his heroes - modest, unself confident heroes, it is true."22

An analysis of the middle-class milieu may further reveal that Narayan locates it in the South India. Having a first hand acquaintance with his people and knowing their mental make-up as closely as the skin of his palm, Narayan seems to have determined to focus on that class alone and never to shift his lense to other human territories. One may note the characteristic middle class traits so authentically mirrored in Narayan's novels :

a. An average and ordinary individual engaged in the common and unflattering pursuit of life.

b. His tendency to opt for the security and his instinct to escape or postpone the challenges of time.
c. His inclination to rebel but the final preference for acceptance and withdrawal.

d. His passive nature suited for the life of non-doing and non-action.

e. His remarkable sensitivity and high sense of religiosity.

f. His cowardliness and his tendency to indulge in fantasizing life's minor issues.

The most significant feature of Narayan, with which the writer has often been identified, is the non-committal stance. It is particularly here that Narayan stands out in the company of his fellow novelists. The only commitment, which he has been following with a religious zeal, is the writer's commitment to his art. As far back as in 1953, Narayan had clearly voiced his views regarding the role of an Indian English writer in the context of the Indian novel. In the special Atlantic Monthly Supplement on India, Narayan pointed out that the subject matter of fiction during the nationalist movement -

"...became inescapably political..... the mood of the comedy, the sensitivity to atmosphere, the probing of psychological problem factors, the crisis in the individual soul and its resolution, and above all the
detached observation, which constitute the stuff of fiction, were forced into background."\(^{23}\)

R.K. Narayan writes his novels as a true artist. He is therefore, basically different from both Mulk Raj Anand, the progressive humanist and from Raja Rao, the philosopher - novelist. R. K. Narayan tries to give his readers the joy of a purely creative artist. He loves humanity but does not take sides. In his novel we have no didacticism, no philosophy and no propaganda, he interprets Indian life aesthetically, with unprejudiced objectivity. But he does not lack sympathy for his character. Each one of his characters, wicked or virtuous, is drawn with extra-ordinary delicacy and tenderness. In his sympathetic hands they turn into interesting and amusing figures as make the earth very colourful by their presence and by their actions. His novels seems to suggest that:

"One who lives with caution, sincerity, good sense, intelligence and understanding as does Srinivas in \textit{Mr. Sampath} or Bharati in \textit{Waiting for the Mahatma} or Natraj in \textit{The Man Eater of Malgudi}, sails his way through
the wide ocean of life smoothly and finds
life full of delight: but one who brings
much sentimentality and selfishness
stumbles and undergoes innumerable
hardships and difficulties like Chandran or
Margayya or Sriram and sometimes like
Ravi or Raju he even goes under."24

Thus we find that though R. K. Narayan is not a didactic novelist he has an extraordinary power of evoking a sense of propriety in life. Though not a critic of society, he is certainly a critic of conduct. The best word to describe Narayan would probably be 'Simplicity'. Personally uncomplicated and direct, he is without affectation in conversation, and a natural sincerity comes across. Similarly in his writing he tells a story clearly in a straightforward manner avoiding convoluted sentences and elaborate vocabulary. True to the style he admires, his stories read easily and naturally. The effect is of effortless. His novels transport readers into a different world, with no self-conscious style to bar the way. It was into this uncomplicated, almost casual atmosphere of simplicity that Malgudi was born. The idea for this famous place "just happened" in R. K. Narayan's head. He
gained fame as one of India's best-known novelists. The greatness of R. K. Narayan lies in his presentation of psychological behaviour of his characters with minute detail. K. R. S. Iyengar explains how Narayan's artistic excellent is maintained under a limitation:

"He is one of the few writers in India who take their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instrument, pursuing it with a sense of dedication what may often seem to be the mirage of technical perfections. There is a norm of excellence below which Narayan cannot possibly lower himself."25

The real charm of R. K. Narayan's novels lies in his exploration of human implications particularly attached to human motives and counteractions. He understands the mind of his characters profoundly because he dives deep to present the inner motive and much of his life too he adds to them. It is the real charm of the study of R. K. Narayan's novels that his characterization is always live and authentic. The liveness and authenticity of his characters depends upon their realism. R. K. Narayan is much interested in the presentation of the inner
happenings in the minds and in the hearts of his characters. His characters cannot break their limits. Their happiness, unhappiness, triumphs, defeats, morality, immorality, etc., are not unreal but true to their nature. Being a psychological observer of human emotions and feelings, Narayan successfully presents the conflict between the Western and the Eastern sensibilities in the minds and hearts of his characters. He does it because of his deep insight. Ramesh Srivastava rightly remarks:

"Narayan has a photographic eye for an object. He looks at it as if through a magnifying glass and catches it in its various hues. In recording his objects, he is like the oscillating movie camera, which catches and videotapes all that goes through its eye."26

His Malgudi is its fictional externalization, and through it he acquires his perspective of the world. An examination of certain cardinal themes in his novels projects his creative framework and moral outlook. The theme which more than any other has defined and projected Narayan's world of values is the theme of juxtaposition of tradition and modernity in its various aspects. It grows into the central comic themes
of deviation from the normal in his presentation of human relationship. Malgudi is steeped in tradition and its inhabitants are men and women with their roots in family and religion. Graham Greene rightly remarks:

"They Cherish a heritage of faith and values, customs and rituals, and even dogmas and superstitions. Considered as a whole, they constitute a strong framework of social convention with which the author sympathizes but which he does not share."²⁷

Thus, we find that Narayan reigns supreme in Indian English writing in terms of his technique and deployment of literary devices, which enrich his style with perfection. His technique of sensational story-telling provides enough charm and enchants the readers in magical manner. He presents the music of life of the people around him in realistic manner with the help of simple language. His ironical details of the complicated and dramatic situations are so live that his novels become the true account of life in each and every circumstance.
Reference:


5. Commonwealth Literature, ed. John Press, op. cit, p. 120.


8. Ibid., p. 16.


10. Ibid., p. 123.

11. Ibid., p. 123.


13. Ibid., p. 124.


15. Ibid., pp. 125, 126.

16. Ibid., p. 127.
17. Ibid., P. 128.


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Chapter - II

REFLECTIONS OF HIS LIFE:

R. K. NARAYAN'S EARLY WORKS
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Art, for instance, is not life but it certainly is life-like. Again, art does not make for something real, but it is for most part something realistic. Both art and life therefore closely relate to each other. Narayan who takes his craft seriously has often enough moulded the raw – material of his life in the light of such requirements and tenets of art form. To him his own life has been a major theme among many other themes he deals with. His own experiences, his encounters with other people, the major events of his life, the family and friends he grew up
with, the kind of world they amounted to and he grew up in, have gone, into his work. What must be noted however is that these bits and pieces of his life do not exist there like so many autobiographical statements: instead they turn into kind of leitmotifs of his art. He does not offer a mere transcription of life but a selection, reorganization and transmutation of it in his fictions. His writing may appear a matter of "self-expression" to the extent he channels his life into it, but as Northrop Frye observes in relation to Wordsworth, his refashioning and reshaping distances it from more self-expression. The self indeed is taken over by and included in the artistic endeavor and output. A close, comparative reading of Narayan's autobiography. My Days with his two novels Swami and Friends and The English Teacher give us the point.

R.K. Narayan's fiction, says William Walsh, "is unusually close to and intimate with his personal life." He maintains that Narayan is predominantly autobiographical and utilizes the experiences of his life to organize them in his work of art. He compares Narayan with Katherine Mansfield in whose case:

"The personal part, the known place, the home, the physical context and chores of the household, family relationships, and in
particular the friction and harmony of young and old, these are the points through which the line of her art goes. And much the same might be said of Narayan.\textsuperscript{2}

Narayan's personal life in \textit{My Days} reads like any of his novels, with his emphasis on the Indian domestic scene, the middle class, especially the small segment of the agricultural community, and the personal relationships. The Indian middle class, which Narayan says is the only class he understands, is beautifully represented not only in his autobiography but also in \textit{Swami and Friends} and \textit{The English Teacher} – the two novels which have drawn heavily from Narayan's life. Though it makes Narayan limited in his scope of art, he is content, as K.R. Srinivas Iyengar says, "\textit{Like Jane Austen with his little bit of ivory, just so many inches wide.}\textsuperscript{3}

The difference between autobiography and fiction is clearly marked in the writings of R. K. Narayan. The novels portray the autobiographical events in new combinations; they are selected, altered and imbued with the brilliant projection of various themes to suit the particular frame work and ambience of the stories. Narayan's art is a blending of explicit realism with poetic myth, experience with
imagination. Narayan's "serious comedies", as Walsh calls his novels, depict the rebirth of the self and the revelation of his most intimate experiences through the recomposition of other personalities, his characters, who live their day to day life quite happily.

Narayan's mode of writing gives a "Slant" of its own to the events of his life, uses "recall and hearsay" to "turn fact into fiction," stays "deceptively simple and seemingly innocent of literacy technique," mingles the comic with the sad providing a philosophical insight into life, and employs a "lean, lucid and wonderfully expressive" style of writing typically characterized by a "lightness of touch".

When Narayan wrote My Days in 1974, he was already well-known as a novelist. As such his literary autobiography "forms a part of an oeuvre." Born in 1907 in a Brahmin family at Madras, Narayan's earliest memories are of his childhood companions – a peacock and a monkey. My Days opens with the town of Madras in the background, and its various problems; then there is the family circle, the central framework of the autobiography. And in its midst is Narayan, the hero quite like one of those middle class men.

The quiet city of Mysore where he spent a major part of his life becomes the Malgudi of his novels. It is an imagined small town in
South India; and in the larger context represents the whole of India. Thus came into life the Malgudi of *Swami and Friends*, which grew and developed over the years. Years later, to be precise in 1996, Narayan recalled the railway station, where Swami goes to watch the trains, and which needed a name-board. Narayan was not keen to use any name from the railway timetable:

"And while I was worrying about this problem, the idea came to me – Malgudi just seemed to hurl into view. It has no meaning. There is a place called Lalgudi near Trichy and a place called Mangudi near Kumbakonam or some where. But Malgudi is no where. So that was very helpful. It satisfied my requirement."  

Narayan became so fond of this name that he once jokingly said: "I am a treacherous writer when I move out of Malgudi." However Narayan in *My Days* emphatically states that "the river side forest, village and crowds, granite steps and the crumbling walls of a shrine" of Mysore "combine to made up the Malgudi of my story." This
fictional town is essentially Indian with a unique identity says William Walsh:

"After having read only a few of his books it is difficult to shake off the feeling that you have vicariously lived in this town. Malgudi is perhaps the single most endearing 'character' R. K. Narayan has ever created."  

This authentic and endearing Malgudi, though a kind of 'local habitation and a name,' has a ring of the universal around it. "What happens in India happens in Malgudi and whatever happens in Malgudi happens everywhere," said William Walsh. The same applies to the people living in Malgudi. He says:

"Swami, the undistinguished, cricket – loving school boy; Krishna, the college lecture traumatised by the loss of his wife; through these South Indian characters and the moral predicaments in which they find themselves, the writer reveals the universal in the particular."
Malgudi in *Swami and Friends* is not presented as a village or city, but as a town of small size. The hero of the novel, Swaminathan or Swami, is an average schoolboy in whom Narayan has captured all the essence of his own boyhood days. The writer's own childhood experiences find a reflection in Swami. So we have Swami watching a small piece of tin skimming gently along in the gutter of Vinayaka Mudali Street which is reminiscent of Narayan training the grasshoppers in *My Days*. Again, 'childhood forms a substantial part of *My Days*; and probably in order to accentuate the significance of this part of his life. Narayan wrote *Swami and Friends*, a full novel about a child. Graham Greene, who was suggested to read it, took an instant liking for this book and eventually recommended it to British publishers. Swami, who like Narayan, hates school and education, loves to spend time with his friends and lives with his grandmother. The most lovable person of Narayan's family was his grandmother, with whom he spent his childhood in Madras. She looked after his needs, taught him multiplication, the Tamil alphabet, Sanskrit *slokas* in praise of goddess Saraswati. What was most important was that granny kept a strict watch on his behaviour.

He recalls:
"My Grandmother's preoccupations were several and concerned a great many others, she was a key figure in the lives of many. My Grandmother was an abiding influence. Grandmothers were in those days very important. They are no longer so – have disappeared."\(^7\)

Not only was she "a key figure" in the Narayan household, but she became an epitome of all the grandmothers in the novels of Narayan. Swami's granny was a benign and ignorant old lady, who lived in an "ill-ventilated dark passage between the front hall and the dining room". She was an important part of Swami's life:

"After the night meal, with his head on his granny's lap, nestling close to her, Swaminathan felt very snug and safe in the faint atmosphere of cardamom and cloves."\(^8\)

Swami used to share every little secret of his school with his granny; who would narrate stories of Harishchandra to him. Swami's
grandmother is the prototype of nearly all the Indian grannies, who uphold the traditional values of the Indian society.

The old lady finds a reflection in The English Teacher in Krishna's mother. The novel, claims Narayan in My Days, is heavily autobiographical, "very little part of it being fiction". At the same time, Krishna is a fictional character, who lives in the fictional city of Malgudi; none the less his experiences of life, especially those after the death of his wife, Susila, are those of Narayan's. M.N. Srinivas states how the loss of Narayan's wife shattered him:

"I remember accompanying Narayan on a few of his walks around this time. They were not walks through the city but brooding, sad walks on the roads, skirting kukkarahalli Tank to the west of the town. Narayan talked about death and after-life, and incidentally, his preoccupations expressed themselves in a few ghost stories. Sometime later he went to Madras and there met the medium through whom he was able to contact Rajam. All this is
narrated elegiacally in *The English Teacher.*"\(^9\)

In the novel, Krishnan's mother comes to Malgudi to set up the house for the young couple:

"House keeping was grand affair for her. The essence of her existence consisted in the thrills and pangs and the satisfaction that she derived in running a well-ordered household. She was unsparing and violent where she met slovenliness."\(^{10}\)

She demands the same perfection in the household chores which Narayan's mother had expected from his wife, Rajam: "Rajam was less then twenty, but managed the housekeeping expertly and earned my mother's praise."\(^{11}\)

Both Rajam and Susila contracted typhoid and died after a prolonged illness. The second part of *The English Teacher* is marked by "spiritual" preoccupations and pursuits of Krishnan who confronts his unredeeming loneliness like Narayan did for a long-long time. The book is by and large an attempt to bridge the gulf between the "man"
and the "writer". Krishnan in the novel tries to accept the death of his wife, while living his every day life. And Narayan, through the act of writing, gives meaning to his grief and learns to come to terms with it. The act of writing proves to be a cathartic therapy as it helped him to overcome the grief and the subsequent upheaval in his life by submitting it to the orderliness of art. It was akin to resolving the discords of his life into some kind of controlled art.

