Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Indians have to wait for the novel, to be called properly, until the Western impact on them and their culture, first as a functional, in the development of formal written prose, and then as an artistic medium of expression. On the arrival of Christian missionaries in India, Indian scholars had translated the Bible into the living languages of India, in this process, the prose medium engendered into currency of official use to keep records. Such renderings took the form of adaptation, of which the next step was the composition of original works under the inspiration or imitation of Western models. The reciprocal concern in English language and in the regional languages has been more intimate and intentional than such influences in the fields of poetry or drama. That is why novels have been published on an ample scale in the many languages both regional and national of the country, and also in English. It has, of course, been facilitated by the comparative ease which a novel, distinct from poetry and drama are to be translated in countless regional languages of India. It was in Bengal that the literary renaissance first manifested itself, and thereafter, immediately the signs of new life were to be seen in all other parts of India comprising Mysore, Madras, Mumbai, Pune and etc. The first novel Alaler Gharer Dulal (Spoilt Son of a Rich Family) was written in Bengali, published in 1858. It was a pioneering work, in the history of novel in India.

However, the real commitment of the novel was started with the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee whose first effort in the English language was Rajmohan’s Life (1864). Then it was followed by Durgeshnandini, Krishnakantor Uyil (‘Krishnakanta’s will’), Anandmath, Devi Chaudhurani and other novels appeared between 1866 to 1896; originally written in Bengali and later appeared in the English versions. Meanwhile, Raj Lakshmi Devi’s The Hindu Wife was published in 1876, H. Dutt’s Bijoy Chand in 1888. Today these and other novels written in English remained no more than an antiquarian
or the books of historical interest which once accelerated the development of Indian novel, a huge platform of the literary world. (1-9 Singh)

Novel as a genre, in India, was established during third decade of the 20th century. Novel was immediately confronted by complicated problems such as to reproduce life objectively, to portray reality in the context of certain historical period, and reveal human psyche. A solution to these problems lay on the shoulders of the eminent novelists like R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and others; their contribution is highly appreciated by critics and readers. In fact, R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao are the triple pillars of Indian novel. Novel not only rested on them in India, but they gave a height to it, which remained unachievable till today to the Indian novelists.

R.K. Narayan has been regarded as one of the best Indian writers in English literature. The adjective Indian first needs to be understood on several levels. Elena Kalinnikova says that: “Narayan is neither Anglo-Indian nor Indo-Anglian, he is very much an Indian both in spirit and thoughts” (Elena 72-73). He dealt with great themes with simplicity. Ved Mehta has rightly said of Narayan, “He seems to carry his home, his cosmos, on his back, as did the ageless Swamis” (qtd. in. Singh 8). Narayan writes about India, for Indians; in this sense he is an Indian. His novels reveal Indian ways of life, along with it the culture and tradition of India.

As a matter of fact, Narayan writes for the Indians not for the foreign readers, though he is published abroad and widely read abroad. He does not choose his themes nor distort them in order to please Western readers. Reading the novels of R.K. Narayan’s is both a matter of artistic interest and spiritual passage through India. The journey introduces the reader with so many typical Indian men, women and children with all their beliefs, myths, rituals and customs which are very common in India.

Here it is worth to quote Aijaz Ahmad, an authority to make the concept clear about Indian Literature. Aijaz Ahmad, in his great work Theory Classes Nations Literatures rightly says that:

At some level, of course, every book written by an Indian, inside the country or abroad, is part of a thing called ‘Indian Literature’. But the
institutions that could produce a coherent and unified knowledge of the various language-literature clusters in India, either in a strictly comparatist framework or as a unified, albeit multilingual object of knowledge,… (245)

In this sense the works of Narayan are very much Indian, as well as they are a great source of pleasure and knowledge about life and India. The writers like Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao also gave a dimension to the knowledge of India and its customs and culture. Writers like E. M. Forster, Rudyard Kipling also wrote about India, but their views are different. One can find a type of inferior and subaltern feeling about India and Indians while reading the works of these foreign writers. A reader meets a different kind of India as imagined and understood by the English people, but the fact is this that is not the real India, but one dimension of multidimensional, multi-coloured, multilingual incredible India. In the introduction to The Bachelor of Arts (12th Reprint) Graham Greene notes that India portrayed by Kilping is a romantic playground of the Raj. He is touched and moved to tears by Kipling’s story ‘Without Benefit of Clergy’. But he says that he cannot believe in Kipling’s Indian characters even Kim leaves him sceptical. “Kipling romanticises the Indian as much as he romanticises the administrators of Empire” (Intro. to BA. Greene). Further Greene says that E. M. Forster is tender and funny about his friend the Maharaja of Dewas and severely ironic about the English in India, but real India escapes from him also. Greene says that: “He wrote of A Passage to India; “I tried to show that India is an unexplainable muddle by introducing an unexplainable muddle.” No one could find a second home in Kipling’s India or Forster’s India. (Intro. to BA. Greene)

Graham Greene is an Englishman, but he wrote the above lines very objectively and without any pride or prejudice. Though he is an Englishman, he did not praise Kipling and Forster, the British writers. Further Greene says, “Perhaps no one can write in depth about a foreign country—he can only write about the effect of that country on his own fellow countrymen, living as exiles, or government servants, or visitors. He can only “touch in” the background of
the foreign land” (Intro. to BA. Greene). Whereas while talking about Narayan Greene says:

There are writers—Tolstoy and Henry James to name two—whom we hold in awe, writers—Turgenev and Chekhov—for whom we feel a personal affection, other writers whom respect—Conrad for example—but who hold us at a long arm’s length with their “courtly foreign grace”. Narayan (whom I don’t hesitate to name in such a context) more than any of them wakes in me a spring of gratitude, for he has offered me a second home. Without him I could never have known what it is like to be Indian. (Intro. to BA. Greene)

Through the works of R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao one gets a better vision of the real India. Some scholars raise doubt about the very existence of Indian literature itself. To make the point more clear here it worth to quote once again Aijaz Ahmad an eminent scholar of this age.

There is doubtless the generally undisputed idea that an ‘Indian Literature’ exists, whether definable and quantifiable or not in generic or any other terms, one whose unity resides in the common national origins of its authors and the common civilizational ethos of the Indian people. (Aijaz 256)

Why Indian literature is a matter of debate, though India is such a big continental country; the country which has such a glorifying history and rich culture. The reason is that India remained under the rule of the British and they consider Indians as savage and they came here to civilize Indians. It is simply a colonial attitude of the British people of looking towards the other countries. These people purposefully neglected that the Indus Civilization is one of the most old civilization of the world, far old than the British civilization. Narayan tries to give the realistic picture of real India by using English simply as a medium of expression. In this sense also Narayan is very much Indian.

R. K. Narayan, in his first novel Swami and Friends, comments on the matter of civilization; in a very artistic manner, through the speech of “an earnest-looking man clad in khaddar.” The occasion is the protest against the arrest of Gauri Sankar, a prominent political worker of Bombay, on 15th of August 1930. By chance Swaminathan and his friend Mani are there on the
bank of the river and they listen to the speech. The leader in the khaddar says to the people of Malgudi to remember the great heritage.

Have we forgotten the glorious periods of Ramayana and Mahabharata? This is the country that has given the world a Kalidasa, a Buddha, a Sankara. Our ships sailed the high seas and we had reached the height of civilization when the Englishman ate raw flesh and wandered in the jungles, nude. But now what are we? (SF 94-95 ch.12)

The speaker pauses for a moment and says on the inspiration of the moment, till he gathers his thoughts, and again he continues: “we are slaves of slaves…Just think for a while…” (SF 95 ch.12). Then he makes a geographical comparison of India and England. He says England is no bigger than our Madras Presidency; and tells the people gathered there that India is as big as Europe minus Russia. Thereafter he makes the comparison of the population of India and England, it is three hundred and thirty-six millions of India, and the population of England is a handful. The speaker asks the people that if such is the past of India, if such is the demographic and geographic superiority of India, then why Indians should bow in homage before the Englishman? Thereafter Narayan gives a touch of light humour to the speech of the speaker, as he is the master of it, and as the novel is about the children. Humorously he says, “Let every Indian spit on England, and the quantity of the saliva will be enough to drown England…” (SF 95 ch.12). In this sense Narayan is an Indian; and he and other like him have been creating Indian English literature.

R. K. Narayan is low on melodrama and high on humour and irony. He is a marvellous story teller, who is liked by every reader. His full name is Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayanswami. What a long name it is! The first initial of his name ‘Rasipuram’ represents his ancestral village and second initial ‘Krishnaswami’, the name of his father, who is a school teacher (Singh 5-6). It is difficult to remember for anyone such a long name; his English friend Graham Greene shortened it to R. K. Narayan, while publishing his first novel *Swami and Friends*. He was born on 10 October 1906 in Madras, British India and died on 13 May 2001 in India. He lived very long life of 94 years. His
childhood in Madras provided him much capital for his creativity in his career. He became a graduate from Maharaja College of Mysore with a degree of Bachelor of Arts in the year 1930. He made an attempt to teach at a school for a short period of time and later on turned to writing as a full time profession. Young Narayan never lost contact with this quality of experience and even as old he kept returning, imaginatively, to the scene of his childhood.

The first phase of Narayan as a novelist started with *Swami and Friends* and closed with *The English Teacher*. The three novels of this period are written before independence; and the location of action projected in these novels is limited because it is related to the personal experiences of Narayan’s school and college days and his married life. As the experience of young Narayan was very limited both as a human being and as a writer, so the location of action projected in his novels; but in the course of time his experience of both life and writing increased, and so the location of his novels.