When Narayan wrote **My Days** almost thirty years after having written 'The English Teacher", he was unable to give direct expression to his personal grief. Why did Narayan need the mask of Krishnan to give vent to his grief ? Why did he think it necessary to talk about the death of his wife through a persona ? Narayan says :

"**I have described this part of my experience of her sickness and death in The English Teacher** so fully that I do not, and perhaps cannot, go over it again. More than any other book 'The English Teacher' is autobiographical in content, very little part of it being fiction."\(^{12}\)
We can presume the reasons behind this distancing of a tragic episode in his life. It could be because the death had given him so much anguish that he could not bear repeating it in the unfiltered form of an autobiography. He had already described it in the fiction form, and had immortalized the fact. Secondly, Narayan has been able to establish a link between fiction and autobiography. By mentioning the novel, 'The English Teacher', he expects the reader to fill this gap in his autobiography by reading his fiction.

Not with standing this reticence and reluctance of Narayan the 'spiritual' experience of Krishna does find a reflection in My Days. The author recalls that he was able to have contact with Rajam through one Raghunath Rao. Later he was able to attain a "philosophical" understanding. In the same way Krishna too makes adjustments with the grief in his life and finally overcomes the sense of decay. He says:

"Thus I reconciled myself to this separation with less struggle than before. I read a lot, I wrote a lot, I reflected as much as I could… My mind was made up. I was in search of a harmonious existence and everything that disturbed that harmony was to be
rigorously excluded, even my college work."\(^{13}\)

Hence we see how art and life permeate each other. A friend says:

"This extrinsic reality is reflected in the novel, and thus the extrinsic is in a sense the intrinsic as well, and vice versa."\(^{14}\)

Narayan mentions a mystic friend in "My Days", who after the death of Rajam, had hinted at the therapeutic value of art:

"You will write a book which is within you, all ready now, and it is bound to come out sooner or later, when you give yourself a chance to write."\(^{15}\)

He wrote The English Teacher and found solace.

Quite a number of minor but minute details of My Days correspond with those of Swami and Friends. Both the autobiography and the novel are not only an account of the writer's inward journey from childhood to maturity; they make for a unique representation of the social scenario of the writer's times. And so we have in both the works a picture of the life and times of the pre-independence India, the India of the early 20\(^{th}\) century. There is a detailed account of the lighting of the
street-lamps by the lamp-lighter, which Narayan had seen as a child on a visit to the street shops with his uncle. The man in khaki coat, with a cane of oil, rags and matches, lighting the lamps impressed the child's mind so much that as a writer he incorporated the lanterns with their smouldering wicks in *Swami and Friends*. Similarly the turbulent times of the freedom struggle also find a reflection in both the books. However Narayan was not keen to include the political events of his time in his novels or autobiography. His role during the freedom movement was that of a witness, an observer. Narayan's meeting with Nehru in Teen Murti House in 1961 finds no mentioned in *My days*, where as his friend K. Natwar Singh, who had arranged the meeting, has been referred to in the autobiography. On being questioned by the latter about the absence of any reference to Nehru, Narayan calmly answered;

"It never occurred to me to give publicity to it, and in any case I could not weave it into the narrative. *My Days* is a literary work, not a political tract. At the time, I thought this was carrying modesty too far, but now I realize how right R.K.N. was. There is a time to include and a time to exclude."16
The lampooning of the Hindus in Narayan's Lutheran Mission School was also a done thing in Swami's school. In My Days Narayan says:

"The scripture classes were mostly devoted to attacking and lampooning the Hindu Gods, and violent abuses were heaped on idol-worshippers as a prelude to glorifying Jesus. Among the non-Christians in our class I was the only Brahmin boy, and received special attention; the whole class could turn in my direction when the teacher said that Brahmins claiming to be vegetarians ate fish and meat in secret, in a sneaky way and were responsible for the soaring price of those commodities."17

Swami's scripture master was also a fanatic who abused the Hindus and their idol-worship:

'Oh, wretched idiots;' the teacher said, clenching his fists,' why do you worship dirty, lifeless, wooden idols and stone
images? Can they talk? No. Can they see?

No. Can they bless you? No. Can they take you to heaven? No. Why? Because they have no life'.

Swami and his friends formed the M.C.C. team to play cricket matches. Narayan and his schoolmates were addicted to football and their team was called "jumping stars". While choosing names for their cricket association Swami and the other boys also mention "jumping stars" as one of the proposed names.

Swaminathan often enough lived in his own private world, which did not include the restriction of school. He would be forever looking for some plea or other to miss school: sometimes it would be feigned headache and fever. It would win him the sympathy of his granny and mother, but not of his father, who knew his son's tricks too well:

"Father stood over him and said in an undertone, 'you are a lucky fellow. What a lot of champions you have in this house when you don't want to go to school' Swaminathan felt that this was a sudden and unprovoked attack from behind. He
shut his eyes and turned towards the wall with a feeble groan."²²

Examinations were very unnerving for swami and studying for them was an ordeal. Looking at the crooked map of Europe he would often wonder how people lived in it. He had mixed feelings of exaltation as well as unease when the exams were over:

"Out of the examination hall, standing in the veranda, he turned back and looked into the hall and felt slightly uneasy. He would have felt more comfortable if all the boys had given their papers as he had done, twenty minutes before time."²³

We have more or less the same kind of distance for education in My Days:

"I instinctively rejected both education and examinations, going to school seemed to be a never-ending nuisance each day, to be borne because of my years. At Madras, in my Lutheran mission days, my uncle was
strict and would not allow me to stay at
home, however much I tried."24

Narayan's strict uncle and father, the latter was a headmaster of a
school, found reflection in the autocratic rule of Swami's father:

Much to Swaminathan's displeasure, his
father's courts closed in the second week of
May, and father began to spend the
afternoons at home. Swaminathan feared
that it might interfere with his afternoon
rambles with Rajam and Mani. And it did.
On the very third day of his vacation father
commanded Swaminathan, just as he was
stepping out of the house: 'Swami, come
here.' 25

Narayan's theory that "fiction outlasts fact" finds a mention in My
Days. Perhaps this was the reason why he mingled incidents, both
major and minor, from his life, which he wove in his fiction. The
artistic motive is to immortalize his life-experience by giving it the form
of a story. Undoubtedly it gains a kind of richness by being transformed
and transmuted. When he wrote Swami and Friends in 1935 and The
English Teacher in 1945 he had been too young to think about writing his autobiography, which he eventually did in 1974, at the ripe old age of sixty – seven. And in order to eternalize the many events and the people of his life, he included them in these two novels as in many others. This practice is not confined only to Swami and Friends and The English Teacher: his printer, Mr. Sampath became a character in one novel and two film stories. An incident about someone "suffering enforced sainthood in Mysore offered a setting for…… a story". The story concerned a drought – hit region, where in desperation the municipal council organized a prayer for rains. A group of Brahmins prayed and fasted, to the accompaniment of the chanting of mantras on the dry bed of kaveri and brought rains to the region on the twelfth day; "This was really the starting point of The guide." M. N. Srinivas says:

"Mysore provided plenty of subject matter to Narayan for writing stories as he rambled along the streets of Mysore and he was 'always willing to listen to someone who had a story or an incident to narrate."
And he knew many of the people he ran into on his walks.\(^\text{26}\)

"At every turn I found a character fit to go into a story," and on "returning home, sat at my desk and wrote till the evening".

Narayan's long time friend M.N. Srinivas sees these walks as "ethnographic forays" as they provided him:

"With material for his stories on column.

He also enjoyed his encounters with idiosyncratic acquaintances and friends….

Extremely important and urgent matters had to wait a chance encounter on the streets of Mysore for discussion, if not resolution. If this is not the essence of Malgudi, what is?\(^\text{27}\)

R.K. Narayan selected and organized the new material, which was available to him in the city of Mysore and which reflected the thematic constraints of his various books. The routine of ordinary life is transformed into a rich experience. The data is not presented in a photographic way; the exclusion of certain episodes from his life makes the writer emphasize certain other events. The very ordinary people are
focused on in amazingly extraordinary manner. Their minor aims and their small / petty machinations brilliantly come to life. The terrain Narayan treads is indeed challenging. Graham Greene thought it to be the "riskiest kind of fiction – writing" – it held out no messages to be preached and no causes to be promoted:

"Everything rested on the kind of characters that were created, and above all, the story itself. Such a writer, Greene pointed out, staked everything on his creativity. It is necessary to stress this point now, for in the world of today, far more than before, the prizes go to those who champion causes considered worthy. Creativity alone is not enough." 28

Narayan hates giving formal interviews; he wants to remain a story – teller. And as long as Narayan tells the story with his typical "touchstone method," Malgudi will continue to live on.

R. K. Narayan is known as a writer of realistic fiction, which is characterized by his peculiar irony and humour. In My Days (1975), Narayan mentions that he set out with the ambitions to be "a
As a writer of realistic fiction, R. K. Narayan deserves praise. Britta Olinder comments: "Narayan's realism is above all seen in his drawing of the background, the day-to-day life." It seems that Narayan's novels do have an autobiographical dimension. Further, it is true that the extent of the use of this art may differ in his various novels. *Swami and Friends* (1935) launched Narayan into the world of the novelists. It is mainly a record of the life of teachers and students. The creation of the fictional Malgudi as a typical South Indian Town in this novel is a new feature created by R. K. Narayan, it is recurring in all his subsequent novels. Moreover, Malgudi also gradually develops and extends its topography in his later novels like any other Indian town which develops with the passage of time. But Malgudi remains identifiable as Malgudi in his novels. H. H. Anniah Gowda comments on *Swami and Friends*:

"This early work is a pointer to many of Narayan's later portraits. Malgudi, the Sarayu river, Lawley extension are all established."
The English Teacher (1946) appeared after a gap of seven years. Besides, the writing of the novel marks a significant stage in Narayan's career as a novelist. As H. H. Anniah Gowda remarks:

"It would seem that the experience Narayan reports in The English Teacher which, he said, led to a philosophical understanding that also changed his way of writing, gave it a new direction or, perhaps, a new dimension."

Further, The English Teacher is very much autobiographical. The theme of love, death and reunion run as a thread throughout the fabrics of the autobiography and the novel alike. In the novel, Susila dies in the prime of her youth, about four years after their marriage and just in one year after she comes to the city. Death, in the novel, is viewed as a continuation of life. Between the world of the living and the world of the dead, there exists no boundary. Krishnan in the novel acquires this vision towards the close of the novel when, after having resigned from his college job, he evokes his wife. Light dawns upon Krishnan at this moment. As S. C. Harrex observes: "Light is the key word and conveys the traditional concept of spiritual
Krishnan finds no boundary between himself and his dead wife: "The boundaries of our personalities suddenly dissolved." And it is here that Krishnan ventures to communicate with his dead wife, as Robert Martin Adams observes, to find their meaning. The English Teacher was published under the title 'Grateful to Life and Death' at the Michigan State College Press. The union of Krishnan and Susila is what Krishnan feels, "a moment of rare, immutable joy - a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death."

"I shall, in what follows, base myself pretty well exclusively on My Days, a set of autobiographical sketches published in 1974."

It lacks the implacable inclusiveness of the full scale autobiography as well as its impassioned self-regard. Indeed, in many ways it is very similar to a Narayan novel. It certainly brings home to one how very much of his fiction, and not only the strikingly personal fiction his novel like The English Teacher, is firmly tethered in the detail of his own experience. Narayan's autobiography, like his novels, is regional in that it conveys an intimate sense of a given place in the
novels. Malgudi, in My Days Mysore - but it is not parochial or shuttered. The life in My Days is that of Narayan's own class, the Indian middle-class, where people are not too well off to be unworried about money or brutalized by the total lack of it. He appears like the hero of one of his novels as sensitive, ardent, modest and very about himself, and with a hidden resolute will. In My Days we see, as we do in the novels, first the context of the town and the skills and problems of various kinds of work which so fascinate Narayan; within this the subtler circle of the family; and then at the centre a figure posing modestly but with an inward conviction, Narayan himself, another Narayan hero. He has been formed by the immense weight of the inherited tradition of India in balance with a positive but subdued individuality. Narayan's novels are comedies of sadness, and the quiet disciplined life unfolded in My Days is both suffused with a pure and unaffected melancholy and also lighted with the glint of mockery of both self and others.

As in the novels there is a fundamental perception enlivening and organizing the record of Narayan's life. Although one is conscious of the overwhelming background of the Indian past, of the great crowd dead and alive moving in the mind and along the highways, of the intense and
even smothering life of the family, one becomes increasingly aware of the truth Narayan was to express in *The English Teacher*: A profound and unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life. In this lightly buoyant, delicately developed account of his life, his childhood, his family, his work, and the tragedy of the loss of his wife, the artist who created and populated Malgudi, working in the same easy, limped English and with the same tolerant and attentive attitude to life, brings to bear on his own nature the gift for moral analysis, the marvellous comic talent, and the eye for human queerness which distinguishes the novels. Being human, the subject of Narayan's art, is what this account of his own life convincingly testifies to. The students in Madras bitterly attacked Narayan for what they called - inaccurately I think - his exclusive concern with the middle-class, a treachery, they thought, to the Indian poor and the dominantly peasant character of the country. But Narayan writes chiefly about the Indian middle-class because he is a member of it, and it is the class he understands best.

The novel, thus, is charged with an intensity that can come only from a deeply-felt experience. Its theme is based on a need to understand the meaning of life and death, which according to Narayan resides in the realization that 'life' and 'death' are only two different
states of existence - one primarily material and the other all spiritual.

Narayan tells us that when he was able to establish a spiritual communion with his dead wife, the spirit of his wife told him:

"In your plane, your handicap is the density of the matter in which you are encased. Here we exist in a more refined state, in a different medium."\(^{38}\)

Regarding the meaning of death, the spirits told him that:

"Death is only the vanishing point of the physical framework in which a personality is cast and functions; that same personality is unperceived before a conception, and will be lost sight of again at death, which we repeat is a vanishing point and not the end...."\(^{39}\)

The novels of R. K. Narayan persistently concern themselves with the theme of man's search for his identity as the ultimate goal of life. Discussing the significance of this theme in relation to *The English Teacher*, Narayan writes:
"Out of all this experience a view of personality of self or soul developed which has remained with me ever since… Our normal view is limited to a physical perception in a condition restricted in time, like the flashing of a torchlight on a spot, the rest of the area being in darkness. If one could have a total view of oneself and others, one would see all in their full stature, through all the stages of evolution and growth ranging from childhood to old age, in this life, the next one, and the previous ones."\(^{40}\)

Referring to what Paul Brunton, a mystic, told him he says:

"The enquiry who am I ?… eliminated the self-conscious framework limiting one's personality, and one attained a great spiritual release."\(^{41}\)

For Narayan, thus, the question of human identity appears to hinge on a full understanding of man's totality of relationships on the
earth as well as beyond it. The other worldly dimension of man's identity assumes special significance for Narayan because he had found, in his own case, a particular strength and consolation to face his daily struggle for life after his wife's death and his subsequent 'contact' with her in a sort of telepathic experience. The horror of his experience of his wife's physical death was transformed into a kind of spiritual elation when he was told by his wife that she existed in a finer and more refined state of pure spiritual existence. This not only helped him bear his great loss with equanimity but also replenished his sagging creative vitality with a new and luxuriant energy.