The novel, *The English Teacher* brought a turning point in the career of Narayan as a novelist. It is important to note here that *The English Teacher* established him as a novelist, who is capable of handling both the comic and tragic elements with the same ease. *The English Teacher* is one of the autobiographical novels of Narayan, which is dedicated to his beloved wife Rajam. H. Pontes in his article *R.K. Narayan Biography* gives detailed information about Narayan’s life and career. In 1933, Narayan met Rajam, a fifteen year old girl and fell in her love. He managed to marry her despite of many astrological and financial obstacles, the references to these things are found in *The Bachelor of Arts* which makes the novel autobiographical. Unfortunately Rajam died of typhoid in the year 1939 by leaving a three year old daughter for Narayan to take care. Her death was a great shock for Narayan, he remained depressed and uprooted for a long period. (H. Pontes) The loss and suffering of Narayan is personal and his own experience is the basis of his novel *The English Teacher*; yet the greatness of Narayan lies in transcending his personal experience in a wider frame-work of spiritualism and divinity.
The English Teacher completes the trilogy of novels which consists of Swami and Friends and The Bachelor of Arts respectively. These three novels constitute a milestone in the growth of Malgudi and in the long journey of Narayan as a writer. One common thing in these novels is that these three novels deal with the theme of education. Swaminathan as a school boy in Swami and Friends, Chandran as a college student in The Bachelor of Arts and Krishna as a teacher of English in The English Teacher, explore the education system in India. In Swami and Friends Swaminathan is seen as most critical about the education system in India. Through this novel Narayan tries to attack on the Christian missionary teachers, who had been trying to inculcate how their religion and Christ are greater than the Hindu religion and gods. The English Teacher is a powerful attack on the education system in British India. Narayan attacks the British education system with the help of two characters, Krishna and the headmaster.

Narayan is a well-known craftsman; his novels are marked by certain peculiarities in the structure of plot. They are governed and shaped by the particular milieu and background of a South Indian Community which is deeply rooted in the cultural tradition. His characters, especially protagonists return to the normal life that is the traditional pattern of life which underlines cyclical pattern of the plot construction of his novels. Narayan used simple and episodic plot in his earlier novels. The plot of Swami and Friends is simple. Wandering Swami is presented directly in the novel. The structure of plot of The Bachelor of Arts is classical. It has a good beginning, better middle and better end. It is episodic in nature. The actions and events are divided into different stages of Chandran’s life. Those are: Chandran’s college life, his love at first sight and his firm decision to marry Malathi by revolting against the traditional norms of Malgudi, as he says to his mother, “I don’t care. I shall marry this girl and no one else” (BA 69 ch. 8). His leaving for Madras and wandering as a sanyasi; and finally Chandran’s return to his parent’s house in Malgudi, with a lot of experience which is enough to bring a sense that one has to finally surrender to the customs; and his marriage with Susila, a girl of his parent’s choice.
The plot of *The English Teacher* is divided into two equal parts. The intimate relationship between Krishna and Susila is presented in the first part of the novel, and it ends with the death of Susila. Graham Greene says, “In his third book, *The English Teacher*, the marriage ends in death and Narayan shows how far he has grown as a writer to encompass the sadness and loss” (Intro. to BA. Greene). The second half of the novel is very interesting; Krishna spends his time by establishing communication with the spirit of his dead wife Susila. R. K. Narayan deals with various themes like human relationships, illusion versus reality, conflict between tradition and modernity, return of the native and the theme of rebellion in *The English Teacher*. A close study of these themes shows that the theme of human relationship has originated from the Indian tradition; the rebellion is realized as a deviation from the tradition and in the course of rebellion there runs the theme of illusion versus reality.

*Swami and Friends* elaborates the examples of Swaminathan’s rebellious deeds. Swaminathan’s rebellion is considered as Narayan’s technique to present the world of Swami’s illusion. The theme return of the native is indicated by Swaminathan’s understanding of the reality and moving towards normal state of the mind. He presents the theme of mother-son and father-son relationship within the frame-work of Malgudi tradition. Again in the second novel, *The Bachelor of Arts* Narayan explores the father-son and mother-son relationship. In it the importance is given to understand parent and child relation. Chandran’s mother is very traditional type of woman whereas his father is as traditional as his mother is. Before considering their natures, it becomes essential to take into consideration the educational background of the two. Moreover, in the novel, Narayan does not mentions anything about the education of Chandran’s mother, whereas Chandran’s father is a retired District Judge; he is not a very forward type of man, but it is clear that he is not conservative like Chandran’s mother. He is traditional in the sense that while maintaining relationship he wants to respect rules and traditional values.

Ordinary talk at home was becoming rarer every day. It was always a debate on Custom and Reason. His father usually remained quiet during these debates. One of the major mysteries in life for Chandran
at this period was the question as to which side his father favoured. He did not appear to place active obstacles in Chandran’s way, but he did little else. He appeared to distrust his own wisdom in these matters and to have handed the full rein to his wife. Chandran once or twice tried to sound him and gain him to his side; but he was evasive and non-committal. (BA 70 ch.8)

Chandran’s love at the first sight with Malathi and his decision to marry her by violating traditional norms underlines his rebellion in the novel. After getting disappointment in love, he leaves Malgudi and reaches Madras to take some harsh experiences of life. When he comes back to Malgudi, he emerges as a sane man, now able to understand well the illusionary nature of infatuation to which he considers as love. The normalcy returns in Chandran’s life when he returns home and settles down by marrying Susila, a girl of his parent’s choice. “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” (BA 164 ch. 18). His marriage with Susila is a traditional arranged marriage.

Comparatively the plot of The Dark Room is well organized and its structure is episodic. Triangular relationship between Ramani, Savitri and Shantabai is presented by Narayan in it. The plots of, all the novels of Narayan are shaped and governed by myth and legends with the background of South Indian community. In his childhood Narayan’s grandmother Parvathi told him so many mythological stories; the impact of these stories is very deep on Narayan, as a result of it, there are so many mythological references in his novels. The community in Narayan’s novels is from Malgudi. It is the location which firmly establishes a cultural tradition. It also shows the impact of Hindu myths and customs on Narayan. It is true that he writes with objectivity, but one finds the customs and the myths that Narayan listened from his grandmother imbibed so deep in him that they became a part of his life and thinking.

Narayan has presented the theme of husband-wife relationship in The Dark-Room. The arrival of Shantabai in the married life of Ramani and Savitri
disturbs their domestic harmony of Ramani and Savitri which leads to the theme of rebellion. Husband Ramani, his wife Savitri and the other woman in their married life Shantabai become the agents of rebellion in the triangle. In the introduction to The Bachelor of Arts, Graham Greene says, “In The Dark Room the screw of unhappiness is twisted further, the killing of love more tragic than the death of love” (Intro. to BA. Greene). The extramarital relationship between Ramani and Shantabai is against the tradition. Through such type of extramarital relationship, such men and women try to get love and peace, but in fact, it remains only illusion for them. The married life is the real life and the relation outside marriage is the unreal real. The theme of illusion versus reality is reflected through the deeds of these characters. In fact, Savitri’s leaving of her house in despair because of the extramarital relationship of her husband, for committing suicide by throwing herself into River Sarayu, is an act of rebel, which is temporary.

Narayan’s characters are not strong enough to face the reality or to change the situation by fighting against it. They are weak and submissive, they rebel, but their rebel is also not strong. They do not have that much potential to set the things right. So finally they come back to home and surrender to the tradition. Savitri comes back to home, like that of Chandran, which symbolizes the theme: return of the native. Narayan’s world of values as reflected in The English Teacher through the theme of husband-wife relationship. The domestic harmony establishes at the end of the novel, but at the cost of Savitri’s forceful, unwilling surrender to the tradition as there is no any other alternative left with her, such type of settlement seems correct from traditional point of view, but from modern point of view it is a forced act, where a person accepts the tradition as he or she is left with no any other option.

Narayan’s novels present the truthful picture of the middle class in the Indian society, and his characters are chosen from the same class. Almost all the characters of Narayan are the followers of the Malgudi custom. They are strongly imbibed with the tradition; they cannot think apart from the customs or outside the framework of the tradition, and it restricts their growth. Their thinking is governed by the same customs and the traditions; so, for them
thinking apart from this, is like swimming against the flow of water. Fortunately some of them try to do so, but only for a little period of time and finally by accepting the defeat, flow with the flow of water. In fact, it is the greatest defeat of the characters, if they would have died in the attempt, it could have given some new meaning to their efforts, but their surrender itself is the clear indication that it is the only correct thing. From this point of view the customs and the traditions are the elite things, though abstract, and the characters are the subalterns, though concrete, and real human beings. The customs and the traditions are more strong then the characters. It seems that the customs and traditions are not made for human beings, but the human beings are made for the customs and traditions.

In the early novels, Narayan dealt with simple, modest, loving and obedient characters. The life in these novels is not complex and complicated but simple. As it was the early and developing stage of Narayan complex and complicated neither plot nor characters are seen. Rather the characters are innocent and they are without any ambition, enjoying simple ups and downs of life, with a presumption that they are the great one. The relationship between the characters is not governed and shaped by any complication. The base of these characters is the native cultural. The domestic harmony in the family is governed by religious activity, and not by any other act of these characters. The happiness of these characters depends on the gods and fate and not on their acts. There is a devotion and dedication for each other in the family, which tightens the family bonds. It is because of this bond Chandran, Savitri come back to their homes, and Krishna continues his love even after the death of his wife.

Narayan’s novels are described by some critics as simple. In his novels the descriptions are clear, and the emphasis is on direct and intelligible storytelling, invoking a cast of vivid characters. The modern readers, who are accustomed to artifice and allusion, may feel the novels slightly dated, yet it is this quality of simplicity and directness which makes his novels fine works of art. Narayan is a storyteller first and foremost; it is a characteristic which puts him in the rank of the great nineteenth century novelists as well as those
tenth century writers, such as Somerset Maugham, who believed that the
novelist’s business is to narrate. While making a comparison of Kipling and
Forster with Narayan, in the introduction to *The Bachelor of Arts* Graham
Greene says that he feels that Narayan’s novels offer him India as a second
home where as Kipling and Forster fail to do so. His storytelling sometimes has
a rambling flavour, sometimes the narration shifts from the main point and
again it comes on the track again. But this flaw in Narayan’s writings is not
necessarily a flaw; in real lives people often wander aimless, and while reading
such lives in literature a reader easily recognizes the authenticity of Narayan’s
novels. There is nothing false in the world created by Narayan on the contrary;
these novels convey the taste and texture of India with vividness which strikes
the reader as utterly true.

Narayan has described a major part of his life in *The English Teacher* so
thoroughly that it will be very difficult for him to describe the same so vividly
once again. Out of all the novels of Narayan, *The English Teacher* is more
autobiographical in content and very little part of it is fiction than any other
novel. The whole story of the sickness and death of Krishna’s wife is due to
typhoid; and the desolation that follows, with a child to look after, and the
psychic adjustments, all are based on Narayan’s personal experience. After the
publication of the novel in 1945, Narayan emerged as a writer of greater
maturity and confidence. The autobiographical elements which were often seen
in his earlier novels became less prominent, allowing him to develop his
characters more freely. It will not be wrong to say that with the publication of
*The English Teacher* Narayan emerged as a more mature novelist. And the art
of writing novel of Narayan went on developing with each successive novel
thereafter. (Smith x-xi)

Sometimes some moments come in the life of a man which change his
entire life. Narayan also witnessed the same type of moment in his life. The
year 1930 witnessed the breakthrough creative event in Narayan’s life; he
visualized a small railway station and suddenly its name came in his mind and
Malgudi was born. Quite literally, the Malgudi railway station put Narayan
and, in a sense, Indian fiction in English on the right track of writing. Narayan
always saw the birth of Malgudi as the pivotal moment of his writing life. In the introduction to *The Bachelor of Arts*, Graham Greene says, “I was able to find a publisher for *Swami*, and Malgudi was born, the Mempi Forest and Nallappa’s Grove, the Albert Mission School, Market Road, the River Sarayu—all that region of the imagination which seems to me now more familiar than Battersea or the Euston Road” (Intro. to BA. Greene).

Here is the imaginary map of the fictitious town Malgudi. This map of Malgudi is created by Dr. James M. Fennelly from the descriptions present in novels and short stories of Narayan. This map is made available on internet but it is not clear; and it is black and white, but it gives a better understanding of Malgudi. Not only this, but the map also shows the interest with which the foreign readers and scholars read Narayan. Another illustrational colourful map of Malgudi is created by Lavanya Nayadu. He is a Kolkata based illustrator. He created the map for Penguin Puffin Publication’s *Malgudi School Days* project. A close study of both the maps shows that Lavanya Nayadu might have taken inspiration for making this map from Dr. James M. Fennelly. One thing which needs to be mentioned here is that the map created by Lavanya Nayadu is more clear and coloured.
It is essential to talk about Malgudi, a wonderful imaginary creation of R. K. Narayan. The setting of short stories and the novels of Narayan is Malgudi. It is a state of mind; hunting down Narayan’s fictional town. It is inspired by Narayan’s ideological concept. Malgudi, a small place that appeared in the history of Indian English literature in the year 1935, began to grow novel after novel of Narayan. Its idea came in Narayan’s mind on the day of Vijayadashami. Here it becomes important to quote Graham Greene, for he is the man who introduced Malgudi to the world. In the introduction to *The Bachelor of Arts*, twelfth reprint of 1992, Graham Greene says, “In the eleven novels which extended from *Swami and Friends* to *The Painter of Signs* Narayan has never, I think, stayed far from Malgudi, though a character may sometimes disappear forever into India, like Rajam, friend of the schoolboy Swami, simply by taking a train. Year by year Narayan has peopled Malgudi with characters we never forget” (Intro. to BA. Greene). These words of Greene not only focus on Malgudi, but also on Narayan and his characters.

Malgudi is such a wonderful place where every literary traveller wishes to travel again and again. Malgudi, a small place where some people live happily, grow; and gradually shops, temples, theatre, coffee house, restaurant, lodge, post office, play grounds, town hall, municipal co-operation, railway station, police station, tennis court, circuit house known as Glass House, tourists, printing machines, *sanyasis*, and finally the Mahatma and the foreign visitors James J. Malone, from California some press and TV reporters from America as in *The Guide*, began to appear in Malgudi. In this way Malgudi which was a small town, known only to a few people, now became a familiar town even for the foreigners. The growth of Malgudi is not forced one but very natural and gradual; and as an artistic need of Narayan.

The map of Malgudi was very easy in the very first novel of Narayan i.e. *Swami and Friends*, in the course of Narayan’s literary journey it becomes densely populated and complex. In *Swami and Friends*, Malgudi is neither a village nor a city, but a town of modest size. With each new novel it grows in
importance and gains in definition. It forms the setting to all novels of R. K. Narayan.

Malgudi is a metaphor for India. Like any other town in South India, it is a typical South Indian town. And it has been presented in his works vividly and realistically. Even its past history is given in the successive novels of Narayan. Malgudi evolved through the various works of R.K. Narayan, slowly evolves in the mind of a reader after reading one after another works of Narayan.

The major landmarks of Malgudi are the River Sarayu, Nallappa’s Mango Grove, Mempi Forest, Trunk Road to Trichinopoly, the Market Road known as the life line of Malgudi and the railway station. There is a banyan tree, a station master, and two trains a day; one comes and one goes. The natural location of Malgudi is very good. The River Sarayu is to the North of Lawley Extension. It is the same river that becomes the witness of so many events in the history of Malgudi. “On the 15th of August 1930, about two thousand citizens of Malgudi assembled on the right bank of Sarayu to protest against the arrest of Gauri Sankar, a prominent political worker of Bombay” (SF 94 ch. 12). It is on the bank of River Sarayu Chandran meets Malathi for the first time. Savitri, a silent sufferer of the dark room, runs from the house in tears to throw herself in the same River Sarayu; it is the same River Sarayu that keeps alive Savitri and puts in the hands of Mari. The people of Malgudi gather on the bank of River Sarayu to listen the speech of the Mahatma in Waiting for the Mahatma. There is Mempi mountain range, valleys and forest of Mempi to the North side of Malgudi like the Himalayan mountain range to the North of India. The source of River Sarayu is also there on the Mempi Peaks likes that of Gangotri in the Himalaya. There is a bungalow known as Mempi Peak House where Marco stays in The Guide. People visit to Mempi Peaks for different reasons as Raju, the tourist guide in The Guide tells, “Tastes, as in food, differ also in sightseeing. Some people want to be seeing a waterfall,” some people want to go to the source of River Sarayu (Guide 62 ch.5).

There is Albert Mission Schools and Albert Mission College along with the Board High School and a local private school of the headmaster as seen in
novels *Swami and Friends* and *The English Teacher*. There are different streets and roads in Malgudi such as Ellamma Street, Mountain Road, Tricy Trunk Road to the outer side of Malgudi and Sarayu Street, Vinayaka Street, Kabir Lane, Market Road, Anderson Lane, Racecourse Road. Apart from the main town there are some extensions to the town Malgudi such as Lawley Extension and South Extension. These extensions to the main town show the new growth of Malgudi. “Lawley Extension (named after the mighty engineer Sir Frederick Lawley, who was at one time the Superintending Engineer for Malgudi Circle), which consisted of about fifty neat bungalows, mostly occupied by government officials. The trunk road to Trichinopoly passed a few yards in front of these houses” (SF 24 ch. 3).

The places like Market Road, Anderson Lane, Lawley Extension and South Extension are the rich localities or the elite places of Malgudi, the places like Sarayu Street, Vinayaka Street, Kabir Lane are the local middleclass people’s localities and the place where the Mahatma prefers to stay i.e. the locality of the untouchables, away from the town is the subaltern place of Malgudi. Perhaps because of Madras, the nearest big city there is no industrial growth in Malgudi. The presence of Albert Mission School, Albert Mission College, Ellamma Street and Anderson Lane show impact of the British on Malgudi. Finally it will not be wrong to say that Malgudi is the only character in the works of Narayan which changes, but the changes that take place in Malgudi are the changes that were taking place in the country as a whole during the stirring sixty years, from 1935 to 1996. Narayan’s treatment is so convincing and vivid that the reader begins to feel that whatever happens in Malgudi happens everywhere.

While talking about Narayan, it became indispensable to talk about Malgudi. There is no single critic on Narayan, who did not talk extensively about Malgudi, and Alexander Mc Call Smith is no exception to it. The way in which Smith focuses of Malgudi, gives better understanding of Malgudi. While talking about Malgudi he says that it provises the strong sense of place which suffuses these books. “This is India distilled – an urban India, but one in which a hinterland of jungle, of small villages, of wide plains is still present” (Smith
When the readers read the works of Narayan they feel that they are there. This powerful impression is created in the minds of the readers not because of the detailed descriptions of certain buildings or the countryside, but by the characters themselves and the suggestive nature of their thought and their speeches.

R. K. Narayan, the prolific writer, wrote many short stories, articles and novels. It will be convenient to study the novels of R. K. Narayan in three parts. The early novels of Narayan are a sociological study of people’s manners and mentality in pre-independence days. *Swami and Friends* (1935) highlights the existing manners as well as the impact of National Movement on common people. As a man grows and undergo experiences of life; he develops, the same is true about Narayan as a writer and his novels. In his early novels one can see the development of Narayan as a writer. Thereafter he develops as a more mature and confident vision which is later novels. In the novels like *Swami and Friends* and *The Bachelor of Arts*, Narayan was a beginner as a novelist; but later on when he developed as a writer his art of novel writing began to develop which is seen in his novels after novels. (Smith xii)

No doubt there is a great deal of light and freedom in these two above mentioned charming early novels, then in his third novel, *The Dark Room*, one enters into graver and more disturbing territory of life i.e. marriage life. It is the common theme of three of the novels in this collection. In *The Dark Room*, which Narayan himself described as an early women’s liberation novel, it is shown, how the traditional Hindu marriage could trap women in complete subservience. Savitri marries to a tin-god husband, Ramani. He runs a branch office of an insurance agency. He has a car; and it shows that he is a local rich man. Here it is worth to note that the novel is published in the year 1938. Ramani’s affair with Shantabai brings one more twist in the story, and makes life intolerable for Savitri.

It seems that the mythological story of Savitri was there in the mind of Narayan while choosing this name Savitri for the wife of Ramani. As per Hindu mythology Savitri is that woman who brought back the soul of her husband from Yama, the God of Death. Such and many other stories are there
that tell and describe in detail how a wife should behave and live a life where as a man or husband is free to behave as per his will and wish. The conduct of this affair between Ramani and Shantabai is artistically described by Narayan. At the end of the day Savitri, driven to an attempt at suicide as the only way out of her intolerable situation, returns to the matrimonial home, the only ultimate destination of a married woman; where there is her unapologetic husband Ramani to repeat the past again. Most unfortunately he is defended by centuries of customs and traditions. Now a day the position of the women in the society has improved a lot, but there are many women for whom this story would still ring very true.