The English Teacher stands out amongst Narayan's novels by virtue of its intensity of feeling and a depth of penetration which give the book a spiritual quality. Narayan agreed that the book had a dimension not felt in his other novels, but refused to explain the reason - "It just happened that way." When I made the suggestion that Krishnan could be identified with Narayan himself, he pointed out that the author and his character were not necessarily in accordance:

"The character could be a murderer, but that does not mean that the author is also a murderer. Even if it's in the first person,
the author assumes the role of a character

but remains personally detached.\textsuperscript{42}

He refused to admit to a connection between his own experience and that of Krishnan, although the details of his marriage as recounted in his autobiography \textit{My Days} show a clear parallel. In \textit{The English Teacher} one senses a certain need to exercise or immortalize the author's deep felt experience. Narayan's reluctance to corroborate the facts reveals yet again his shying away from the idea of the individual.

Thus, the novels of R. K. Narayan are cast in the mould of a typical aesthetic pattern in which the protagonist usually sets out on a quest for identity, and through him we get a glimpse of the author.
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Chapter III

THE PERIOD OF MATURITY :

R. K. NARAYAN'S NOVELS
Chapter III

The period of maturity: R. K. Narayan's Novels

Narayan takes up the theme of a young man's search for a place in the society consequent upon his taking the B.A. degree. The search is, however, complicated by the various ups and downs in his life, the havoc caused by his frustration and disappointment in love, his subsequent renunciation of society which virtually means giving up one's social obligations and search for meaning in the garb of an ascetic, his realization of the deception of it all, his return to his home and parents, his taking up the agency of a newspaper as a source of his livelihood and then his marriage and complete absorption in the
householder's life. Thus the name of the novel appears to be an ironic comment on the inability of a university degree to equip a man to face the challenges of life.

As Narayan says – "These are all instances of my own life, just the extension of what I underwent through experiences in 'Swami' as a little boy, now in Chandran who tries to find a direction in life".

When Chandran, the hero of the novel, returns to his old college to canvas for the newspaper he distributes, he stands before some old group photos and muses:

"All your interests, joys, sorrows, hopes, contacts, and experience boiled down to group photos...... the laughing, giggling fellows one saw about the union now little knew that they would shortly be frozen into group photos."\(^1\)

Then stopping before his own group he tries to remember his class-fellows and ask himself:

"Where were they ? Scattered like spray.

They were probably merchants, advocates, murderers, police inspectors, clerks,
officers, and what not.........all at grips
with life, like a buffalo caught in the coils of
a python."

In all likelihood this comment is made on the basis of Chandran's own experience of life.

The novel is divided into four clear cut parts, just as the different stages in the life of R. K. Narayan. Part one consists of five chapters which reveal Chandran's activities at the Albert Mission College in the process of his earning the degree of the Bachelor of Arts. Right from the beginning of the novel, when he finds himself trapped into becoming the Prime mover of the union debate on the subject, "In the opinion of this house historians should be slaughtered first," Chandran is actively involved in college activities. Outside the college he finds enjoyment in the company of his friend, Ramu, with whom he goes to cinema, which for him is "an aesthetic experience to be approached with due preparation." In the college, an Historical Association is formed and Chandran is assigned the task of organizing the inaugural meeting as the Association's secretary. But Chandran's notions "as to what one did on the day of the meeting were very vague. He faintly thought that at
such a meeting people sat around, drank tea, shook hands with each other, and felt inaugural."⁴

At the inaugural Meeting, the speech of Professor Brown is described by Narayan in words which, by and large, may be applied to Narayan's own fictional art, technique and vision:

He held the audience for about an hour thus, with nothing very serious, nothing profound, but with the revelation of a personality, with delicious reminiscences, touched with humour and occasional irony.

He sat down after throwing at his audience this advice; 'Like art, History must be studied for its own sake……...'?⁵

There are several other statements in the novel which also sum to reflect Narayan's own thinking. For instance, when Chandran has done his B. A., every body seems to offer him advice as to what he should do now Chandran suffers from a feeling of persecution, and asks his father with righteous anger: Why should every body talk about my career? Why can't they mind their business⁶ Narayan's refusal to meet with critics and scholars and to leave their letters and queries unanswered is quite possibly a result of this kind of thinking.
Similarly, when Chandran settles down to a life of quiet sobriety after his "Sanyasi experiment' is over, he feels that "his great striving ought to be for a life freed from distracting illusions and hysteries." This may also be described as part of Narayan's own vision of life as revealed in his novels. Finally, there is Chandran's friend, Mohan, the poet-cum-journalist, who tells him: "There ought to be no narrow boundaries. There ought to be a proper synthesis of life."

This, again, might be considered as an important article in Narayan's own philosophy of life, proclaiming the need of a 'Synthetic vision'. Part two of the novel, consisting of another five chapter, deals with Chandran's disastrous experience of love. Chandran takes fancy for a lovely girl, Malathi, with whom he enjoys an "optical communication" every day. The same that Narayan experiences in his own life, but when the matters proceed further in the direction of a possible marriage, the horoscopes play the role of arch villains as they refuse to be matched, again very much of his own life happenings. This comes as a bombshell to Chandran who decides to leave Malgudi to repair the damage done to his sensitive heart.

Part three of the novel, though consisting only of two chapters, is structurally most important. It describes that state of drift, of mysterious
experience, of strange happenings, of a kind of death, which forms a significant stage in the process of the protagonist's self-education. This is a typical Narayan situation which can be found virtually in every novel written by him. In the case of this novel, Chandran is supposed to go to his uncle's place in Madras. But on reaching the railway station there he slips out unnoticed and takes up lodging at a hotel. Here, to escape from Kailas, it occurs to him that he should become a Sanyasi:

He was like a Sanyasi. Why like? He was a Sanyasi;\(^9\)

He seeks the easiest escape-route to:

"……salvation' which however seems to elude him. He was a Sanyasi because it pleased him to mortify his flesh. His renunciation was 'a revenge on society, circumstances and perhaps, too, on destiny.'\(^{10}\)

Part four, consisting of six chapters, deals with Chandran's return home and his subsequent search for a foot hold in life. He first thinks of becoming a teacher but his friend advises him against the profession and so he starts a small paper agency in spite of stiff competition because of his uncle's help, and then he puts his heart and soul into it. By his
sustained efforts and systematic planning he is able to do quite well in his new found profession. This part that Chandran faces is also a close reflection of Narayan's own life, at the time he was in search of a profession.

And the remaining gap in his life is also filled when he finds to his pleasant surprise that there can be other girls as divine as Malathi and the moment he sees Susila, whose horoscope has already matched his, he madly falls for her and all his morose memories of Malathi are wiped off in his newfound joy.

"Chandran returned a new man, his mind full of Susila, the fragrance of jasmine and sandal paste, the smokiness of the sacred fire, of brilliant lights, music, gaiety, and laughter."11

The Narayan protagonist, thus, discovers that the world from which he wanted to run away is the only world which can offer happiness to him.

The first problem that the hero of the novel The Bachelor of Arts has to face is the problem of educated unemployment. After taking his B.A. degree Chandran fails to find any suitable employment for some
time. But Chandran makes a compromise with the times and accepts a lower job which is not commensurate with his qualifications. The present system of general education perhaps is to a large extent responsible for this problem. Narayan only describes with a true artist's detachment and objectivity how young and ambitious men were forced to accept a railway clerkship of Rs. 30/- p.m. or other third rate job as newspaper agency.

The second problem which Chandran has to face, is the problem of rigid customs and useless traditions existing in Hindu Society, like the absurdity of astrological considerations, in comparing the horoscopes of the boy and the girl before finalizing the marriage proposal, Chandran falls in love with a young beautiful girl Malathi, but fails to marry her because his horoscope does not match with hers. In this case, Narayan offers some comments on the absurdity of consulting the horoscopes that took place during his times and in his case too.

In Narayan's novels, the lover-beloved relationship begins within a moment, just after their first meeting, whether they are completely acquainted with each other or not. The relationship between Chandran and Malathi is such in which we find one sided Chandran's emotional relationship with Malathi. He at once falls in love with Malathi the
moment he sees her near the banks of the river. He finds Malathi beautiful and charming:

One evening Chandran came to river and was loafing along it when he saw a girl about fifteen years old. Chandran was in the habit of staring at every girl who sat upon the sands but he never felt the acute interest he felt in this girl now.  

Malathi thrills the heart of Chandran who is fascinated by her simplicity and innocence. Chandran's imagination is sharpened by his uncontrollable emotions and burning passions even without knowing her detail and name. There develops a deep kind of affection and attraction for her. Chandran gets delight in imagining Malathi's action and interaction:

Chandran liked the way she sat; he liked the way she dug her hands into the sand and threw it in air. He passed only for a moment to observe the girl. He would have willingly settled there and spent the rest of
his life watching her dig, her hands into the sand.\textsuperscript{13}

Chandran imagines everything, but he does nothing. He does not get ample courage to communicate with Malathi. Even his uncontrollable emotions and burning passions do not encourage him to ask the name of his beloved because he is afraid that someone will see it. Orthodox and traditional set-up of Malgudi does not allow Chandran to talk to Malathi as L. Holstrom thinks:

\textbf{The theme of romantic love in 'The Bachelor of Arts' presents a crucial problem to the Indian novelist how to show delicacy of emotions and even passionate involvement where free choice is limited, determined by fate and astrology. Narayan accepts that free communication between an orthodox boy and girl before marriage is impossible and invest enormous significance in gesture instead.}\textsuperscript{14}

Chandran starts dreaming of Malathi. Her name, her beauty, her charm and her innocence immensely fascinate Chandran but the norms
and tradition of Malgudi have no appreciation for Chandran's emotions. There is going on a conflict in the mind of Chandran whether he should blindly appreciate the Malgudian tradition or depreciate it by violating it. About the conflict arising in the mind of Chandran, O. P. Mathur rightly says:

**Chandran's soul is a play ground of powerful antagonistic forces, both social and metaphysical and the novel seems to be an uncomfortable idyll of boyhood often hovering dangerously near tragedy.**

The tradition and customs of Malgudi forbid Chandran to approach Malathi even for a moment. Finding himself a failure in approaching Malathi, Chandran tells his father about his decision to marry Malathi. Chandran's father also does not want to approach Malathi's father because he thinks that it is not in custom to approach bride's father first. Malgudian traditional culture does not allow Chandran's father to approach Malathi's father for the marriage of his son. Graham Greene rightly says:

**Considered as a whole, Malgudi constitutes a strong frame work of social convention**
with which the author sympathizes but
which he does not want to share.\textsuperscript{16}

Chandran's father is now ready for his son's marriage with Malathi, but Chandran's horoscope does not match with that of Malathi. Chandran's father and Chandran himself could not go beyond the Malgudian traditional values. In this way, Chandran's emotions and passions have been suppressed by the Malgudian traditional values. Commenting on the pathetic condition of Chandran which almost breaks his heart, Holstrom writes:

These (Chandran and Malathi) never meet
or talk together: their conduct is by means
of optical communion. He gives her
imaginary virtues. This is the fantasy which
still grows out of observed facts.\textsuperscript{17}

The role of the parents is extremely important in the novels that Narayan has displayed. The parents of both Chandran and Malathi are orthodox, rigid, and firm, and do not want to go beyond custom and tradition for the sake of happiness of their children. Here, Chandran also raises a few questions about the interference of elders:
"Why should we be cud-gelled and nose-led by our elders", Chandran asked indignantly. Why can we be allowed to arrange as we please. Why cannot they leave us to rise or sink on our own ideals.18

Chandran's failure in marrying himself with Malathi disturbed him too much, and he left Malgudi and became Sanyasi to understand the futility of tradition and culture which distort many innocent lives. In this way, Chandran comes across the obscure caste-divisions, class snobberies, sex taboos, absurd marriage customs, blind superstitions, and the tyranny of astrology which emerge as the dominant agents distorting and deforming the lives of many people, the same that happened to Narayan himself. Indian Society does not appreciate 'love' and 'marry', but it believes in 'marry' and 'love' as K. R. S. Iyengar writes:

With rigid caste prohibitions to be respected and difficult astrological hurdles to be crossed, how can there be 'love marriage' in India? And can 'arranged marriages' ever succeed? But 'marry and
love' seems, in practice, to be at least as sensible a path to love in marriage as 'love and marry'. However, irrational it may appear, horoscopes and parents often arrange marriages quite satisfactorily.19

The failure of the relationship between Chandran and Malathi is not compensated by Chandran's marriage with Sushila, but it is significant in the sense, that it reveals the continuity of human relationship. Chandran's relationship with Malathi does not get any deeper significance as Chandran's attachment with Malathi is only optical, emotional and sentimental, and these do not help him to break the tradition and come out from the clutches of customs and values. Much of all the above experiences which run parallel to Narayan's own experiences and life.

Narayan's art takes a nose-dive in his seventh novel Waiting for the Mahatma as his creative energy appears to sag here. The fragile foundation of this novel's theme – a young man's infatuation for a girl landing him in the midst of strange experience and ultimately restoring him to his original self is a repetition of the pattern of his earlier novels, but conviction and credibility are the prime casualties in the novel's
recording of the human motivation and in its grasp of the nature of political pressures working during India's national struggle for freedom. It would appear that the author's own ideological myopia might partly account for this lack of authenticity in the novel. But then artistic integrity, which bears almost a dialectical relationship to one's ideological convictions, also falters leaving it an aesthetically botched work.

Sriram, the protagonist of this novel, who is a reflection of R.K. Narayan himself, has just turned twenty, when the novel opens and reaches the age of about twenty seven or twenty eight, when the novel ends with the assassination of Gandhi. The period which forms a background to the novel is the most crucial one in India's national struggle the 1940s. But the way the novelist looks at the happenings during this turbulent period of India's history, it appears as if he were watching just an artificial pageant or tableau in a ceremonial procession. The harsh political realities are conveniently glossed over, just as it had been during the time of Narayan.

The novel is divided into five parts. Part one which constitutes a little over one third of the novel, introduces Sriram as an orphan, who has been brought up by his Granny, and who is in love with a "portrait
of the lady with apple cheeks….and large, dark eyes\textsuperscript{20} that hangs in
the shop of kanni a "\textit{cantankerous, formidable man.}\textsuperscript{21} Sriram
celebrates his twentieth birthday alone with his Granny and is initiated
into the mysteries of banking when he is authorized to operate his bank
account. Being the owner of thirty-eight and a half thousand rupees in
his account, he feels like a man "\textit{with a high-powered talisman in his
pocket, something that would enable him to fly or go any where he
pleased.}\textsuperscript{22}

In the first part of the novel his close connection and he
being in the care of his grandmother is much related to Narayan's own
life, in his own life too, he easily fell in love with girls from all walks of
life.