Marriage again plays a central role in *The English Teacher*. A comparative study of husbands Ramani and Krishna and the wives Savitri and Susila from *The Dark Room* and *The English Teacher* respectively shows that the family life of Ramani and Savitri is very worst whereas the family life of Krishna and Susila is very good; but unhappiness is there in both the families, but the reasons are altogether different. Unhappiness in the life of Ramani and Savitri is due to Ramani’s attitude towards his family, and his own life whereas unhappiness in the life of Krishna and Savitri is due to unnatural death of Krishna’s wife. In this sense both the families are very different. Ramani stands sharp in contrast with Krishna. Narayan lost his wife due to typhoid, and that is what happens to Krishna’s wife, in this novel. It is a very sad and very painful story. In the introduction to *The Bachelor of Arts*, twelfth edition of 1992, Graham Greene says, “One is tempted to exclaim: isn’t the imaginative experience enough? Why should the author have had to suffer in himself the agony of his character?” Perhaps the character of Krishna is the externalization of the author himself. It is just the same as it must have been for Narayan himself in real life.

*The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) is a deep probe into the everyday incidents in a Hindu household in South India and also the odd, from modern point of view, traditional norms of society. *The Dark Room* (1938) presents the typical Indian attitude to family life and exposes the predicament of housewives in India. There is no doubt that the extraordinary experience of 1939-1945 had a
profound influence on Narayan. Greene notes in his introduction to *The Bachelor of Arts*, twelfth edition, 1992, that: “something had permanently changed in Narayan” and that: “the writer’s personal tragedy has been our gain.” Sadness and humour in later novels of Narayan go hand-in-hand like twins, inseparable. Narayan’s fiction, deceptively simple and elusive in terms of literary theory and technique; it is distinctive for its voice, its fusion of the comic with the sad, and its philosophic depth. He is very famous for his lightness of touch and a style that is lean, lucid, undecorated, but wonderfully expressive and full of surprises. He is a great master of clear glass style.

*The English Teacher* published in the year 1945 tells a tragic love story of the divine separation of two souls, with an ulterior motif of satirizing the fault in the existing education system, in the words of Krishna, which “makes us (nothing but) morons, cultural morons, but efficient clerks for all your business and administrative offices” (ET 179 ch. 8). The statement of Krishna shows that he is aware of the fact that the British people had a strong policy to keep Indians as subordinates.

Krishna has a desire, but not enough mental strength, as a mind-set of a subaltern, to fight against it. “I can’t go on with this work any longer, sir….” (ET 179 ch. 8). It seems that the English teacher will revolt against the Principal, the representative of the British; but all it was the inner desire of the Indian, a subaltern. The further words of the narrator are suggestive enough to make the idea clear. “The repetition of ideas uttered a hundred times before. It looked like a rehash of an article entitled “Problems of Higher Education”…” (ET 179 ch. 8). These words make it clear that Krishna has a desire to revolt, but not enough inner strength to face the reality. He had a strong desire to express all his feeling in writing, but being submissive writes differently. Krishna writes his resignation in these words, “Dear Sir, I beg to tender my resignation for personal reasons. I request you to relieve me immediately…” (ET 179 ch. 8). These words clearly show the suppressed voice of the English teacher. There is a mild smell of revolt in the dialogue between Krishna and his Principal Mr. Brown. But at a superficial level it is evident that Krishna is at back foot trying to mitigate the unseen anger of Mr. Brown, the dominant.
Krishna says he does not know what to say to Mr. Brown, he says, “I am taking up work in a children’s school... I am beginning a new experiment in education, with another friend” (ET 179 ch. 8). Krishna further says to Mr. Brown upon his suggestion to look at the children’s school as an extra interest, “Sir, what I am doing in the college hardly seems to me work. I mug up and repeat and they mug up and repeat in examinations... This hardly seems to me work, Mr. Brown” (ET 179 ch. 8). The novel ends but the feelings of Krishna remain suppressed and unexpressed.

Narayan’s middle novels are the explorations into the manners and behaviour of people in the Post-independence era. These novels highlight the modern people’s modern desire for wealth. Mr. Sampath (1949) is a story of a cunning rogue who without any corresponding ability wants to earn enormous wealth in a very short time. The Financial Expert (1952) is an exact account of village usury and city deceit and a controlled probing into the motives of money-making. (Walsh 72) Both Sampath and Margayya represent modern men who aspire to touch the sky in a jump and ultimately come back to the same old ground with nothing in the hands. Waiting for the Mahatma (1953) presents the National Movement for freedom through love story of Bharati and Sriram. It highlights the impact of Mahatma Gandhiji on the different strata of Indian society. The Guide (1958), the most famous novel, is the depiction of the ironies of the modern Indian life.

The later novels of R. K. Narayan reflect his metaphysical spirit. They are based on Indian myths. Narayan’s religious sense of Indian myth is a part of his grip of reality, of his particular view of human life and ordering human feeling and experience. Narayan embodies the pure spirit of Hinduism in his later novels. The Man-Eater of Malgudi (1961) is based on the Hindu mythological legend of Bhasmasura. The Vendor of Sweets (1967) is based on the Hindu concepts of cyclical existence and four stages of human life. The Painter of Signs (1967) exploits with adroitness in the story of ancient King Santhanu as mentioned in The Mahabharata. The novel A Tiger for Malgudi (1983) is mainly an exploration of philosophical Indian myths and metaphysical parables of Hindu religion.
Narayan’s voice is lovely, grave, humour-laden and above all original. Narayan is very much original and realistic in the portrayal of ordinary life in Malgudi. It has many shades of irony; it is never-heavily philosophic. There is objectivity in his voice that conveys something universal. There is nothing false and artificial about his fiction, everything is very natural and pleasant.

There is a wonderful combination of sparkling inventive skills, the effortless simplicity and the cerebral switch-board of ideas in R. K. Narayan. A remarkable unity and a distinctive tone of voice, which combines Narayan’s style of writing with virtue is found in the Malgudi novels. The creative works of Narayan astonishes the readers with their brilliance of the national colour. In his novels there is a picturesque style which is peculiar to R. K. Narayan, and which is particularly noticeable in the mass scenes, especially in descriptions of national festivals, for example the chapter ‘Broken panes’ of *Swami and Friends*. Considerate sincere attitude to people and to the outer world, peculiarity and originality of characters in the works, and sympathy and artistic susceptibility towards urgent social problems—all these qualities make Narayan an original and a truly Indian writer.

It is very obvious, every artist desires popularity, but there are certain great artists who did not like it; for instance, Bismillah Khan, the great *shehnai* player, Birju Maharaj, the great classical dancer and R. K. Narayan, the great novelist. His dislikes publicity and it is being expressed by him in his personal interviews to magazines and newspapers. He said that in the ancient times there were great sculptors, they did not chiselled their names on the back of the stone, for example the statue of a veiled Rebecca is a sculptor created by Giovanni Mariabenzoni, an Italian sculptor. It is at the Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad, India. It is one of the wonderful pieces of art, but there is no name of the sculptor on it. For some it is a poem in the marvel and for some it is a great melody. Narayan further said that it will be an ideal state of affair where a book will be published only with its title and not with its author’s name on it. The authorship of the book must be a state secret known only to the God, income tax authority and the accountant of the publisher’s officer. Such is the opinion of Narayan about the publicity which a book gives to the writer. One
more thing is needed to be mentioned here in this connection, that for the proper estimate of the work of art in hand, its authorship must be unknown. If the author is known and if he belongs to the category of the great or classic writers like Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Wordsworth or any one like them, then there will be the possibility of historical estimate of the author; and if the author is of the present day, then there is a fear of personal estimate, as it is told by a great poet turned critic, Matthew Arnold in his famous essay the “Study of Poetry”. So in this sense, whatever is told by Narayan about writing the name of the author along with the title of the book is very correct.

Narayan won some awards during the course of his literary career. He got Sahitya Akademi, award for his novel The Guide in 1958. When it was made into a Hindi film starred by Dev Anand as Raju and Vahida Rehman as Rosie, he received the Film-fare award for the best story. In the year 1964, he was honoured with the Padma Bhusan award on the Republic Day. In 1980, he was awarded with the A C Benson Medal by the British Royal Society of Literature. In 1982 he was elected as an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature, but unfortunately never won the greatest honour that any literary artist can get. The University of Leeds conferred on him the honour of D. Litt. in 1967, and Delhi University also followed it in 1973. (ILI) There is a great paradox about R.K. Narayan i.e. his novels first appreciated by an Englishman, Graham Greene and published in England. Greene’s Indian friend Purna gave him the typescript of Swami and Friends written by his friend Narayan (Intro. To BA Greene). Narayan wrote for the Indians and about Indian and he is the best known Indian novelist in America. Narayan is the first Indian writer who has been included in The Writers and Their Work, a series of monograph published by British Council. Towards the end of his career, in 1989 he was nominated the Member of Parliament, the Upper House for a six-year term, for his contributions to Indian literature. In 2001, a year before his death Narayan was honoured with the Padma Vibhushan award, the second-highest civilian honour in India. (ILI)
Narayan became a Member of Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of the Indian Parliament in 1989. He gave his inaugural speech there on the subject of Indian children. In his speech he said, “Children were being deprived of time to play or to look at birds and trees” (Smith xi). A man who wrote extensively about the children and their world through his first novel *Swami and Friends* in the year 1935, now giving his speech on the same topic in the second highest policy making house of the nation. There is the gap of 54 years between these two events, and this gap brought a lot of maturity and responsibility in Narayan. The above mentioned statement by Narayan leads to rethink his novel *The English Teacher*, where the readers meet a very interesting character the headmaster. This headmaster runs a local school, without any financial assistant from the government, but his teaching method is very innovative and student friendly like that of constructivism which is now accepted in the schools in Maharashtra in the year 2014. A method where freedom is given to students to think, watch things in nature; and not like that of the British method where students are prepared to be clerks and compounders to assist the British officers. The mental conflict which goes on in the mind of Krishna was not of leaving the job of professorship, but of whether accepting the teaching method of the headmaster by leaving the education method specially designed for Indians by Macaulay.

The analysis of R. K. Narayan’s novels reveals that he deals neither with the aristocracy at the top nor the poor at bottom. To use Dr. Iyengar’s often quoted comment; Narayan is a writer of “resolved limitation.” Like Jane Austen he identifies himself with the middle class people and their various involvements, their clashes and adjustments that constitute the main interest of his novels. Like D. H. Lawrence and E. M. Forster, Narayan is a critic of contemporary Indian society who ironically criticizes the follies and foibles of modern civilization reared on the material values of life.

Narayan is a regional novelist in the higher creative sense. Like Hardy’s Wessex, Malgudi is the chosen region that forms the background to the works of Narayan, whether novels or short stories. According to Srinivasa Iyengar, “Malgudi is Narayan’s Casterbridge”; but the inhabitants of Malgudi, although
they may have their recognizable local traits are essentially human and hence have their kinship with all humanity; in this broader sense Malgudi is everywhere.

In *My Days*, Narayan says that with time his outlook did not change. As far as the school was concerned, his first reaction seemed to be the final one. In due course he became a pupil there. On the very first day of the school he wept because of fear. The sight of his classmates shook his nerves greatly. An old man with silvery stubble on his chin, turban crowning his head, clad in a striped coat without buttons and a white dhoti, a short cane permanently tucked under his arm, presided over the class of the little children. This is description of the teacher before 1970s. Under the watchful eye of the teacher, all the students in the class sit on the floor. They worked on small lumps of wet clay and shaped them into vegetables, fruits, and etc. They cut out coloured sheets of paper and made vegetables and fruits and also boats. The teacher used to bring down his cane very violently on the table in order to gain the attention of all the children in the class-room; and thereafter he told them what to do next. Little Narayan did not think but only saw when the teacher lay his cane on anyone's back. He flourished it and used it as a medium of self-expression.

Child Narayan’s main ambition in life was to remain unnoticed from such a teacher. No matter how hard he tried, the clay never assumed proper shape in his hands says Narayan. It retained in the symmetry shapes; while other students produced marvellous different kinds of objects; but his own handiwork remained unclassifiable perhaps he was ahead of the time as a sculptors. He was always afraid of what the teacher might ask him in the class, but luckily he was given a late admission and was given the last seat in the class. In this way, he got the experience of the back bench which he used in portraying the character of Mani in the *Swami and Friends*. There were so many children in his class. By the time the teacher reaches Narayan, all the students would stand up, and they would run to the water-tap under the tree and clean up their tiffin boxes and their hands. (My Days 6) These words from *My Days* tell the real life experience of Narayan. The echoes of this class room experience are found in the novels as well as short stories of R. K. Narayan.
Normally Granny would not let anyone touch the flowers in her garden (My Days 10). Its echoes are found in the novel The Bachelor of Arts. The incident of the flower picker is a famous incident of the novel. Chandran’s mother did not like anybody to pluck the flowers, but the flower thief plucks them up. Here the autobiographical touch of Narayan is found in the novel The Bachelor of Arts. Such autobiographical touches are very frequent in the novels of Narayan.

Narayan says in My Days that fear, secrecy and furtive acts are very natural in childhood. Such acts are adopted instinctively by children for survival in a adult dominated world. It makes Narayan believe that a child is capable of practising greater cunning tricks than a grown up man. (My Days 12) Its echos are found in several novels and short stories of R.K. Narayan. It is one of the autobiographical elements and the knowledge of the child psychology which is found in Narayan’s works. It has another indication i.e. a child who suffers from the feeling of being a subaltern tries to find out some way out to escape. This feeling is found in Swaminathan, the central character of the novel Swami and Friends.

It is universally accepted that every artist is the offspring of his age. The notions, customs, socio-economic ideas which are prevalent in the society shape and develop the thoughts and the artistic sensibilities of the writer; R. K. Narayan is not an exception to it. He has the advantage of both the half-renaissance i.e. pre-independence in India and post-independence period in India. In this connection Alexander McCall Smith says that life of Narayan spans both to an old and new age of the twentieth century. “At the time of his birth in1906, the British Raj, that astonishing imperial conceit, was firmly in place, as were those iron-clad notions of caste that were to prove so difficult to shrug off” (Smith vii).

The childhood days of R. K. Narayan were good. As his father was a teacher there was a good library at his home and the reading-room at the school paved the way for Narayan in making a good reader first and then as a good writer. As he wrote in My Days that his father did not mind his taking away the books that he likes provided that it must be kept back on the desk without
spoiling the book. It made him well acquainted with various magazines and
great writers like Conan Doyle, W.W. Jacobs, Arnold Bennett, and so on. The
impact of this reading is obviously seen in Narayan's novels. As he was born in
pre-independence period, it was natural for him to experience the life of a
subaltern; and he had grown up in the post-independence period so it is
obvious; one can find liberal individuality and a sense of elite in him. He was
under the British Rule, as a child and later on as a young man, Member of
Parliament of independent India. By dealing with a variety of the themes like
religion, child-world, family, education, corruption, freedom struggle,
Gandhian philosophy, myths, art and literature, he had made a great
contribution to Indian writing in English. Narayan as a writer in the colonized
country like India tended to soak up the culture of the colonial power and feel a
familiarity and some affection for it, even though the experience of colonialism
may have demoralized and destabilized his own colonized culture.

The present research is entitled as “The Subaltern Voices in the Novels
of R.K. Narayan.” On a border level, there are two things in the research, one
the concept of subaltern and the other is the novels of R. K. Narayan. Here the
novels of Narayan are the basic source from which the subaltern voices are
traced out first and they are analysed further for better understanding of the
same. The concept of subaltern voices was adopted by subaltern studies group.
Originally it referred to a loose condition of Indians and British historians
under the leadership of Ranajit Guha. They have dedicated themselves to offer
a radical alternative to traditional colonial and elite nationalist versions of
nineteenth and twentieth – century Indian history since the early 1980’s.

The term subaltern refers to a subordinate position in terms of class,
gender, race and culture. Abhijit Sahoo in his article ‘Subaltern Studies: A New
Trend in Writing History’ says that: “A subaltern is someone with a low
ranking in a social, political, or other hierarchy. It can also mean someone who
has been marginalised or oppressed” (Sahoo 81). The term is derived from the
Latin roots sub means below, and alternus means all others. The term subaltern
is used to describe some one of low rank as in military. In fact the term is
derived from the world of military. But later on the term subaltern is used to
describe someone of lower rank as in the caste system, especially in India. Sometimes the term *subaltern* is also used to describe a person without any political or economic power. Sahoo further notes that: “Gramsci has used the word *subaltern* for minor, poor, downtrodden people. Subaltern means overlooked, neglected, disregarded, and treated with unconcern and indifference” (qtd. in Sahoo 81-82).

Originally, the term *subaltern* was used by Antonio Gramsci for the proletariat whose voice was not heard. It has since come to stand in for all subordinate subjects in society and has been revived in history to draw distinction between the elite and the non–elite within colonized society.

Gramsci was a multi-faceted Italian scholar. He was a journalist, activist, and social and political theorist whose writings are largely concerned with the analysis of elite culture and political theory. He is one of the most original thinkers of the world. He has influenced many thinkers and scholars of the world. The impact of his deep influence is easily seen among the scholars of subaltern studies. His ideas are highly original within the Marxist tradition, especially concerning with the role of civil society, the economic base and the ideological superstructure of societies. He is very famous for his theorization of the importance of cultural hegemony as an unforced means of maintaining bourgeois dominance in the capitalist societies. In fact the term *hegemony* is not coined by him, but the credit of imparting wider and deeper meaning to it definitely goes to him. The term *hegemony* has got wide currency and significance because of Gramsci.

The impact of Gramsci’s *Letters from Prison* was very great in Italy after their publication in the early 1950s. Raymond Rosenthal translated Gramsci’s *Letters from Prison*. The artistic value of these letters is very high. There is profound humanity in these letters. If Gramsci could have decided, he would have easily avoided his imprisonment and lived a very comfortable life. He could have managed the jailer. But he did not do so. The moral within him never allowed him to do so. Ethical base of Gramsci prevented him from such compromise; which makes him an uncommon man.
Strong moral fibre of Gramsci, a lot of courage, a great intellect and an extraordinary insight into an exceptionally wide range of issues makes him an extraordinary man. Gramsci the great, left behind him a legacy of great philosophy of life; and as a good man, he left behind a moral lesson to the world of not getting managed or to compromise with the principles in life at any cost. From his notes it becomes clear that interest in the subaltern was threefold. Firstly he was interested in producing a methodology of subaltern historiography, then he wanted to create a history of the subaltern classes, and a political strategy of transformation based upon the historical development and existence of the subaltern.

History knows it that every great man who tried to assert the truth in the world suffered a lot by the tyrant hands of wrong people, and unfortunately the ruling people. The men in power tried to suppress the voice of that truth lover; either it may be Galileo, Socrates or Gramsci. But fortunately, their voices rose in the course of time; and the echoes of the same are being heard by the world from the mouths of many scholars and thinkers like Spivak, Ranajit Guha and many more. It reminds Facult’s words i.e. truth is the outcome of systems of power. As the system changes the truth also changes. The things said by Gramsci were rejected as false then by the fascist, now accepted as the truth by the entire world.

Gramsci’s incarceration is strong proof of the fact that the fascist regime not only intended to silence him, but to stop his mind from functioning. In other words, fascist elite tried to suppress the voice of subaltern Gramsci. But Gramsci succeeded in transforming the discomforts and forced idleness of prison life into a momentous contribution to twentieth-century thought through his Prison Letters. Unfortunately, prison killed Gramsci before the ideas collected in the prison notebooks could be transformed into studies of the history and popular culture, as he had planned. Finally it can be said that Gramsci the thinker succeeded by leaving behind a philosophy through his Prison Notebooks; where Gramsci the politician failed. He not only spoke, but being heard by the thousands of scholars and echoed by hundreds of thinkers.
In this sense it will not be wrong to say that yes subalterns can speak. (Jones 13-26)

There is inequality on four major grounds in the world and the fifth is in India. These five grounds are: sex, race, economy, religion and caste in India particularly. These five grounds remain at the bottom of all the discrimination and suppression. There are some other sub-grounds like informal relations such as mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, husband and wife, son and daughter and formal relations such as employer and employee, senior and junior. Hierarchy is accepted by rejecting equality, on the basis of these grounds. It gave birth to elite and non-elite, haves and have-nots, superiors and subalterns. This inequality is found from international level to local level. Standards, methods, norms and traditions of discrimination and inequality have been different, but the concept is always the same; one is at top the other is at the bottom, one dominates and the other suffers. In this sense Gayatri Spivak in her famous essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” says that the regional and local dominant groups hierarchically inferior to those the dominant all-Indian groups.