Sriram happens to meet a beautiful girl who is collecting funds
and is immediately drawn to her. Later on he spots her on a dais where
Mahatma Gandhi has come to deliver his speech. Among several other
things, Sriram hears Gandhi speak of his attitude to evil;

\textit{"When some one has wronged you or has
done something which appears to you to be
evil, just pray for the destruction of that
evil. Cultivate an extra affection for the}
person and you will find that you are able to
bring about a change in him."23

This goes above Sriram's head. But the readers may legitimately ask if evil could really be destroyed by prayers! "If it were so, evil would have ceased to exist thousands of years ago. Moreover, Gandhi's idea of the "change of heart" occupies such a supreme place in his scheme of things that he could go to any absurd lengths in advocating it. For instance, when he says:

"I want you really to make sure of a change in your hearts before you ever think of asking the British to leave the shores of India"24 or, an equally stupid and reactionary proposition: "If I have the slightest suspicion that your heart is not pure or that there is bitterness there, I'd neither have the British stay on. It's the lesser of two evils."25

Sriram decides to follow Gandhi in order to be near the girl he has taken a fancy for. But when he meets her he finds that she is very sharp-tongued, witty and a real termagant. But he finds himself
courageous enough to declare his immense liking for her, whose name, he discovers, is Bharati.

Bharati tells him, however, that he will have to face Bapuji if he wants to work with them. Sriram does so and agrees to all conditions imposed by Gandhi on his followers. He is also asked to seek his Granny's permission if he wishes to join the Gandhi camp. Sriram returns home to do so, but thinking that his Granny might not understand the "new things", he decides to leave without telling her, though he does leave a note behind. Thus he now goes into a new life full of thoughts, as to what was in store for him?

Part Two takes Sriram and Bharati to various villages with Gandhi. The horrible condition of villages worsened by famine gives Sriram an entirely different picture from what he was obtained through his viewing of Tamil films. But so long as he has Bharati with him, nothing can upset him:

"However grim the surroundings might be,

Sriram and Bharati seemed to notice

nothing. They had a delight in each other's

company which mitigated the gloom of the

surroundings."²⁶
Sriram makes his new home in a deserted shrine on a slope of the Mempi Hill. Here he "was going through a process of self-tempering, a rather hard task, for he often found on checking his thoughts that they were still as undesirable as ever."27

By sheer dint of hard work he leaves to spin and when he wears clothes made of the yarn spun by him he exults in a new feeling of glory:

Sriram suddenly felt that he was the inhabitant of a magic world where you created all the things you needed with your own hands," and "He felt he had seen and reached a new plane of existence."28

Sriram now starts spreading Gandhi's message. Although he finds it worthless, it seems that an inner voice tells him, to go on, "Your conscience should be your guide in every action."29

He feels very emotional about Bharati and succeeds in having her promise to marry him if Bapuji permits.

Part three shows us Sriram's involvements in various activities, he finds out that Bharati is in prison and tries to see her but it does not work out but he gets to know of the critical illness of his granny and an
appeal to see her before it was, too late. He immediately leaves for his home at Kabir lane, but his Granny is already dead, but while on the pyre she is found to have life and returns from the world of the dead. This part of the novel ends with Sriram's arrest form the place where his granny is kept.

Part four recounts Sriram's experience in the central jail where he is lodged. His granny has gone to Benares to pass her last days at this famous pilgrimage and her house has been rented out to someone else. During this time the news reaches the prisoners that Mahatma Gandhi has become the new 'emperor' of India. With the departure of the British from India, Sriram is also released from the prison.

Part Five brings the novel to a conclusion. Here we have Gandhiji's mission of peace in Noakhali torn by communal riots. Bharati and Sriram meet at Birla house in New Delhi, they do get the blessings of Bapuji to get married but only to face the horror of his assassination. The novel thus ends without leading the reader to any worthwhile conclusion.

From the angle of Narayan's usual pattern, however, the protagonist here is reconciled to the world of reality after his 'unreal' experience in the prison - unreal because it is political and also because
it fails to educate him about the social reality of colonial oppression and tyranny. Even his Gandhian experience is deemed as 'unreal' because it is his attraction for Bharati that leads him into it and as if to provide an edge of irony to this unreality. Gandhi is made to quit the scene and the world as well at the end.

In his gentle novels of Malgudi Narayan proves that the quintessence of Gandhi's teaching is part and parcel of India's daily life, one might even be tempted to say of India's folklore. Narayan has repeatedly stressed the three points which stand out in Gandhi's philosophy in a way that puts him in a class of his own among Indo-Anglian novelists and which allows him to add an extra dimension to the Mahatma's vision of India because it removes it from its political and temporal contexts.

Life is a never ending quest for truth. That word has never been easy to define in the Gandhian context. It is generally equated with sincerity of heart. This necessarily implies the discovery of one's own self. Man must question his place in society and cast off social artifacts. Only then will he be able to re-establish the pristine an essential link with God necessary to answer the question "who am I ?" and hence the question that naturally ensues "What am I ?" Narayan is a certified
Gandhian novelist because in his novel 'Waiting for the Mahatma' Gandhi himself is a character. Both critics failed to realize that Narayan's understanding and defense of the teaching of Gandhi went far beyond the picaresque adventures of Sriram, a nit wit who never knew the difference between Bose and Gandhi. Narayan's Gandhism is not limited to one single novel but pervades every page of his work.

Narayan's characters are literary incarnations of the Gandhian ideal. They are people in quest of truth. They embody the greatest virtues of the Hindu way of life at the level of the man in the street; exactly where Gandhi wanted them to be.

Malgudi is far too large to be one of Gandhi's Indian 700,000 villages but Narayan proves that Gandhism is a humanism that can be practiced anywhere provided the heart be willing.

At an individual level one can say that practically all of Narayan's heroes go through an "experiment with truth". This experiment is what his novels are primarily concerned with. Gandhi wanted to revive the spirit of Vivekananda and of Ramakrishna to lift India out of the religious superstition it had fallen into. Narayan's heroes prove to be very Gandhian in spirit.
See the evolution of Krishnan, The English Teacher who is the victim of two illusions which he discards in the course of the novel: his social illusion linked to his status as a college lecturer and a spiritual illusion deriving from his belief that happiness in life can be an end in itself. There is little doubt that this interpretation of life as part of a larger religious experience and as a quest for the discovery of one's true self is the cornerstone of Gandhi's philosophy, itself part of India's religions past through its Vedantic origin.

Narayan's heroes are ordinary people whose lives take on a religious dimension. They revolutionize their inner selves to become better Indians and in this way the author reminds us that Gandhi's message appealed to the spiritual in man. As such it remains valid today and will be so for ever.

Narayan's criticism, even when bitter and far reaching, can never be violent and what he gives us in his gentle novels of Malgudi is but an illustration of what Nehru called "the tender humanity of India". As a humanist Narayan could not possibly accept the dichotomy between town and country. Man is the same everywhere, each born with his own qualities, be they good or bad and each fractionally moulded by his
environment. Everything is to be found in Narayan's villages: good, evil even murders.

In India this town/village dichotomy originated with Gandhi. What the Mahatma mostly objected to was the uprooting which necessarily went with the move from country to town. Malgudi itself is no better or worse than any ordinary village. Officials are corrupt and inefficiency is to be found at every level. Narayan is too much a master of the art of novel writing to make an in depth study of corruption. He merely drops remarks here and there and makes corruption seem a perfectly normal way of life. The corruption he sees is not an artefact, something linked to a certain class or to given social circumstances; it is not even part of life but it is life itself. In this respect Narayan's pessimism runs very deep and it is obvious that only a change in people's hearts could eradicate this evil. Paint the Indian way of life and corruption will ooze back through your canvas like a still wet coat of paint. Malgudi is a microcosm upon which the outside world still has little impact even if the intrusion of the West is not to be belittled. Malgudi's problems are India's problems at large and in that respect the society shown is a long way away from the one Gandhi saw in his
dreams. Belonging to the right caste is what makes the right marriage and pulling the right strings is what gets one a good job.

Balancing the effect of corruption and faithful to the traditional rhythm of Siva people naturally put into practice many of Gandhi's principles. Concerning good things in man, Narayan uses the same technique of sprinkling his novels with casual remarks. Good policemen exist, pujas are never forgotten and Sanyasis are respected. Religious tolerance is something practiced and not boasted about Narayan wrote novels to prove inter-religious friendship in the subcontinent.

In Narayan's novels Gandhi's preaching is echoed on every page. Faith transcends the town-village opposition because it is an individual matter. It concerns the self only and so it can be found anywhere. It belongs to the heart but has to be permanently reassessed. Narayan takes Gandhianism away from cotton spinning and gives it a modern outlook as if to help it stand the test of time.

Gandhian literature came to life with a new language or to be more accurate, it gave a new dimension to an old language, though it is true that at times Indo-English looks like a new language altogether with a vocabulary and a syntax of its own. Rao defined the rules and all Indo-
English stuck to them. Narayan's English, however, has a class of its own which comes from the naturalness with which it flows.

While many of his literary peers obviously worked at creating a new style, at times at the cost of authenticity, Narayan made a point of writing his novels in the English he spoke. In the same way as he describes the India he knows well, he uses the vocabulary he masters well. In that respect he stays in line with Gandhi's wish. Only what is needed for the writer's purpose is described, the rest is forgotten about. The English Narayan uses is as fictional as Malgudi itself. It is by no means a faithful account of the language spoken in India. Indianism either in the syntax or vocabulary are scarce, technical terms carefully avoided. All along, throughout his sixty odd years of writing Narayan uses his own English and this serves his purpose to perfection.

As far as the novel itself is concerned it looks as if Gandhian novelists have done nothing but shroud in Indian clothing what basically remains a western form of literature. Many Gandhian novelists departed from the oral tradition and wrote long novels swarming with characters. From the start Narayan decided to stick to the Indian tradition. His novels conform to the norms and composition of what is proposed by the village story teller. His novels then are short and linear in structure.
The rules of story telling are respected: long narration are avoided because they tire the audience out and make it lose the thread of the story. Only the major characters must have lives and personalities of their own, the supporting ones appearing when needed and dropped when their part has been played. The plot must build up slowly to a climax and then be drawn to a prompt conclusion.

All these characteristics are recurrent in Narayan's novels and account for the fact that as a novelist he has often been misunderstood by European critics. He must be judged by his own standards which are those of the oral tale. While other Indo-Anglians of the Gandhian School only Indianized the style and kept on to the original form of the novel Narayan gave an Indian form and an Indian content to the novels he wrote.

Narayan penetrated the heart of Gandhi's teaching. He separated the obviously ephemeral implications of his philosophy from what was eternal in it and he gave literary existence to the latter. This probably accounts for the fact that he can ceaselessly renew his inspiration while drawing from one spring only. As a humanist rather than a revolutionary Narayan only flirted with the fight for independence and with the momentous events which preceded and followed it. Preferring to bear
witness to the universality of the Mahatma he took up his pen to show
that, like Shakespeare according to Ben Jonson, his bond was with all
time and all places.

In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Narayan was attempting to show
the epic order through Gandhi and his followers influencing the normal
life of Malgudi, making Sriram the via media, but on the whole it fails to
solve the purpose of the novelist. However, it has two reasons of its
failure - limitation in exploring the relationship between Bharati and
Sriram, and Gandhi's peace in it. Gandhi appears only twice in the
novel, at the beginning and at the end of the story in a straight forward
and prosaic manner, but his extraordinary impact makes other characters
smaller. The other factor is the distance between Sriram and Bharati.

There is all the details about Sriram but Bharati has no surface to
stand. She is simply an orphan and dependent on Sevak Sangh.

"I do whatever I am asked to do by the
Sevak Sangh. Sometimes they ask me to go
and teach people spinning and tell them
about Mahatmajji's ideas. Sometimes they
send me to villages and poor quarters. I
meet them and talk to them and do a few things. I attend to Mahatmaji's needs.\textsuperscript{30}

This makes the personality of Bharati unreal than the minor characters Kanni and Sriram's grandmother. There is also difference in role - Bharati is Sriram's Guru and Sriram her unwilling follower and they have also no meeting point because of total surrender to Gandhian way of life: non-violence, truth and self-discipline. This prevents the readers a close study of their tension and communication. All the time Sriram follows the fixed set of rules framed on Gandhian way of life. Still Sriram is least complicated of all the characters of Narayan. He moves towards terrorism as it seems to hit the natural course of his right action, self-deception and self-awareness. Treatment of the normal course of life in Malgudi with awareness of change is one of the themes in 'Waiting for the Mahatma'. Gandhi with special spiritual powers, is a saint for the Malgudians, although they do not follow his ideals in their daily life.

Finally, we find Narayan is non-committal in his approach. If Narayan presents his experiences of Gandhian consciousness in his novels as a moral analyst and with a powerful ironic vision, Gandhi certainly reflects morality in politics and wages the war of independence
against British rulers not as an enemy but as a non-violent soldier. The liberation of India becomes symbolic of liberation of humanity. Thus Gandhian consciousness generates Narayan as an artist of literature.
References:


2. Ibid., p. 145

3. Ibid., p. 13

4. Ibid., p. 30

5. Ibid., p. 38

6. Ibid., p. 53

7. Ibid., p. 123

8. Ibid., p. 154

9. Ibid., p. 102

10. Ibid., p. 108

11. Ibid., p. 164

13. Ibid., p. 55


21. Ibid., p. 1

22. Ibid., p. 10

23. Ibid., p. 18
24. Ibid., pp. 19, 20.

25. Ibid., p. 20

26. Ibid., p. 59

27. Ibid., p. 64

28. Ibid., p. 66

29. Ibid., p. 86

30. Ibid., p. 39.

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Chapter - IV

PERSONAL REFERENCES:

NARAYAN'S LATER NOVELS
Chapter - IV

PERSONAL REFERENCES : NARAYAN’S LATER NOVEL

When Narayan wrote 'Mr. Sampath' his fifth novel, he was in his forties and had obviously reached a point where his fascination for certain aspects of Hindu religions and philosophical tradition had grown into a full-fledged conviction of their truth and relevance, particularly with reference to an individual's persistent quest for identity and self-knowledge. With Mr. Sampath, Narayan plunges into the zany, eccentric and, at the same time, true to life world of Malgudi, which is to be the special background of his tales from now on though we have known it earlier. As always, there is a hard core of autobiography in this book. The narrator, Srinivas is an edition even as Narayan was at this point in his life. “Sampath, the printer, a character taken from real
life, when he finds that he can no longer run his press, takes to film
production, an endeavour into which he draws Srinivas half-
heartedly."

Narayan's pattern was fixed. The protagonist is initially engaged
fruit-fully in the pursuit of some aspect of social reality. But gradually
he finds himself drawn into a range of activities that appear to belong to
the region of the unknown and the "illusory". After realizing the futility
of this "illusory" world or after gaining fresh insights into the nature of
reality from his encounters with this world, he returns to the world of his
former activity. The novel thus ends with an acceptance of the world as
it exists, the novel thus is a reflection of Narayan's own experiences, the
manner in which he came across things echoed in his works, the
acceptance is because of the new knowledge gained by the protagonist
helps him over come his reservations about the actual world. The novel
derives its name from Mr. Sampath, the printer of Malgudi, but its real
protagonist is Srinivas, the editor of 'The Banner,' through whose eyes
the whole world is seen from a perspective of non-attachment. Srinivas
feels that the problem of one's identity is basically philosophical.