According to Gayatri Spivak there are three dominant groups of elite, they are: dominant foreign groups; dominant indigenous groups on the all-India level; dominant indigenous groups at the regional and local levels. The fourth group is of subalterns. Guha used the term people as synonymous term for subaltern classes. To the third item in the above group Derrida has described as an antre, says Spivak. The social groups and elements included in this category represent the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those who are described as the elite (CSS 27).

In fact all human beings are the same, but even then they are categorised as elite and subalterns. It becomes clear from the mentality of the people who are they? In fact biologically all the people are the same, but it is their upbringing, culture, company, society, history, the books that they read shape their mentality. No one is either dominant or submissive by birth. Submissiveness and domination these are the two sides of the same coin called mentality. The upbringing, culture, company, society, history, the books read create a method of thinking which later on results in to action; it may be
submissive or dominating. The feeling to scarify something for somebody or to rebel against somebody for something is also the outcome of the above mentioned things.

While talking about the mentality of subaltern Gautam Bhadra says, in his essay, “The mentality of subaltern: Kantanama or Rajdharma” in the book *A Subaltern Studies Reader 1986-1995* edited by Ranajit Guha:

> It is well known that defiance is not the only characteristic of the behaviour of subaltern classes. Submissiveness to authority in one context is as frequent as defiance in another. It is these two elements that together constitute the subaltern mentality. It is on account of this combination that the poor and the oppressed have, time and again, and in different histories, made voluntary sacrifices in favor of the rich and the dominant, at least as often as they have rebelled against the latter. (63)

The above statement by Gautam Bhadra, an eminent critic of subaltern studies is very significant. It leaves the readers in no doubt about the concept *subaltern*. Gautam Bhadra says that *defiance* and *submissiveness to authority* these two are the essential elements that go together in making a person a subaltern. In fact, these two essential elements are psychic or mental, or to be more simple a way of thinking or a way of reacting in a given situation. Here it is important to note that these two essential elements which make a person subaltern are artificial, manmade rather situational and unnatural. Such type of mentality is the offspring of the colonialism, society, history, economy, customs and religion, race, caste, authority and power, in short elite mentality. *Defiance* and *submissiveness to authority* these two are the essential elements which form a subaltern mentality and make a person oppressed, weak. They finish his individuality, freedom and make him subaltern, suppressed and the Other. A person with such mentality surrenders to his elite either it may be a ruling country like England, a boss in the office or the husband or any other such elite.

The two groups i.e. elite and subaltern form different mentality. *Defiance* and *submissiveness to authority* are the parts of subaltern mentality. And
imposing something or ordering someone and domination are the parts of elite mentality. If there is a close connection between the elite and the subaltern, then there must be some connection between their mentalities. Neither elite nor subaltern has any existence in isolation; similarly neither domination nor subordination has any existence in isolation. There is a close link between the elite and the subaltern; and there is some close link between their mentalities. In this connection the words of Gautam Bhadra deserve attention.

Certain assumptions made here need to be emphasized. First, the idioms of domination, subordination, and revolt, I believe, are often inextricably linked together; we separate them here only to facilitate analysis. If this is true, it follows that subordination or domination is seldom complete, if ever. The process is marked by struggle and resistance. (SSR 63)

While reading the novels of Narayan, it is observed that these essential elements that form subaltern and elite mentality are often found in his characters, especially his protagonists, women, children and the poor characters.

Hence the study is divided in to six chapters, by devoting one chapter to one type of above mentioned four types of characters and with an introduction and a conclusion of all the research.

As per the situation the characters behave in Narayan’s novels. Sometimes they rebel against the person or situation in which they are found; and sometimes they surrender to the person or the situation whatsoever it may be, but, of course, it is suppressing. So many examples can be cited from the novels of Narayan. For instance, Swaminathan in Swami and Friends, tries to rebel in the school at some point and surrenders to the teacher as well as the strong students. Chandran in The Bachelor of Arts rebels against the customs and his mother, for getting married with Malathi, a girl of lower rank, but finally surrenders to both of them by marrying Susila, a girl of the same caste from Talapur. Jagan in The Vender of Sweets tries to set his son Mali right, but finally surrenders to the situation in which he is caught. Raju and Rosie in The Guide are fond rebellious at one point and submissive at another point. The
same is the case of Krishna, in *The English Teacher*, while thinking about his resignation. There is an element of rebel in Savitri, though weak in front of very strong Ramani, in *The Dark Room*. Submissiveness and defiance these two qualities not only constitute the subaltern mentality of these characters, but also make them round, difficult to understand. They grow and change as the situation changes and time passes. Swaminathan in *Swami and Friends*, Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts* and Raju in *The Guide* all of them tire to get over a difficult situation in which they are caught. They revolt against it but finally accept the defeat. There are so many occasions on which the protagonists are found submissive. They surrender to some authority; it may be some person, social institution, situation or some custom.

The subalterns are suppressed, but not in isolation. They are suppressed by some elite, dominating thing or a person. For instance, in *The Bachelor of Arts*, Chandran is suppressed by the strong customs of Hindu religion and his mother’s strong faith in it. Krishna is dominated by the British education system, later on he escapes from the domination. In *The Vendor of Sweets*, once dominating, Jagan in his home becomes a subaltern, and his son Mali becomes the dominating person. In *Waiting for the Mahatma* all Indians are the subalterns and the British are the dominating elites. In *The Dark Room* Ramani dominates his wife and children. It shows that nation, government, customs, boss or employer, and husband are the dominant groups. But they need somebody to dominate, they cannot dominate in vacuum. Their existence depends upon the existence of the subalterns. According to Gautam Bhadra certain assumptions made here need to be clearly explained. First, the idioms of domination, subordination, and revolt are often inextricably linked together; they are separated here only to facilitate analysis. If this is true, it follows that subordination or domination is seldom complete in itself. The process is marked by struggle and resistance (SSR 63).

Gayatri Spivak has become an authoritative voice of the post – colonial period since the publication of her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Spivak, the post – colonial intellectual, has extended her discourse to a large variety of topics such as Marxism, Feminism and Deconstruction. Spivak’s critical
discourse raises the issues of the marginal subjects such as the place of the subaltern women in the society and their empowerment. It is a matter of fact, that though the people, who were once under the colonial rule, now such people could surpass the colonial rule; but they are not actually free from its influences and power structures (CSS115). Morton says: The social, political and economic structures that were established during colonial rule continued to inflect the cultural, political and economic life of Post-colonial nation states ranging from Ireland to Algeria; from India to Pakistan and Jamaica to Mexico (qtd. in STS 116).

In any social structure where there is hierarchy there is struggle and tension. In the process of domination, subordination, revolt and finally surrender there is struggle which gives rise to the tension. The person at the apex of the hierarchy being chief tries to control, dominate the subordinate. It is the hierarchy that creates the big gulf between the two i.e. a person at higher rank and the person of the lower rank. In fact, the term ‘Subaltern’ is borrowed from the military world. In the war on the battle field, the captain or any higher authority generally treats his subordinates as his equal; but on the contrary in peaceful situations the person of a higher rank treats very badly to the person of a lower rank. Power is not something static, a dynamic thing that changes, moves, reduces and grows as per the situation and as per the person. To make this point clear it is worth to know what Steve Jones notes in his book *Antonio Gramsci* about the concept of power. He says that power is something which is achieved once will remain forever, this notion is rejected by Gramsci. On the contrary Gramsci believes that it is an ongoing process. It operates even at those moments when some ruling group can no longer generate constant. It is Gramsci’s original understanding of the concept of power which is based on common sence. (AG 4)

Power is dynamic and not static, so are the subaltern groups. The person turns out to be suppressed today rebels on another day and tries to exert his power on some or other day. It is found in case of Jagan, Raju and other protagonists of R. K. Narayan. Being a keen observer of the society, Narayan understands this basic principle of power so his characters, especially
protagonists are not found always as powerful or always suppressed. The shift of the power is not only found in case of people only, but also of the situation and society. Society is like a big sea where big fishes eat the small fishes. There are so many situations in the fictional world of Narayan where the readers encounter the shift of power from some custom to person or a situation to a person and vice versa. So the shift of the power from one person to another or from one situation to another is found in his novels.

Partha Chatterjee, in the book *A Subaltern Studies Reader 1986-1995* which edited by Ranajit Guha says that:

The “renaissance” reformers were highly selective in their acceptance of liberal ideas from Europe. Fundamental elements of social conservatism, such as the maintenance of caste distinctions and patriarchal forms of authority in the family, acceptance of the sanctity of the shastras, and preference for symbolic rather than substantive changes in social practices, were conspicuous in the reform movements of the early and mid-nineteenth century. (241)

Renaissance and reformation came to India, but very late and that not in the full-fledged form. The waves of Renaissance, which came from Europe struck to Indian continent, first to West Bengal, but did not spread throughout whole India. Liberal ideas were accepted, but in certain areas only. In certain areas conservatism, caste system and patriarchal forms of authority in the family remained as it is. India remained on the threshold of transformation. India is such an incredible country, which is neither modern nor conservative completely. Train, theatre, printing machine came to Malgudi, as the readers see in the novels like *The Bachelor of Arts, Mr. Sampath* or *The Printer of Malgudi* and so on. Whereas all the types of conservatism as stated above like caste system and patriarchal forms of authority in the family are found in the novels of Narayan.

In E. M. Forster’s novels *A Passage to India* the theme of subaltern voices can be noticed. The setting of Narayan’s novels is like Forster’s novels, the British India. Hence Indians are found as subalterns who try to raise their voice against the British and the established order of the society. In Mulk Raj
Anand’s novel *The Untouchable* the untouchables are treated as the subalterns who try to raise their voice against the society.