Srinivas appears to think here that the problem of one's identity
can be solved by abstract speculation and meditation on the nature of
'Self', rather than by being worried about one's social duties and responsibilities, which, in his view are petty and insignificant. But on deeper examination, Srinivas protest seems to be directed against petty individualism and selfish and narrow minded possessiveness. A little later in the novel Srinivas is shown writing a series of articles, entitled "Life's Background":

Life and the world and all this is passing –
why bother about anything ? The perfect
and the imperfect are all the same. Why
really bother?' He had to find an answer to
the question. And that he did in this series.³

With this philosophical line of thinking, Srinivas also realizes the futility of interfering in other people's lives, because his mind perceived a balance of power in human relationships. He marveled at the invisible forces of the universe which maintained this subtle balance in all matters:

"It was so perfect that it seemed to be unnecessary for anybody to do anything.
For a moment it seemed to him a futile and presumptuous occupation to analyze,
criticize and attempt to set things right any where."^4

This leads him to the expression of a wish:

"If only one could get comprehensive view of all humanity, one would get a correct view of the world: things being neither particularly wrong nor right but just balancing themselves."^5

According to this philosophy of inaction, any form of human intervention in any matter is unnecessary, for things are likely to balance themselves in a scheme of things where a perpetual balancing act goes on continuously. But, somehow, Srinivas also desires to have a 'comprehensive view of all humanity' to get 'a correct view of the world'. While one part of his brain decries all action and protest as futile, the other part aspires to have a total and comprehensive view of humanity to arrive at a correct understanding of the world. The same dilemma that Narayan was when in between crossroads in life, the same thoughts came up in his mind to which finally he arrives at an understanding by and by.
Before, however, Srinivas can arrive at such an understanding, he must get an opportunity to acquaint himself with other aspects of reality which constantly baffles him. He has to change his profession, to close down his paper and to accept the job of a script-writer for a film, just as Narayan turned his back to teaching and turned to writing novels in real life. Initially, he feels very enthusiastic about it:

"He felt that he was acquiring a novel medium of expression. Ideas were to march straight on from him in all their pristine strength, without the intervention of language: ideas walking, talking, and passing into people's minds as images like a drug entering the system through the hypodermic needle."  

But as he is gradually drawn into the maddening whirlpool of the film world, he begins to grow disenchanted. He felt he is missing his true vocation - his search for truth and self-realization-which he could have more conveniently and fruitfully pursued through his journalistic career: thinking to himself of 'the Banner' again, he makes a mental note of the things he would like to have in his paper:
He would print thirty-six pages of every issue; a quarter for international affairs, half for Indian politics, and a quarter for art and culture and philosophy. This was going to help him in his search for an unknown stabilizing factor in life, for an unchanging value, a knowledge of the self, a piece of knowledge which would support as on a rock the faith of Man and his peace; a knowledge of his true identity, which would bring no depression at the coming of age, nor puzzle the mind with conundrums and antitheses.7

After his foray into the film world proves a maddening disaster, he returns to his paper and gets it printed at the Empire Press. Explaining the cause of its revival, he writes:

"You know the old fable of a man who mounted a tiger – I'm in the same position. 'The Banner' has to be kept fluttering in the air if I'm to survive."8
The final meaning of his quest for identity and of non-attachment and withdrawal is yielded to Srinivas, when his mind begins to telescope history, while Ravi, the artist gone mad, is being treated by an exorcist:

Dynasties rose and fell. Palaces and mansions appeared and disappeared. The entire country went down under the fire and sword of the invader, and was washed clean when Sarayu overflowed its bounds. But it always had its rebirth and growth. And throughout the centuries Srinivas felt, this group was always there:

Ravi with his madness, his well-wishers with their panaceas and their apparatus of cure. Half the madness was his own doing, his lack of self-knowledge, his treachery to his own instincts as an artist, which had made him a battle-ground. Sooner or later he shook off his madness and realized his true identity though not in one birth, at least in a series of them.9

The logical conclusion to this kind of thinking is the adoption of the attitude of an immaculate passivity, total surrender and complete inaction. The vast rush of eternity swallows each and everything, one
and all and in it all distinctions vanish and nothing really matters, this is exactly what Narayan experienced in his life. These questions were true to his own experiences and partly he projected them in this novel:

**Madness or Sanity, suffering or happiness**

*seemed all the same……it was like*

*bothering about a leaf floating on a rushing torrent - whether it was floating on it straight side or wrong side.*

This novel obviously provides a significant peep into Narayan's thinking about the relationship between individual and the society, particularly in the context of the Gita's philosophy of non-attachment at the fruits of one action which gets degenerated here into a kind of nihilistic and negative quietism and inaction.

The trouble with the Narayan's protagonist is that he seeks his identity not in terms of social and economic relationships which really govern its formation, but in terms of abstract speculation. Man, as a concrete individual, can be identified only by the sort of role that he plays in the social productivity. If, however he seeks the meaning of his identity in isolation from his socio-economic obligations, he will only be wandering in a world of glorious illusions. The example of Srinivas is a
case in point. His complete indifference to the fate of a fellow artist proves him to be a selfish individualist who can never know the meaning of true salvation. If each man is considered to be an island, into himself, the entire social fabric loses its cohesion and becomes a torn and fragmented entity.

In *Mr. Sampath*, myth is recalled by being used as the plot for a film while the actual events that take place both in the film and in the novel are contrary to the myth. Myth is thus set against it inversion or parody. Throughout the novel we are aware both of the difference, between present day India and its mythic past. The omnipresence of the past, never pure, always expressing itself in parodies of ideals, is the basis of Narayan's vision; he accepts his society regardless of its faults. If Narayan seems passive and accommodating, it should be remembered that the Indian sensibility has always placed a high regard on inactivity and acceptance of the flow of life. Indeed, doing so is regarded as classical Hindu virtue.

Narayan has been criticized for not having the social concerns of Anand as also for not explicitly examining cultural conflicts as does Rao. Such disapproval ignores precisely those qualities that make Narayan a major novelist.
The central theme of Mr. Sampath is based on the following sequence of attachment described in *Srimad Bhagvad Gita*:

"That deluded man is called a hypocrite who sits controlling the organs of action, but dwelling in his mind on the objects of the senses."\(^{11}\)

Infatuation, madness, and desires of Ravi comprises the cycle of events of the novel. Srinivas with his friends is involved in this attachment by various reasons and in varying degrees. Here Narayan takes up the old myth of the burning of Kama to show comic implications of his involvement. The handling of the plot has reversed the myth. The old myth tells that Kama tempted Shiva while he was meditating at Mount Kailash. When he finds Kama he opens his third eye and Kama is burnt up not to be seen again. This scene of temptation of Lord Shiva appealed to Srinivas as a script writer.

This was one of his favourite scenes. By externalizing emotions by superimposing feeling in the shape of images, he hoped to express very clearly the substance of this
episode: of love and its purification, of austerity and peace.  

But the old myth is mishandled and its meaning is dissipated. The film gets a vulgar and provocative slant. Ravi's and Sampath's infatuation and jealousy come to their climax in this central scene of the novel. It causes great physical and emotional confusion.

Srinivas is portrayed as an idealist. He is thirty-seven with wife and children. He is the founder-editor of 'The Banner' and the scriptwriter of 'The Burning of Kama'. Years of reading the Upanishads has made him indifferent to his family life. He holds a philosophical attitude towards this world. He seldom bothers about worldly anxieties but perceives a balance of power in human relationships. Reading of 'The Upanishads' prompted him to ask 'Is it right to be family-centred?' He is in a fix not to find the solution of his responsibilities.

My children, my family, my responsibilities I must guard my prestige and my duties to my family - who am I? This is far more serious problem than any that I have known before. It is a big problem and I have to face it. Till now I know who I am, how can I know what I should do.
“He marveled at the invisible forces of the universe which maintained this subtle balance in all matters, it was so perfect that it seemed to be unnecessary for any body to do anything. For a moment it seemed to him a futile and presumptuous occupation to analyse, criticize and attempt to set things right anywhere.”

While he thundered against Municipal or Social Shortcomings a voice went on asking life and the world and all this is passing - why bother about anything ? The perfect and the imperfect are all the same. Why really bother ?

Srinivas is the centre of all the actions of the novel and his role is very important. N. Mukherjee sums up:

Structurally speaking, the role of Srinivas is very important. It is he who integrates the plot. All the characters in the novel are known to us in proportion to their relationship with him. The single point of view influences the structure.
Mr. Sampath is 'The Printer of Malgudi'. He is the proprietor of 'The Truth Printing Press'. He often publishes false statements as he cannot refuse any kind of publication and he is in the habit of obliging everybody. Nobody returns empty and he pleases everybody simply with words. Mr. Sampath is sensual, sentimental and lustful. He desires to make Shanti his second wife.

Every sane man needs two wives - a perfect one for the house and a perfect one for the outside for social life…. I have the one why not the other ?

Shanti becomes his mistress. He takes her to the rest house on Mempi Hills. One day she disappears leaving behind a note.

I am sick of this kind of life, and marriage frightens me…. Please leave me alone….. If I find you pursuing me, I will shave off my head and fling away my jewellery and wear a white Sari. You and people like you will run away at the sight of me. I am after all a widow and can shave my head, disfigure myself as I like.

Mr. Sampath strikes others to be a man of strong personality and impresses them by his obliging attitude, prompt service and hospitality. He is the custodian of accounts - income and expenditure of Srinivas.
He is equally mysterious. The New York Times Book Review, May 9, 1957, p. 14 presents Mr. Sampath as:

A masterly first impressionist in whose spacious gestures and rich evasive words a greaky press and one exhausted boy somehow becomes a big establishment.¹⁸

In the opinion of N. Mukherjee, Mr. Sampath -

Moves among the imagination of his friends like some minor deity. The moment he enters the novel, he not only takes the charge of the publication of the weekly 'The Banner', but also takes the novel from the hands of Srinivas. It no longer remains the story of Srinivas, the editor, it becomes his story - the story of the printer of Malgudi.¹⁹

Mr. Sampath is above all other characters. According to N. Mukherjee:

One meets all kinds of people in the Printer of Malgudi. Schemers, adventures, speculators, get-quick-rich financiers,
eccentrics, absurd dreamers, impassioned reformers, and crooks. And dominating them all there is Mr. Sampath.²⁰

The novel is named after Mr. Sampath, but in the first 64 pages of the novel there is no reference to his name. He emerges as a stranger in Chapter IV, page 66 where Srinivas happens to visit Bombay Anand Bhawan Hotel giving up all ideas of printing his work in Malgudi. He finds a man 'with his fur cap and the scarf flung around his neck' sitting in a chair next to the proprietor at the counter speaking Hindi as North Indians. 'He seemed to be keeping the whole establishment in excellent humour, including the fat proprietor'.²¹ In a dramatic manner Srinivas lets the readers know about Mr. Sampath, who would print his journal - 'The Banner'.

In Mr. Sampath Narayan finds himself close to Srinivas as he also seems to perceive the world as a complicated system of checks and counter-checks, the final outcome being the absurdity:

His mind perceived a balance of power in human relationship. He marveled at the invisible forces of the universe which maintained this subtle balance in all matters, it was so perfect that it seemed to be unnecessary for anybody to do any thing. For a moment it seemed to
him futile and presumptuous - occupation to analyse, criticize and attempt to set things right any where…. If only one could get a comprehensive view of all humanity, one would get a correct view of the world. Things being neither particularly wrong nor right, but just balancing themselves, just the required number of wrong doers as there are people who deserved wrong deeds, just as many police men to bring them to their senses, if possible, and just as many wrong doers again to keep the police employed, and so on and on in an infinite concentric circle.  

Apart from this, one finds Narayan's deeper philosophy of life when one goes through the old verse of the old man - the landlord of Sampath and Srinivas :

When I become a handful of ash what do I care who takes my purse, who counts my coins and who locks the door of my safe, when my bones die bleaching, what matter if the door of my house is left unlocked.  

This quoted verse of the old man appeals to Narayan and he feels that 'Life and the world and all this passing - why bother about anything.' Here is Narayan's unconscious affiliation with the puranic
tradition of switching from fantastic to the reality of life in order to create emotional conflict and to make the readers realize the ultimate truth of life. To this context of Narayan, Stephen Hemenway remarks:

The Hindu attitude towards the individual's life - transitory, a small part in a continuing process, the need to strive for dharma or right action is upper most in the formation of his characters.25

Mr. Sampath is a lovable rogue, innocently crooked, cunningly foolish, unselfishly selfish and sadly cheerful. Above all, he is a masterly first impressionist. He is ever cautious, shrewd, evasive, ambitious and self-confident. He returns to Malgudi but leaves the place soon for fear of his financiers. He starts as a printer, becomes a producer - actor and finds disaster overtaking him. He ends as a forlorn person - going towards the Malgudi railway station, prepared to leave the place for good.

Falling as it does in the middle of Narayan's creative career, this sixth novel enshrines within itself much of the typical charm of Narayan's unadorned prose, along with the expression of a characteristically naïve and simplistic philosophy; the futility of man's
forays into unaccustomed paths of quick gains and easy prosperity and
the necessity of his turning back to the same point where he began, for
this cycle of experience embodies the only worth while wisdom that a
man can gain in this life or in the lives to come. This essential circularity
of human experience appears to be structured on the pattern of the
Hindu view of time and history and is partially a product of the belief
that 'the world does not progress, it merely changes.' On the reckoning
of this philosophy, all worldly and material gains appear to be very
fascinating and desirable, but they seem to obstruct man's 'spiritual'
progress. Therefore, man is advised to be content with whatever little he
has and to strive only for "self-development" and "self-knowledge", the
ultimate goal and purpose of human life. Through the protagonist
Margayya, Narayan wants to strongly emphasize the importance of
spiritualism in human life and conveys the message that if a person
strikes to give too much materialistic happiness which is short-lived he
surely will be doomed.

Margayya, the financial expert who sits under a tree and shows
people how to borrow more and more money from the co-operative
Bank, is shooed from his spot by the new manager of the bank. He tries
to conduct his business as usual from outside the compound of the bank
but his heart is not really in it. He has to find other means for self-aggrandizement.\textsuperscript{26}

Margayya, meaning "one who showed the way", is the acquired name of one Krishna, the protagonist of this novel, who is a financial wizard, who shows "the way out to those in financial trouble."\textsuperscript{27} He helps the simple and needy villagers to "draw unlimited loans from the cooperative bank."\textsuperscript{28} Sitting under a banyan tree with a little box, he transacts his business with great acumen. But he is rattled by people's lack of respect for him. He feels that "the world treated him with contempt because he had no money. People thought they could order him about."\textsuperscript{29} He also feels that if he were a well dressed person people would not dare to look at him sneeringly as they tended to do now. This is actually the manner in which Narayan himself guided the people of his region, although he was no bank officer yet he was good at accounting and money management, and so he helped the needy with advice free of cost. Telling his wife about the threat held out to him by the secretary of the cooperative Bank, he says:

"He has every right because he has more money, authority, dress, looks above all, more money. It's money which gives people
all this. Money alone is important in this world. Every thing else will come to us naturally, if we have money in our purse.”³⁰

Margayya is the product of a bourgeois society where money holds the sway in all walks of life, just as Narayan was a product of his society which reflects the same thought.