The untouchables live very miserable life which the readers notice while reading *Waiting for the Mahatma*. Pitiable condition of Savitri and her children move the hearts of the readers while reading *The Dark Room*. In the preface to the book *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Ranajit Guha says that:

> The word ‘subaltern’ in the title stands for the meaning as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, that is, ‘of inferior rank’. It will be used in these pages as a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way. (Preface to SSI)

India comes in South Asia and Narayan’s novels deal with India. In this sense the term *subaltern* is to be considered in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office. Though the term subaltern is derived from the world of military, which means a soldier or an officer of inferior rank, it is widely used in the social and civil context by the thinkers and scholars. The term is exclusively and extensively used by the Subaltern Studies Group headed by Ranajit Guha in the special study of South Asian society. Guha in his book *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society* says that:

> We recognize of course that subordination cannot be understood except as one of the constitutive terms in a binary relationship of which the other is dominance, for ‘subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up’. (Preface to SSI)

To the one dominating action of the elite a variety of reactions are given by the subalterns. If we consider the action of the dominant group upon the subalterns then there are varied reactions of the subalterns at different situations. Sometimes they surrender, sometimes they rebel; sometimes they accept the thing as it is and sometimes they run away from the place or the situation. The reacting behaviour of these subalterns is irregular. Here it will be appropriate to say that man is such a complex mixture of culture and biology
that it is difficult to analyse his nature by a single formula. It is the psychological and natural phenomenon that different men give different reactions to the same situation; it all depends upon their mental makeup. Their different reactions to the same situation is the result of different factors like social, psychological, economic, physical, historical, geographical and educational that go all together in giving some reaction to a situation. As a beautifier gives different looks to the face with the same colours in the makeup box, similarly human mind gives different reactions to the same situation though the mind is the same. But one thing is clear that all the reactions of the subalterns are the outcome of the actions of the dominant group.

Ideas are ideas; they may be right or wrong. When certain ideas remain in the society for a long time, they take the form of ideology; and they become a part of way of thinking and living of the people. People think everything in the same direction, for a long practice of the same ideas they began to appear right and other than that seem to be wrong. Ideas do not remain only something abstract things after remaining for a long time in the society. They become a part of the society. They become a way of living for the society. They become concrete reality in the form of social practices. So it becomes very difficult to either to move or to change them in the society where they existed for a long time. More long the social practice of the ideas; more is the possibility of becoming the ideas more concrete reality. In such a case it becomes very difficult to change such type of old ideas, though they are wrong. In this connection the words of Raymond Williams throw a good light on it. Ideologies are not merely some abstract set of notions imposed on society. The habits, assumptions, cultural, social and political ideas are not the result of some specific manipulaton or a kind of overt training which can be be easily ended or withdrawn. So it is not easy to move or change certain practices in the society. (AG 4)

Smooth functioning of the society is not an easy thing. There is constant friction in the society due to varied ideas. Different groups of the society have different views about the existing things in the society, as their views are different there is friction and to neutralize it there is a need of negotiation.
From the smallest group called family to the largest group parliament of a country like India; there are different groups in the society. Apart from this there are certain people in the society; who follow the tradition strictly, and that becomes the culture of the society. According to Raymond Williams, Gramsci is one of the first Marxist theorists to who recognize that culture is not simply the expression of underlying economic relations, but it involves some other factors also. (AG 4)

A British cultural theorist Raymond Williams says, “Ideologies were simply false ideas imposed upon people” (AG 4). Chambers’s Twentieth Century defines the term ideology as the “body of ideas or way of thinking.” If it is a way of thinking, it may be right or wrong; it may not be always correct only. For thinking of a man is governed by many factors; which includes psychological, physical, economic, geographical, social, historical, educational and other contemporary factors. As a man lives in the society certain ideas are imposed on him, which go in shaping his way of thinking, and in the course of time that man thinks that only that is correct what he thinks and not the other. His ideas give a shape and direction to his ideology, which becomes his way of life and thinking and the rest of the other ways are wrong according to him.

The ideology of the elites and the subalterns are different, hence their ways of thinking and living style. Not only this but the people of the same group i.e. either elite or the subaltern have varied ideologies. When there is a variation there is a need of negotiation. The negotiation between the groups takes place in many spheres of life such as in the family, in the parliament, in schools and colleges, at work places, in universities and hospitals. “Williams argues, it also takes place within culture,…” (AG 4). Gramsci recognizes that culture is not simply the expression of underlying economic relations, but it is something more than that. (AG 4)

Marxist thinkers thought everything in the light of economy. They considered money is responsible for everything in the society. According to them economy is the only cause behind every social and political change. But Gramsci is the only Marxist thinker who gave a holistic approach to his
thinking by considering all other factors like religion, race, customs and gender and so on.

Gramsci is the first thinker to talk in detail about the concept of hegemony. He considered hegemony is process and that to dynamic one. But here it is important to note that Antonio Gramsci is not the creator of the concept of hegemony. In fact the term had a long history which takes the readers to the Russia socialist movement. The term was given fresh theorization by Lenin. There were debates about the term in Moscow during his period. (AG 42)

By using the term hegemony as a tool for historical and political analysis, Gramsci gave a new direction and speed to rethink about the concept of hegemony. Apart from this history and politics were also began to be studied with a new point of view. In this sense the contribution of Gramsci is very important in the study of history and politics. Gramsci not only imparted new meaning to the term hegemony, but also widened its scope. (AG 45)

Rosie, a poor girl, from the community of temple dancers marries to a rich man Marco. When she comes in the company of Raju at Malgudi; she realizes her real self. When she wishes to develop the dancer within her; she has to rebel against the suppressing rules of Marco and go with Raju to fulfill her dream to be a dancer. But if the same incident is seen from the traditional point of view, then going of Rosie with Raju by leaving her husband Marco is an immoral act. The long tradition of Hindu religion says that once a woman marries a man she is bound to remain with him till her death. From this point of view, Rosie’s leaving her husband is not only an anti-religious act, but also not social too. Social norms are the result of long practice of certain things in the society. In the course of time they become very rigid; and as they are not in the written form, they are interpreted differently by the so called responsible and senior persons of the society.

T. S. Gopalakrishnan and A.P. Kamalakar Rao in their work Principles of Organic Evolution say that culture is not the result of some days or months or even years. The process and the history of culture are very complex and very old. The history of culture goes long back to the history of the earth. The story
of the earth is broadly divided into four main stages according to the dominant method of cosmic developmental processes at each stage. These are: atomic evolution, chemical evolution, organic evolution and the last and very important culture evolution. “The stage of cultural evolution involving the accumulation and transmission of a cultural heritage that began with the ascension of mankind above the animal level” (POE 144). If it is accepted as the truth, for it is the scientific theory and not the exact science, and above all nothing is final in science, then all human beings will be Raja i.e. the elites and all the animals will be praja i.e. the subalterns.

Indians were neither animals nor savages, to be civilized by the Europeans; they are the human beings like the British people. On the contrary, Indians have the history of long tradition and rich culture, but it is spiritual as opposed to that of the materialistic culture of the Europe. It is the colonial approach of looking towards the world as savage and considering themselves as the most civilized people who set out to civilize the people in the other countries. It is their most selfish justification to defend their act of colonizing the other parts of the world. Before one should say that they have been doing something wrong, they have created this ready justification for their wrong act of colonizing the territory of the other countries.

The last stage of the history of the earth i.e. cultural evolution leads to the question of what is meant by the term cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is the accumulated fund of knowledge, understanding of the arts, customs, even technology and engineering abilities which are accessible to a human social group at any given time in its history. This great unwritten book of knowledge of traditions results from the discoveries and inventions of earlier generations, and the same has been and will be carried over generation to generation by a process of education. Fresh addition of some new knowledge is also there to the cultural tradition which is also passed on to the next generation by the same process. “This progressive development and accumulation of cultural heritage is known as cultural evolution” (POE 144).

The age old question what actually separates a human being from other animal, has been answered in different ways. Man is a social animal, creative
thinker and maker. Man is a religious animal, an animal with morality and so on. Biologically, man is a mammal more specifically a primate, and still more specific a hominid of an advanced level into whom is built all the successive layers of organic evolutionary development or homosapiens. However in reality man is more than an animal and not simply a product of organic evolution. He is also a product of cultural evolution which contributes another layer or a series of layers to his nature. This stage of cultural evolution is very significant in the developing phase of human being. It is this stage that brought with emotions, envy, jealous, pride, ambition, love, hate and so on. It also brought with it civilizations, national pride, patriotism, imperialism, colonialism, domination, subjudiction, exploitation, and so on. To the question what distinguishes the elite from non-elite, have-nots from haves and dominant from subalterns the proper answer, at a border level, is cultural evolution. (POE 146) Hence the study of culture becomes very important, while finding out the subaltern voices in the novels of Narayan.

The differences between the modern man and the man of Stone Age are very little if the morphological and genetic characters including carnal capacity, but the cultural differences are very high. From the Palaeolithic to the Modern stage in development, the changes in homosapiens have been brought about mainly by the cultural evolution. Cultural evolution is a process in itself; and it has a momentum of its own which is different from that of organic evolution. Man is a product of both organic and cultural evolution, but as a human, he is a product of cultural evolution. The widely accepted view today is that human evolution comprises a mixture of organic and cultural evolution. (POE 145-47)

From the above mentioned things it becomes clear, at least in case of India, that though the Europeans claim to civilize, and make Indians cultured, such claim is wrong and baseless. By their long stay of more than 150 years in India, the British people have added something to Indian culture and gave one more view i.e. materialistic view of looking towards things, people and life. The long customs in India and age old practices of living life developed social and spiritual views of looking towards life. Indian civilization and culture is far
ancient than the European civilization. Of course there are certain major and considerable faults in Indian culture; but it is not the fault of Indian cultures, it is due to the long history of civilization and the demographic and geographic problem of India, which is a big sub-continent. No doubt, these faults which appear in India because of historiographic, demographic and geographic reasons, but it doesn’t mean that everything is of no use. Family attachment, patriotism, respect for elderly people, reverence for the people of saintly qualities, non-violence, reverence for the food that one eats and so on these are the forts of Indian culture. No doubt these things are the abstract, but they are the basic human values, and no British or any materialistic foreigner can say that this is mere stupidity, for a man without values is like an animal.