Becoming obsessed with the pursuit of money, he reflects:

"People did anything for money. Money was man's greatest need, like air or food. People went to horrifying lengths for its sake, like collecting rent on a dead body: yet this didn't strike Margayya in his present mood as so horrible as something to be marvelled at. It left him admiring the power and dynamism of money, its capacity to make people do strange deeds.”³¹

A priest appears to read his mind and he tells Margayya:

"Wealth does not come the way of people who adopt half-hearted measures. It comes
only to those who pray for it single
mindedly with no other thought."32

All vibrations of R.K. Narayan's thought can be seen in the
protagonist.

Margayya, the financial wizard, is very much in need of financial
guidance himself, after his young, impish son, Balu, has thrown his little
box containing his cash books into the gutter. At the suggestion of the
priest, he performs a rigorous forty-day ritual to please the goddess
Laxmi, but there is no visible out come of his ordeal. This particular
incident has signifier in view of Narayan's belief in superstitions and
certain rituals, followed blindly by him to please the Goddess Laxmi to
gain material prosperity. It is by a sheer stroke of chance that he happens
to meet Dr. Pal, who calls himself a sociologist, and who has authored a
naughty script, entitled "Bed-Life or the Science of Marital Happiness."
Dr. Pal literally forces the script on Margayya, telling him that he can
make millions out of it. Margayya takes the script to a printer named
Madan Lal who gets so interested in it that he offers to publish it on a
partnership basis. And soon pots of money begin to flow in for both of
them from this book which is retitled, for the sake of decency, for the
sake of decency, 'Domestic Harmony.' Finally God showers his blessings in one form or the other.

Surrounded with heaps of money, Margayya's attitude to money becomes quase-mystical. The more he meditates on the question of interest that money can earn, the more it seems to him "the greatest wonder of creation. It combined in it the mystery of birth and multiplication……Every rupee, Margayya felt, contained in it seed of another rupee and that seed in it another seed and so on and on to infinity. It was something like the firmament, endless Stars and within each star an endless firmament and within each an further endless……It bordered on mystic perception. It gave him the feeling of being part of an infinite existence."33

Margayya parts company with Madan Lal, gets his share and quits, Dr. Pal again helps him to start anew his business of money lending. Margayya tells Guru Raj:

"Guru Raj, money is the greatest factor in life and the most ill used. People don't know how to tend it, how to manure it, how to water it, how to make it grow, and when to pluck its flowers and when to pluck its
fruits. What most people do is to try and eat the plant itself..."34

As a father Margayya failed as a result his son Balu goes astray, he runs away from home. He does not feel the loss of his son due to his own money-making adventures:

"His affluence, his bank balance, buoyed him up and made him bear the loss of their son. He lived in a sort of radiance which made it possible for him to put up with anything."35

But his wife's condition prompts him to go to Madras to look for Balu where he does find him and brings him back. Margayya's advice to Balu is: "You eat, rest, and grow fat—that is all you are expected to do and take as much money as you like."36

Margayya now decides to get his son married to a beautiful and rich girl, Brinda, and succeeds in his mission in spite of the refusal of an astrologer to match the horoscopes on order. He grows more and more confident of his prowess, and no longer believes that "man was a victim of circumstances or fate—it but that man was a creature who could make
his own present and future provided he worked hard and remained watchful.\textsuperscript{37}

We can relate this particular aspect of matching horoscopes to his own life, Narayan at the time of his marriage faced the same problem, but he did not have faith in what the astrologers had to say therefore he indulges himself in unfortunate marriage and his wife dies within a few years.

Margayya becomes very successful and is called a financial wizard, but he loses grip over his son who demands his share of property. Margayya suspects the hand of Dr. Pal in spoiling his son, and so takes him to task as a result to which Dr. Pal straight way goes to Margayya's clients and tells them how unsafe their money is with him. There's a scramble for the withdrawal of money and the whole financial empire of Margayya comes tumbling down. He is ruined over night. Balu comes back to his father, Margayya asks him to begin his life afresh by going to the banyan tree in front of the Cooperative Bank. And if Balu is unwilling, Margayya himself will take up again his good, old work of helping the needy villagers to get their loans. The novel thus returns us to where we began.
Narayan wishes to tell us something, the novel is conceived as an allegory designed to warn people about the real insignificance of money in life, though people think money to be the be-all and end-all of life. Margayya's mad pursuit of money is an obvious target of Narayan's attack, and his final return to sanity is depicted as his return from an illusory world. Margayya once again accepts his humble life as something in which he finds rest and respite from a world of harsh strife.

Thus the Narayan protagonist finds the acceptance of life as it is as a desirable goal. Till the end Margayya remains a victim of bourgeois deceptions. He endeavors to make money without following the rules of the bourgeois game. His fall from financial heights which were built on other people's money is inevitable and there is nothing surprising in it. His ruin comes faster because of an act of indiscretion. Empires of money do not crash on the basis of an individual's whim as they do in this novel. Narayan, therefore, camourflages his ideological intentions behind the veneer of a tricky humour and deceptive presentation of social reality.

The title of the novel, *The Financial Expert* suggests rather unambiguously that it deals mainly with human avarice. It is the obsession with the idea of amassing wealth, by fair means or foul, which
strikes the keynote here. And the high priest of this Mammon is none else than the central character of the novel, Margayya who in the words of Graham Greene, is perhaps the most engaging of all Narayan's characters. However, the important point to be noted here about Narayan's fictional art is the use of irony throughout the book, the most effective sample of which can be seen in the title itself. A careful reader of the novel can easily perceive that Margayya at once is and is not a 'financial expert'. We keep on wondering as to what kind of financial expert is this man whose business takes very little time to reach its zenith but crashes even with greater speed rendering him a pauper overnight.

Like the title of the novel, the protagonists's nickname 'Margayya' is also replete with complex irony. Though his real name is Krishna, he appears to have forgotten it altogether. He has gradually got into the habit of signing his name Margayya even in legal documents and everyone else also calls him so. Literally, the word 'Margayya' being a derivative of the word 'Marga' with 'Ayya' as an honorific suffix, means the one who shows the way. The full significance of his name is explained thus by the novelist himself in the beginning of the book:
He showed the way out to those in financial trouble. And in all those villages that lay within a hundred-mile radius of Malgudi was there anyone who could honestly declare that he was not in financial difficulties?³⁸

But as we read the novel, the multiple irony of his nickname mirrors before us very clearly that the person who shows the people the way out of their financial problems, does not himself display enough skill in managing the money he has suddenly earned. It appears as if he shows himself the way but loses it sooner than expected to land himself in total ruin. And he is still unabashed when he tells his repentant son Balu towards the end of the novel:

'I am showing you a way, will you follow it?
Have an early meal tomorrow and go to the banyan tree in front of the co-operative Bank..... Go there, that is all I can say; and any thing may happen thereafter....... If you are not going, I am going on with it, as soon as I am able to leave this bed.'³⁹
And as the novel comes to a close, we find Margayya going back to the same spot under the banyan tree from where he 'showed the way' to the people, and then from which he marched on to triumph and tragedy. Narayan confesses that the character of Margayya is not a figment of his imagination and he has, in fact, taken it from real life. He tells us in the introduction to the novel that the original of the 'financial expert' was a gentleman in Mysore who encouraged people to borrow and spend, shattering once and for all the philosophy of thrift. Narayan records:

As I went on day after day, I found the character growing. It must be understood that at the right point fiction most depart on its own course, and soon I forgot the original. Then, when I was half-way through the book, a financial phenomenon occurred in our province..... He promised dazzling fantastic, scales of interest and dividends on the money entrusted to his care, and he became the only subject of conversation until he crashed and landed in
jail. About this time, Margayya of my novel was maturing as a financial expert, and I found the new material just what I needed to blend into the story. So, Margayya is actually a combination of two personalities.40

As in the case of Margayya and his 'office' under the banyan tree in front of the Malgudi co-operative Bank, so in the case of his modus operandi, the descriptions given by the author are extremely vivid and highly realistic. But the use of irony is everywhere in evidence as in this remark on page 2 of the novel:

"If the purpose of the co-operative movement was the promotion of thrift and elimination of middlemen, these two were defeated under the banyan tree"41

Equally pertinent and ironic are the words used by Margayya while professing a humanitarian concern for his brethren in financial difficulty.

He says:
"I want to do much for you fellows, do you know why? ... It is because I want you all to get over your money worries and improve your lives. You must all adopt civilized ways. That is why I am trying to help you to get money from that bastard office."

His skill of persuading the prospective clients, most of whom, of course, are covetous groups of persons, is as marvelous as is his understanding of the people and functioning of their minds. But the real obsession with amassing of wealth takes hold of him after he is humiliated and insulted by the Secretary of the co-operative Bank for illegally processing the loan application forms. Margayya curses himself for his low economic position, and genuinely feels that the world treats him with disrespect and contempt because he has no money. He is very agitated, as if he had made a new and startling discovery. Much frustrated after mysterious actions of throwing his account book into the gutter by his son Balu, he seeks refuge in religion. The entire elaborate episode of the Lakshmi - Worship at the behest of the priest and its coincidental success, is both ironic in nature and has also a touch of
fantasy about it which does not strain the normally superstitions reader's willing suspension of disbelief excessively.

The goddess of wealth does smile on Margayya when he accidentally runs into Dr. Pal, the emissary of modern civilization and an extraordinary fellow who professes to be a journalist, an author, a correspondent, a sociologist and what not. But ironically enough, it is Dr. Pal who proves to be both the instrument of Margayya's rise of fortune and his subsequent sudden collapse. Dr. Pal lures him into buying his manuscript on sex entitled "The Bed Life" or "The Science of Marital Happiness" which he claims is based on Vatsyayana's "Kamasutra" and the researches of Havelock Ellis. It has some alluring chapters like 'Philosophy and Practice of Kissing' and 'Basic Principles of Embracing". Margayya gets this tract on marriage and sex, euphemistically re-titled "Domestic Harmony", published on a partnership basis. It becomes a hot favourite with the public and the venture is a meteoric success, even beyond his expectations, launching Margayya on his spectacular financial career by turning him into a rich man overnight. Later, it is again with Dr. Pal's help that he embarks upon a "Deposit Scheme" which makes him a millionaire. Finally, it is again Dr. Pal, with whom he has now developed serious differences,
who spreads rumours about Margayya's then non existing financial difficulties that ultimately led to the sudden crash of his financial empire. It is, however, significant to note here that inspite of the important role of the erotic treatise in shaping the plot of the novel, Narayan avoids discussing sex openly. He hardly uses sex, as some of his colleagues do, as a prop to add spice to his narrative and this at once puts him in the rank of first rate perceptive novelists.

Margayya's ingenious financial schemes focus our attention on the present day mushrooming growth of the finance companies in our country. The whole episode of his meteoric rise and inevitable fall has somewhat prophetic dimensions. In the success and failure of Margayya as a financial 'Wizard' we can read the fortunes or misfortunes of several pseudo experts in finance and money, management who float attractive schemes for the sole purpose of cheating the gullible and avaricious folks who are tempted to get rich quickly and to multiply their ill gotten gains through short cut methods. However some prudent schemes duly controlled or approved by the Govt. do benefit the genuine middle class persons and the economically weaker, sections as they can not afford to spend lump sum amounts for acquiring certain items of everyday use
and dire necessity such as a small flat, a refrigerator, a scooter, a television set etc. It is, however, no wonder that the greedy ones meet the same dismal fate as do Voltore, Corbaccio and Corvino in Jonson's play "Volpone". Narayan only holds them to mild ridicule through his ironic method as has been observed by M. K. Naik:

'It is obvious that Margayya's story could not have been told on a realistic plane alone. To bring out the full force of the theme of irony of fate (and I would like to add here the theme of human greed), Narayan instills into the narrative a distinctly fabular element which makes "The financial expert" what M. Ramakrishnan rightly calls an almost archetypal fable of financial ambition.'

Thus Margayya remains no ordinary 'financial expert' of Malgudi but becomes a universal prototype of his profession, treated almost on an epic scale in this novel. And we can safely conclude along with M. K. Naik that "The Financial Expert" becomes thus the first major
novel of R. K. Narayan in which the steady light of an all pervasive and ethically motivated irony illuminates the central theme of the novel i.e. Mammonism and its inevitable consequences, that actually took place during the time of Narayan.
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Chapter - V

SUBJECTIVITY IN HIS SHORT STORIES
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The short stories of R.K. Narayan delight us for much the same reasons as his novels do. The author himself may be said to cultivate such a view expressed in the following way in his introduction to his latest collection of short stories.

I enjoy writing a short story. Unlike the novel which emerges from relevant, minutely worked out detail, the short story can be brought into existence through a mere suggestion of detail, the focus being kept on a central idea or climax.¹

Narayan has written more than ninety short stories.²
Most of them first appeared in "The Hindu" or other periodicals, among them Narayan's own short-lived quarterly, "Indian Thought". They have subsequently been published in book form, the later collections always printing varying selections from the earlier ones together with some new material. His short stories give us sustained pleasure as stories, and story-telling has always been his forte. They create successfully the illusion of authentic social reality, and present a wide variety of people, all belonging to 'the little world of Malgudi.' In them too is at work Narayan's unique comic vision of life which enables him to contemplate with his characteristic blend of humour and compassion the absurdities and pathos, fantasies and frustrations, illusions and ironies of everyday life.

A critic who shows more than a passing interest in the short stories is M. K. Naik. He devotes a dozen pages of his full length study of Narayan 'The Ironic Vision:

In ‘Malgudi Minor : the short stories.’ His main complaint is that irony, which is not only his central critical concept but also the touchstone in his value judgments, plays a very limited role in the short stories. This
critical view is, however qualified by his admitting that "a persistent ironic note is by and large their distinguishing feature".³

As early as 1969 Harish Raizada gave an outline of every short story published in book form up to 1956, i.e. in the first four collections. His view of the stories is never the less, much more favourable than Naik's:

"They are full of rich and sparkling entertainment and in them gaiety, fun, satire, amusement, pathos and excitement follow each other in endless variety".⁴

This is true, of course, but a bit facile and it does not help very much in assessing what exactly Narayan has achieved in his short stories.

His early stories tended to be derivative and the keen student can trace the influence of such classic writers as O Henry and Guy de Maupassant in Narayan's initial forays into this form. He also toyed with the supernatural and wrote some fiction that might be called ghost stories. Some of the stories were also purely farcical, a milieu in which Narayan excels, and dealt with the predicaments of people who had -
bought a big metal statue or a road-roller, either because it simply seemed like a good idea at the time or because they were inexorably drawn into the transaction. Narayan's stories get longer and richer as he begins to handle the medium with a sure touch. There is a hard core of personal experience that runs through all his short stories. For example, in 'A Breath of Lucifer', the most autobiographical of these stories, is a transmutation of a fairly unpleasant personal experience into an episode that alternates between farce and panic.

Spread over two of Narayan's popular collections of short stories, "An Astrologer's Day and other stories" and "Lawley Road and other stories" all narrated by the same person who is merely called the Talkative Man. They are "The Roman Image," "The Tiger's Claw," "A Career," "The Snake Song," "Old Man of the Temple," "Old Bones," "Engine Trouble," "Lawley Road," and "A Night of Cyclone". Though written at different times, these stories lend themselves to be grouped together because of the common narrator, and may conveniently, be referred to as 'The Talkative Man Stories'.

The Talkative Man Stories distinguish themselves from most other short stories of Narayan by their subject matter. Generally Narayan's stories use themes and situations which are within our
everyday experience. It goes without saying that the real story-teller in these stories is Narayan himself. He uses the Talkative Man as his narrative medium to achieve a measure of ironic distance from the narrative. Occasionally he uses the Talkative Man as a mouthpiece for his own satirical, though friendly, jibes.

William Walsh in his monograph from 1982 collects and re-writes what he has produced on Narayan over several decades he also adds a separate section on "Other Work", i.e. the short stories and Narayan's versions of Indian myths and legends. He then devotes about four pages to the thirty stories of An Astrologer's Day (1947) fourteen to the five stories of A Horse and Two goats (1970) followed by two pages to 'The Ramayana and The Mahabharata'.

Walsh points to the shortness of the stories relating it to their newspaper provenance. They represent to him "The fictional documentation of Narayan's life as a reporter"5

He emphasizes the technique with "the expected kick or sting or swing in the conclusion" as well as "Narayan's lucid, unaffected and self-effacing narrative method."6 I would not subscribe to the adjective 'self-effacing' without qualifications, seeing that Narayan both uses the
"Talkative Man" as raconteur and in some of the later stories also enters himself.

Unlike the general opinion that Narayan deals only with the middle classes, Walsh stresses poverty as "the air which most people in the stories breathe."\(^7\) Beyond ordinary poverty Narayan in some cases even deals with life 'conducted constantly on the edge of total disaster.'\(^8\)

Very important, too, is that Walsh brings out, on the one hand, "how saturated with his material the artist" is, and on the other, Narayan's "practice with the theme: that is, a degree of deliberate and critical artistic testing and re-testing of the possibilities of a fictional idea….a quality perhaps unexpected in so natural a teller of tales as Narayan."\(^9\)

As an example Walsh gives the theme of the danger of perfection as treated in 'The Sweet-Vendor' (1967) but tried out already in the story "Such Perfection" in Cyclone (1944). Here we may add a different aspect of the same idea as presented by Narayan in "The Image".\(^10\)

Another instance is the theme of the danger of marriage in spite of inauspicious horoscopes as demonstrated in The English Teacher (1945) as well as in the story "Seventh House" published in 1970.\(^11\)
Walsh might, of course, in this case have referred to a story like "The White Flower".  

So even if there is a sympathetic understanding in Walsh's treatment it is undeniable that he gives very short shift to the early stories and does not even mention four of the six collections available and also recorded in his bibliography. He is naturally to be excused in the case of Old and New, a collection only, to my knowledge, published in India the year before. Walsh's monograph and the second Malgudi Days brought out in England the very same year.

Let us examine the extent to which the short stories complement and fill out areas of life dealt with in the novels. On a very straightforward level we may begin by pointing to Narayan's first novel, Swami and Friends, at least to the first half of it. Composed of what seems to be a couple of short stories each with a separate development and focus of interest although centred on the same main character. If we then look at a story such as "Father's Help", which was published in Narayan's first collection of stories, we cannot help reflecting that this must have been a chapter that for some reason was out when the novel was published. Or could it have been material for the novel which was not used or was not worked out until later? It certainly seems to be
about the same character, the school boy Swami, and about his difficulties with his elders, on the one hand his father and on the other, his school teacher. More or less the same goes for the story "Hero".\textsuperscript{14} Even when the boy is not called Swami any longer but Dodu, as in a story of that name, or in another called "The Regal," his personality is similar and he shows the same passionate interest in cricket, the same problem in understanding the ways of grown-ups.\textsuperscript{15}

Children are generally important in Narayan's works, not only in "Swami and Friends" and the stories related to it but also through the glimpses of the world of children we get in other novels such as 'The Dark Room' (1983) and 'The English Teacher' or through the childhood memories of 'The Guide' (1958). There are also a number of stories where a child's feelings or reactions are in focus. In "A shadow" a boy's sorrow for his dead film star father is lightly suggested in a mixture of his pride and enthusiasm, his longing to see his father's last film, his delighted recognition of details in it which remind him of their real-life relationship. It is not until the end, when the lights go up, that he realizes the finality of his parting from his father. The boy's emotions are set off by the different expression of his mothers mourning, the unbearable pain she suffers on seeing her husband on the screen.\textsuperscript{16}
In one of the longer stories "Uncle", the distance between the worlds of the children and adults is further emphasized when the main character as a huge grown-up man remembers his childhood with its delights, fears and mysteries, the enigma of his parents' fate and ugly rumours about his aunt and uncle, rumours that do not agree with his own experience of their loving care for him.\(^\text{17}\)

A special aspect of Narayan's treatment of children is the helpless, unreasonable love of fathers for their sons in 'The Financial Expert' (1952) and 'The Sweet Vendor', novels in which the sons bring about the catastrophe – if we are to speak in terms of tragedy. A similar urge to devoting all interest and care to the younger generation is found in "Hungry Child" which is a follow-up and ironic twist of the novel 'The Painter of Signs' (1977). The main character of this novel becomes emotionally involved with a poor, seemingly abandoned little boy and tries to satisfy all the latter's wishes for sweets and fun. He indulges in a father's joys and responsibilities in some kind of protest reaction to Daisy, the women who in her family-planning efforts wanted to deny him such feelings but then decided to leave him anyway.\(^\text{18}\) In the short story he is similarly deserted as the 'Orphan' rediscovers his family and is suddenly encompassed by their questions, scoldings and protests.
We may also compare with a story such as "Crime and Punishment" where the relationship between teacher and pupil, as in 'The Financial Expert', is turned upside down. Adults, however, become victims not only of the strong will of some children but also of their own sympathetic understanding of the younger generation. This is what happens in "Trail of the Green Blazer" as the pickpocket visualizes the grief of the unknown motherless child on being deprived of his balloon and exposed to his father's unreasonable anger, so vividly that he attempts to put the purse containing the balloon back and thus, risks being arrested himself.

Related to this area are stories about simple-minded adults with an innocent love for children. One of them is "Sweets for Angels" in which Kali still thinks of himself as an urchin "although to the outside world he appeared six feet tall." He is looking forward to the pleasure of offering sweets to the school-children he admires and delights in seeing. His generous offer is misunderstood as an attempt at kidnapping and he is exposed to severe mob violence. Another case is "A Willing Slave" with the Ayah who so completely enters the games and fantasies of her protégés that she renews her own infancy with each child of a large family. "Leela's Friend" is also a story demonstrating the devoted and
childish adult who is a little girl's best friend and companion but is harshly and unfairly treated by her parents and society in general.\textsuperscript{23}

A child's reactions when assessing what goes on among adults or the simple man's response to the complexities and deceptions of the men of the world-this is, in different forms, the issue of changing proportions, something essential in Narayan's works generally but perhaps more striking in the short stories where we can see this 'happening' over and over again. Variations are to be found in stories presenting the human world as perceived from the point of view of animals or vice versa. In another way proportions are important in stories like "Lawley Road" with, on the one hand, the political weight of Indian independence and, on the other, the lightness of the utterly human responses to it on the part of the municipality of Malgudi and its Municipal chairman in particular.\textsuperscript{24}

When the feasting and jubilation is over and everyone has been totally confused by the alteration of all the street names of the town, organized with the view to demonstrating the democratic and patriotic feelings of the citizens, those in authority proceed to try and get rid of a statue of a supposed imperialist tyrant, Sir Patrick Lawley. Now we are confronted with disproportion in a more physical sense, on the one hand
the human effort to remove the statue and, on the other, the incredible weight and bulk of it. As with the difficulty in getting rid of the road roller in the story "Engine Trouble" you get the impression of ants trying to displace a fortress. In the end it is through a natural catastrophe in the one case and in the other through a complete change and adaptation of the human mind that the problem is solved.

Another theme based on the concept of proportions or perspectives is the frustration of the individual when confronted by the administrative or judicial powers in society. In such cases Narayan's narratives turn into something like the works of Gogol or Kafka switched to a comic key. Randomly chosen examples could be the main character's endless difficulties with the lawyer in 'The Man Eater of Malgudi' (1962) or, among the stories, "Flavour of Coconut" about the catching and disposing of a little mouse, presented in a consistent use of images from court proceedings, or again "The Martyr's Corner" where the implied question is whether the martyr is a political leader killed in a fight or the little man who thereby is driven from his livelihood of making and selling snacks.

Many of these stories could rightly be called absurd but for the fact that the detachment of the author is so deeply sympathetic.
This chapter is merely a background to the treatment of Narayan's short stories with a few lines of investigation. There is a wealth of interesting aspects to be explored, not least in the field of a more thorough interrelation between the novels and the short stories. Narayan's short stories combine with the novels to present the world of Malgudi from different view points. These stories are devoted to the description or, maybe, the interpretation of India and the Indians in terms of the developing little town of Malgudi. If the novels provide the depth of this unified picture, the short stories are no less important in furnishing the breadth in an astonishing variety of subject matter, a diversity of characters and social areas as well as a whole gamut of modes and viewpoints. What appears more clearly and convincingly when reading a number of short stories than a handful of novels is the understanding of the human condition without a trace of sentimentality. Equally true of both kinds of Narayan's fiction is the sympathetic interest in the small, unimportant little man, the child or even the animal, an interest which never loses touch with the larger perspectives of life and which is continually refreshed from the sources of gentle irony.
Narayan's short stories appeared in leading Newspapers, Magazines and Journals like *The Hindu*, *Indian Thought*, *The Reporter*, *The New Yorker*, *In Vogue* and others and their length and technique testifying to their newspaper provenance. They represent the fictional documentation of Narayan's life as a reporter. All the stories belong to the native Indian soil and are redolent of its culture. Though his stories mainly depict the South Indian life, they clearly express Narayan's view of the world and those who live in it. Simple but fascinating plot, lively characterization gentle irony coupled with humour, strict economy of narration and beautiful simplicity of language are some of the most distinguishing features of his short stories.

Narayan approaches the Indian scene with no serious angle of study. Unlike Anand and Raja Rao, he is neither a committed writer nor a spiritualist. His delicate mixture of gentle irony and humour, warmth and sympathy, quiet realism and fantasy keep him poles apart from Anand's militant humanism and robust earthiness. Narayan takes life for whatever it is worth and presents familiar scenes which amuse or delight him. He never touches deeper and darker aspects of life. Wide range of characters, a rare touch of irony and humour, lively and engaging language are some of the main features of his stories which brought him
a popularity rarely enjoyed by the other Indian short story writers in English.

Like other major short story writers Narayan also comes under the influence of our ancient classic lore as well as Western masters. He shows a strong affinity to typically Indian tradition of story telling. In his own words, "After all, for any short story writer (Indian) the prototype still inevitably remains to be our own epics and the mythological stories." Abrupt starting, happy endings and the presence of omniscient narrator are some of the ancient Indian techniques found in his short stories. In some of his stories, the incidents are narrated by the character he calls *The Talkative Man*. The techniques of Narayan's stories is clearly influenced by those of foreign masters that he is interested in. He adopts his form and style from the West. Many of his stories have the expected kick or sting or swing in the end. As Dr. C. V. Venugopal says "…….They rather end the O'Henry way, with a sudden reversal of situation ….. a feature decidedly a strong point of the journalistic tradition." In such stories like "A Horse and Two Goats" and "Annamalai" Narayan truly evokes memories of great Russian master Chekov. He steers clear of a message or doctrine to his readers. He analyses individual feelings, and emotions and actions to explore
hidden human conflicts. Nowhere in his novels or short stories does he preach or pontificate.

R. K. Narayan is a regional realist. Malgudi is the figment of his fictional imagination as inspired by his muse. It is created and developed as a suitable and exotic setting for his novels and short stories. It is like Hardy's Wessex country and Nagarajan's Kedaram. In this connection, Prof. P. S. Sundaram says,

"Narayan's books spring from the mud and river of Malgudi. The scene is Malgudi, but the play is a human not merely an Indian drama."²⁹

In his novels and short stories, underneath the apparent change and human action the 'soul' of the place is witnessed. Just like Jane Austen he is content with his 'little bit of ivory' as his art is of resolved limitations and conscientious exploration. As K. R. S. Iyenger says,

"Malgudi and Malgudi humanity are the theme of these various fictional essays and each new novel (or a short story) is a jerk of the Kaleidoscope when a new engaging pattern emerges to hold our attention."³⁰
The familiar details of the early Malgudi are never neglected in the later works and absorbed in the story. In this delineation of Malgudi lies his greatest strength. He presents a microcosm of Indian life rarely touched by the impact of the English.

The hero of R. K. Narayan's novels and short stories is whom he calls in Next Sunday (On Humour) as the modern unknown warrior, who is 'the middle class common man'. The predominant middle class milieu in all his novels and short stories brings to him a widespread and universal appeal. Unlike Mulk Raj Anand and Manohar Malgonkar, Narayan is not interested in politics and sensationalism as the themes of his novels or short stories. In his interview to the Indian Express (March 29, 1961 - A peep into R. K. Narayan's Mind) he said:

"When art is used as a vehicle for political propaganda, the mood of comedy, the sensitivity of atmosphere, the probing psychological factors, the crisis in the individual soul and its resolution and above all the detached observation which constitutes the stuff of fiction is forced into the background."
His success lies in individualizing his characters and exposing the unnoticed, subtle possibilities of the average and the unremarkable. His strength of characterization lies in his thorough and close observation of life's little incidents, a healthy sense of humour coupled with irony and satire. He gently pushes the readers right into the midst of life that he is presenting. R. K. Narayan becomes what Raja Rao calls a true 'Upasaka' in having a strong desire to communicate and in achieving a mastery own the language to communicate effectively and forcefully. "Unless the author becomes an 'Upasaka' and enjoys himself in himself (which is Rasa) the eternality of the sound (Sabda) will not manifest itself and so you cannot communicate either and the world is nothing but a cacophony."32

Narayan's skilful use of language suits to his themes and techniques. As Iyenger puts it, "He wields so difficult and 'alien' a language like English with masterful ease and conveys the subtlest shades of feeling and thought."33

Narayan has inherited the charming volubility proverbially associated with a Tamil man. His thinking process is synchronized with the language he uses. He uses pure and limpid English, devoid of any suggestive epithets and intricate metaphors, easy and natural in its run
and tone. "His ultimate success is the clever blend of Indian words interspersed with the regular narrative without creating any jarring effect."

The two pre-requisites of a short story - saturation with the material and practice with the theme - are found in his works. Like the astrologer in 'An Astrologer's Day' he has a working analysis of mankind's troubles, hopes and aspirations and marriage, money and the tangles of human ties. Many of his stories are built round the principle of simple irony of circumstances, leading to shock of discovery or surprise or reversal at the end. 'An Astrologer's Day', 'Mother and Son', 'Missing Mail', 'Out of Business', 'Father's Help', 'Trial', 'Engine Trouble' are some of the many stories based on the principle of simple irony of circumstances. 'An Astrologer's Day' ends with the shock of the discovery that the Astrologer was himself the person who stabbed that man and then the irony of both his reading of the past and his advice to his client Gurunayak, is brought home. In 'Mother and Son', the fear of the mother is finally relieved on finding her son safe next morning. In the 'Missing Mail', 'Out of Business' the time-factor solves the problems. In 'Father's Help' the letter turns to be an instrument of punishment. "In Trial of the Green Blazer", Raju, the
pickpocket is unwittingly, for his gestures of goodness, caught red-handed. In *Engine Trouble*, the fortune of getting a lottery brings untold misfortune to the winner. A natural calamity, an earthquake, luckily solves the problem of the owner of the engine.

His 'Gandhiji's Appeal' where both the wife and husband part with their ornaments and money, reminds us of O'Henry's story 'The Gift of Magi'. In 'The Doctor's Word', the lie of a truthful Dr. Ramam saves the life of a patient to the astonishment of the doctor himself. In some of his stories, ironic implications ensure in a linked chain, enhancing comic effect. Tragic irony does not seem to appeal to Narayan as to the same extent as comic irony. Even in such stories as *Iswaran*, *Seventh House* - he prefers the gentler avocation of pathos to the sterner effects of tragedy. Humour and Pathos go hand in hand in some of his stories. "It is his sense of humour, his capacity to see the funny side of even the most tragic situation, his essential sanity and moderation which make the great writer he is." 35 *Lawley Road* has many such stories which depict the miseries of common people e.g. *Four Rupees*, *Wife's Holiday*, *The Mute Companions*, *Half Rupee Worth*, *Sweets for Angels*, *Leela's Friend* etc. Like his humour, his pathos is mild and
delicate. In many ways, he comes close to Charles Lamb with his restrained pathos.

In his collection of short stories 'A Horse and Two Goats', Narayan lift his oft-beaten track i.e. the brilliant tradition of his better known stories. For some, some of these stories are inexcusably lengthy and discursive. They feel that Narayan has lost his grip over the successful narrative technique he employed in his earlier stories. Variety is the spice of life and it is not good to find fault with a great writer for not being monotonous in his themes and techniques. Even in these stories, we find a rare and different kind of technique which bewitches the readers and keeps them spell-bound. Just like 'Generation gap', 'Communication gap' gives much scope to an imaginative writer to spin a beautiful story out of it. This communication gap depends on various factors and exists on different levels. This 'gap' may be a result of the difference in the linguistic, physical, intellectual or spiritual levels of the characters involved. Narayan makes use of this novel narrative technique in some of his novels and short stories with an amazing success. This collection of short stories 'A Horse and Two Goats' stands on a proof to Narayan's craftsmanship in exploring this technique to the maximum possible limits.
The title story 'A Horse and Two Goats' is based mainly on the communication gap resulting from the difference in the language of the Redman and Muni. An uneducated Indian goatherd thinks that the Redman (American visitor) wishes to buy his two goats, whereas the tourist bargains for the big clay horse in the shade of which Muni sits. In 'Uncle' this gap is willfully created first by the intelligent aunt, then by the boy and by his circumstances. 'In Annamalai', this communication gap is based on many factors like linguistic, sociological and intellectual levels of the servant and the master. Once the master comes to the conclusion, the only way to exist in harmony with Annamalai was to take him as he was - to improve or enlighten him would only exhaust the reformer and disrupt nature's design. Thus, we seem to notice some sort of innate mystery in nature itself in encouraging some kind of communication gap in our lives, only as if to add, some spice to our day-to-day dull routine. In "A Breath of Lucifer" Narayan achieves a major success in exploring the possibilities of utilizing the technique of communication gap based on non-visual perception on the part of the major character. Here it is apt to quote William Walsh, "Maintaining the delicate fabric of human relationship which are strained or tangled by
knots of incomprehension, is also the subject of the stories in the quartet."

In 'Nitya' (under the Banyan Tree and other stories) Narayan presents a fine story based on the principle of 'Generation Gap'. Nitya, a college student of twenty years, shows his unwillingness to offer his fine and well-cared for hair to fulfill a vow made by his parents, when he was two years old and stricken with whooping cough and convulsions. Nitya half convinced, goes to the place of worship. When all the arrangements are made for the tonsure ceremony, he argues with his parents, and priest and suddenly leaves to place and thus avoids a 'rape of his locks'. In this story, Narayan depicts the sentiments and pious feelings of the old parents and recklessness and atheistic temperament of students like Nitya. While the old generation respects and wishes to cling to certain custom and values, the young generation pooh-poohs them.

There are some interesting thematic inter-connections between some of Narayan's stories and his novels. The stories like 'Regal', 'A Hero', 'Father's Help' relating to boyhood exploits could be fitted into Swami and Friends; The White Flower employs the horoscope motif much in the same way 'The Bachelor of Arts' does; the incidents in the
'The Seventh House' are similar to the incidents in 'The English Teacher' and 'Four Rupees' repeats 'The Guide' theme on a different level.

Narayan has a wide variety of themes - from the innocent pranks of innocent children to serious communal riots. But however, his themes suffer from certain limitations and fail to give a comprehensive idea of the Indian Social Life. "At least in his short stories, Narayan seems to have shut himself up against certain disturbing, yet very real elements of life, such as the death of beloved, the loss of honour, or the heart-breaking pangs of infidelity." Being a regional realist he rarely steps out of his Malgudi. He rarely treats romantic love, politics, religion, struggle for existence and rural life etc. in his short stories. "Thus, they do not cover the entire gamut of human emotions and experience. In stories like 'A Willing Slave', 'The Axe', and animal stories like 'The Blind Dog', 'Attila', 'At the Portal' etc. based on psychology and observation he lags behind many great writers.

M. K. Naik feels "The intrusive presence of the author in the story ('At the Portal') further destroys all chances of an allegorical content".

These drawbacks or limitations are cleverly covered by his delightful sense of comedy, zest for life, artistic beauty, narration and
remarkable simplicity. Entertainment and readability are the keynotes of his stories. He resists moralizing which is the bone of many a good fiction writer like Anand and Raja Rao. We can conclude with Dr. C.V. Venugopal's compliment, "…….... and often, his sharply realized character more than compensate for his other defects." 39

Thus a unique type of subjectivity is found in R. K. Narayan’s short stories too. Quite a few things discussed in R. K. Narayan’s short stories have some connections with his personal life. Hence, his short stories also exhibit autobiographical elements profusely.
Reference:


2. This includes the stories in the first Malgudi Days (1941), 19 Stories' Dadu (1943), 17 Stories; Cyclone (1944), 18 Stories; An Astrologer's Day (1947), 30 Stories including 6 new ones; Lawley Road (1956), 33 Stories including 17 new ones; A House and Two Goats (1970), 5 Stories; the second Malgudi Days (1982), 32 Stories including 8 new ones. Old and New with 18 Stories form 1981 is covered by the other Collections. Cf: P. S. Sundaram, R. K. Narayan, Arnold Heinemann, (New Delhi & London, 1973), pp. 147-159 and Hilda Pontes, R. K. Narayan (A Bibliography of Indian Writers in English, I), concept publishing company, (New Delhi, 1983)


4. Reizada, p.82

7. Ibid., p. 97
8. Ibid., p. 97
9. Ibid., p. 98
10. Publish in Dodu (1943) and Lawley Road (1956).
14. Cyclone and Lawley Road.
15. Dodu" was published in Dodu (1943) and Lawley Road; "The Regal" in 'Cyclone' and Lawley Road.
16. Malgudi Days (1941) and Lawley Road and Malgudi Days (1982)
17. 'A Horse and Two Goats'.
19. 'An Astrologer's Day'.
20. Lawley Road and Malgudi Days (1982).
21. Lawley Road.

22. Malgudi Days (1941), Lawley Road and Malgudi Days (1982)


26. Both Stories in Lawley Road, "The Martyr's Corner" also in Malgudi Days (1982).


34. Novy Kapadia, Middle Class Milieu in R. K. Narayan's Novels, p. 158.

35. Sundaram, p. 139.


37. Venugopal, p. 81.


39. Venugopal, p. 89.

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Chapter - VI

CONCLUSION
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CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this thesis to study the Autobiographical elements in the novels of R. K. Narayan. His life and his experiences can be seen in his novels through the people of lower middle class who are bound by their traditions and superstitions. Thus he offers us a vivid and comprehensive picture of his own life at many times. Narayan's preoccupation is with the middle class, a relatively small part of an agricultural civilization, and the most conscious and anxious part of the population.

R. K. Narayan holds a unique place in Indo-Anglican fiction. He is unique on a number of counts. He avoids spectacular scenes and
sticks to the common place comedy of middle class life in South India. In appearance also he is just a commonplace ordinary man one of the millions of South Indian educated men. And yet this quiet simple man, with nothing spectacular about him, gradually rose to be one of the great, if not the greatest Indo-Anglian novelists. His novel "The Guide" became a screen success and fame and foreign travels kept him busily occupied; yet he finds time to write books on the lives of the simple unsophisticated souls of Malgudi-his dream town. If his wit and humour have given him an abiding place in the galaxy of Indo-Anglian writers, his Dickensian varieties of humorous characters have added to his attraction.

His creation, Malgudi, has become a household name with the Indian reading public. He is a regional novelist all of whose novels are based in the town of Malgudi, an imaginary town some where in south India. Arnold Bennett has written novels about the pottery Towns, Hardy's novels based in Wessex have become immortal. In the same manner, Narayan's Malgudi novels are the pioneering regional novels in Indo-Anglian fiction.

Narayan himself was a very sensitive and emotional man and so are his characters, who try to live independently. He describes their
family, their traditions, their ethics, and even religion in his novels which are very much parallel to his own upbringing and life.

School or College life is not sufficient for him. He goes beyond it. He writes about money-hunting people. He also describes the relationship between an orthodox Hindu father and a rebellious son. Narayan tries to write novels on "love theme"; he takes the great man of the age Mahatma Gandhi in the background of his novel and successfully gives a true picture of a young lover Sriram and Bharti, an ardent follower of Gandhiji.

Narayan's greatest achievement lies in his creation of Malgudi. Malgudi does not appear on any map; it is an imaginary town, yet Narayan immortalized Malgudi. It has everything, two schools-Albert Mission school and Board High school where Swami and his friends studied. The school boys are of the great cricketers like Bradman and Tate, and compare themselves with them. There are fanatic teachers like Ebenezer. Malgudi has a town hall. There is the Albert Mission College, where Chandran (The Bachelor of Arts) studied, there are peons like Aziz who would not allow Chandran to enter the Principal's chamber without a tip and there is a professor like Krishnan (The English Teacher) who is fully devoted to his work, and later on resigns from the
college just to join a school similarly there are different landmarks in all
his novels which give its significance to Malgudi.

Dr. Iyengar presents a new and interesting theory about Malgudi. He writes, Malgudi is the real 'hero' of the novels and the many short
stories: that underneath the seeming change and the human drama there
is something, the 'soul' of the place, that defies, or embraces, all change
and is triumphantly and unalterably itself. All things change but the old
landmarks – the Sarayu, the Hills, the jungles, the groves remain. "The
One remains, the many change and pass.

He was attached to Indian traditional way of life. Narayan writes
about the superstitions that prevail in the traditional families of South
India like his. For example in "The Bachelor of Arts" Chandran and
Bharati's marriage is not possible just because their horoscopes do not
match with each other and their parents are not prepared to grant the
marriage. Just like what happened with him. In "Waiting for the
Mahatma" we find that Sriram's grand mother is not allowed to enter
the village, only because people fear that once she was taken as dead
they could not allow her to return from a funeral pyre. And hence she is
kept out of the village. Raju the railway guide, "The Guide" rises to a
high place in society but lacks culture, civilization and sophistication.
He just makes a mistake, and falls down and his return to prosperity is impossible. Similarly in "The Financial Expert" (1952) we have Margayya who comes to the same end and Vasu "The Man Eater of Malgudi" comes down because of bad company.

Narayan can be called the novelist of the common man. All his comedies have “The undertone of sadness”. Their gentle irony and absence of condemnation remind us how difficult comedy is in the west today. Comedy needs a strong framework of social convention with which the author sympathies but which he does not share.

Narayan has a particular style, the plot moves in a circle; the hero comes back to his original position at the end of the story for eg. Chandran in "The Bachelor of Arts" (1937) is frustrated in the beginning and leaves the house, becomes a Sadhu but as he realizes the reality, he returns home, and marries the girl suggested by his parents. Narayan's heroes are always very simple and unsophisticated; they lack the basic education and culture. For eg. Savitri "The Dark Room" leaves her house because of her husband's attitude towards her and his affair with Santha Bai. But finally she returns home when she feels the pull of love of her children.
Narayan's heroes have some attachment also; for example Raju in "The Guide" is attached towards money than towards Rosie and her art. There is also a mixture of cunning and folly for eg. Margayya and Mr. Sampath are all cunning and basically rogues, but perfect in their profession.

R. K. Narayan in most of his novels reflects himself and even his experiences, outlook and beliefs are highlighted and so this may be one of the reasons that his novels have heroes and not heroines. He presents women characters only to support the main characters, and they do not have much importance in the novels. For eg. Rosie, Bharati, Daisy.

Narayan's heroes enjoy a sluggish tempo of life, people have time to talk and waste, they have time for friendship. For example In "The Painter of Signs", Raman does not care for his painting business but moves with Daisy, just to give her company although she is busy with her work. In "Waiting for the Mahatma" also Sriram is aimlessly doing nothing. When we read "Mr. Sampath", "The Vendor of Sweets", "The Guide", "The Financial Expert", "We enter an exotic world of half-headed or half-hearted dreamers, artists, financiers, speculators, twisters, adventurers, eccentrics, cranks, cinema stars,
Sanyasis with the action rarely straying outside Malgudi, the familiar scene of Narayan's novels.

This thesis, marked by vigorous, insightful and comprehensive scrutiny, reads like a paradigmatic work on Narayan and reveals the way to his life. The doors are open to the local of Malgudi which is very much his province, the intricate yet delicate blend of his humor with sadness, his narrativity and self-reflexivity, his problematization and reconstruction of traditional Indian values and his profound perception of the ordinary are thrown light upon. The data is not presented in a photographic way; the exclusion of certain episodes from his life makes the writer emphasize certain other events.

In this way Narayan's fiction seems synonymous with his life.

Several dissertations on R. K. Narayan have been written dealing with different aspects of his writing. Here, in this dissertation, an attempt has been made to explore to what extent the autobiographical material forms a part of his fictional world and how.

Since this aspect has not been taken up, I decided to undertake it with a view to examining this autobiographical material that contribute so extensively to his writing.

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