Since the down of civilization, the history of culture, economy and politics came into force. At the initial stage they were in their primary stages, but later on in the course of time their advanced stages are found. Different ideas, concepts and methods of studying them came forward, but one thing remained the same that is they remained organize in a relationship and there remained mutual exchange with one another. Though they are different there is some relation of give and take among them, which created a complex network. The process of man’s leaving natural living style, and adopting a new artificial life style, based on reason and thinking was the beginning of civilization. It was a gradual process like the evolution of man; but rather faster than the process of evolution. In the course of time the process took a good speed, and became fast. In this way the process of civilizing a man and separating himself from nature stated long back.

Civilization gave birth to so many things like family, colony or living in a group, society, customs, traditions, art, different feeling, language, religion, economy, and politics and so on. It created very complex structure, but the things in this complex structure are not absolutely separated from one another, there remains some connection among them and some influence on one another. This complex process is hegemony. It means the concept of hegemony is neither simple, nor static, but it is complex, progressive and dynamic in nature. In this connection the argument of Gramsci is needed to be recalled
here. He says that a person or a group of persons having economic or political or cultural power dominates the other. Steve Jones notes in his book *Antony Gramsci* that instead of looking towards the economy as the only determining factor of culture and politics, Gramsci argues that culture, politics and the economy are to be organized in a relationship of mutual exchange with one another, a constantly circulating and shifting network of influence. Antonio Gramsci gives the name *hegemony* to this whole process. (AG 5)

Peyman Vahabzadeh notes that: “Guha (1992:72) defines *hegemony* as ‘a condition of dominance in which the moment of persuasion outweighs that of coercion’” (qtd. in Peyman 105). Guha always discusses the concept of hegemony with reference to dominance. It implies that Guha does not lose sight of the violent movement of the complex colonial institution of the colonized. (Peyman 105)

The beginning of civilization brought people together. This cohabitation brought with it some other things like communication, appreciation, acceptance, rejections, misunderstanding, which further gave birth to different complex feelings like love, hate, jealous, guilt, insult and so on. Slowly two groups created in the society one is the ruling and the other group is which is being ruled by the ruling group. This group is called as the subaltern group. As both the groups live in the same society, transactions take place between them. Both the parties generally did not get satisfied and hence one or the other party of the transaction has to compromise. While talking about *hegemony*, Steve Jones says that it is the process of negotiation, transaction and compromise which takes place between ruling class or group and subaltern group. (AG 10)

It is true that the term *hegemony* is coined by Lenin, but the credit of giving the term wide currency and different shades of meaning really goes to Gramsci. Steve Jones says that Gramsci used of the term *hegemony* as a tool for historical and political analysis in his works. Gramsci’s use of the term *hegemony* changes both over time and in relation to his subject matter. In his work ‘Some Aspects of the Southern Question’, he is very clear about the nature of *hegemony*. He writes that the working class can only become the leading and the dominant (i.e. hegemonic) class to the extent that it succeeds in
creating a system of class alliances which allows it to mobilize the majority of the working people against capitalism and the bourgeois State.

A study of the historical development of the Italian society shows that it was not the struggle, which purely posed in terms of economic inequality in Italy; culture and the role of Catholic Church were also some important aspects of it. It was within these matters that the peasantry experienced their forceful oppression. Jones further says that to achieve leadership, workers have to stop thinking of themselves as metalworkers or carpenters, or even as workers. Instead they must think as workers who are members of a class which aims to lead the peasants and intellectuals. They must think that they are the members of a class which can win and built socialism, if their class is aided and followed by the great majority of the social strata. (AG 45)

Here it is worth to mention what Horace says about the language of poetry, while talking about the nature of poetry.

A poet is free to use both familiar words and new if they fulfil the two requirements of expression, clearness and effectiveness. Familiar words acquire a tremendous power, if skilfully used. ‘Your diction,’ for instance, ‘will be excellent if a clever combination renders a familiar word original’. (Prasad 37)

Whatever is said by Horace about the use of familiar words is applicable here about the term hegemony and its use by Gramsci in very effective way.

The bonds in the family in India are very strong. A type of variety is also seen in the families in India. Traditionally husband is very strong and dominant; but the picture is not always the same. When a girl enters in the family of her husband, by marrying, she is treated like anything in the family by everybody in the family; but in the passage of time slowly she becomes strong and revolting first and dominating finally. A lot of changes occur in the nature and behaviour of a bride at her entry in the family and after becoming the mother of one or two children. As her journey proceeds towards becoming mother-in-law she becomes very strong and assertive; and her husband began to lose the grip of his family. The husband may live the life in his own style, but it seems very difficult for him to say his wife and children to follow his lifestyle. This picture
is very common in Indian families and it is very keenly observed by Narayan and beautifully portrayed in his *The Vender of Sweets*.

Jagan, the protagonist of the novel wants to adopt the way of life as shown and adopted by Mahatma Gandhiji. It also shows how Gandhi and Gandhism influenced the people in India. Jagan is one of the thousands of Indians who tried to adopt Gandhism as they understood. He decides to live the life with minimum needs, as close to nature as possible and without any kind of *himsa* or violence. As a part of it he wears *non-violent footwear* which means footwear made up of the leather of a dead animal. For the same purpose he brings a lather of a dead animal; and after the processing on it he wants to give it to the cobbler to prepare *non-violent footwear*. But the presence of the leather at home threatened to blast his domestic life; he had to preserve it, in the early stages of tanning, out of his wife’s reach in the fuel shed, where there was danger of rats’ nibbling it. “When she lay dying, she summoned Jagan to come close to her and mumbled something. He could not make out her words, but was harrowed by the thought that probably she was saying, ‘Throw away the leather’” (VS 10 ch. 1). Here what Jagan’s wife says that is not important, but what he feels that is very important. If Jagan would be very strong and assertive he might not have bothered about what his wife will think or say. But the words “harrowed by the thought that probably she was saying” imply more than enough.

Hindu religion is the oldest religion in the world. It has its own philosophy that has remained one of the guiding principles of life in the world. The antiquity of the religion is both strength and weakness. There are certain contradictory things in it; which will be a matter of great debate. The greatness of the religion is recognized and accepted by the world after the famous speech of Swami Vivekanand in Chicago. How a man should live from his birth till his death is told in the Hindu religion. Hindu religion recognizes four stages of man, they are called as four *ashramas* (stages): *Brahmacharya* (student), *Grihastha* (householder), *Vanaprastha* (retirement) and *Sanyasa* (renunciation). In the first stage of *brahmacharya*, a man has to remain as a celibate, and complete his education by remaining in the *gurukul*. In the second
stage of *grihastha*, a man has to live married life and contribute something for the procreation of human race. During this phase of life he has to pay the debts of his *guru* means teacher, mother, father, and society. In the third phase of *Vanaprastha*, he has to go into the jungle to pray the God or he may go to some pilgrimage. In the last phase of life, after getting the knowledge and experience of life he has to take *Sanyasa* or renunciation from all the materialistic things, in order to unite with the ultimate soul. This *ashrama* system is one of the facets of the concept of *dharma* in Hinduism. It is a component of the ethical theories in Indian Hindu philosophy.

In the novel *The Vender of Sweets*, Narayan dealt with the same concept of four stages of *ashrama* through the story of Jagan. Jagan who passed the two stages of life successfully enters in to the third stage of life i.e. *vanaprastha* or what is called as retirement. It is the third stage of life where it is told that the old man has to give the charge of the house and his shop to his elder son who is now in the *grihastha ashram* or in the second stage. In fact, it is very beautiful method of telling how to live life happily. The ashram system tells to the children about their role in life, to the youth their duties; and to the old it shows their moral and spiritual ways. Jagan has a strong faith in Hindu religion and profound trust in the scriptures.

The narration in the ninth chapter of the novel gives a clear idea about the changing role of Jagan in his family. He says, “You know, my friend, at some stage in one’s life one must uproot oneself from the accustomed surroundings and disappear so that others may continue in peace” (VS 120 ch. 9). He is now mentally prepared for this change; it seems that it will not be a shock for him; but it is something like that. His ancient home behind the Lawley Statue began to resemble a hell on earth-but he held his tongue. He felt very shy and reserved while talking about his son. It seems that he did not wish to exhibit his sores. It shows that Jagan’s voice is suppressed. A man who lived as per his own will and wishes for a long time in the house; it becomes difficult for him to tolerate the shift in role and responsibility, in the same house. A man may become ready for the change but it takes certain time; provided that the son must be very much capable according to the father. Jagan has a lot of
expectations from his son, but his son Mali could not stand true to his expectations. So the acceptance of vanaprastha becomes not easy for Jagan.

In the thirteenth chapter of *The Vendor of Sweets*, Jagan is found in the third phase of life as per the Hindu religion. He says, “A widower had no right to celebrate anything. He was fit only for retirement” (VS 175 ch.13). By the end of the novel the readers meet Jagan while giving a bunch of keys to the cousin with so many instructions for him, Mali and Gracy. Jagan says to the cousin to open the shop at the usual hour and to maintain it properly till his son Mali will take charge of it. Finally when some doubts are asked by the cousin, in the reply Jagan says, “I am not flying away to another planet” (VS 184 ch. 13). This statement of Jagan indicates that he has given the charge of his shop to Mali, but he is there if any difficulty or problem comes.

On another occasion readers find a tense scene where Jagan and his son Mali had a dialogue. Where the suppressed voice of Jagan is cleared noticed. Jagan who was once enjoying higher rank both at home and at his shop; now finds himself in a changed situation and feels very helpless.

When he was a child, was a subaltern whose voice was suppressed, now Jagan is a subaltern whose voice is suppressed. Mali approached his father and said, “I don’t like that guy over there watching us. Don’t talk loudly” (VS 144 ch.12). Here Mali talks about their neighbour. About who they have been talking is not important here; but what Jagan and Mali feel, that is very important. The way Jagan replies his son Mali and the description which is given by Narayan shows that Mali has got upper position and Jagan a subordinate position. The words from the text itself will through much light on it. “‘All right,’ Jagan whispered hoarsely. The effort to suppress his natural tone to a whisper choked him and puffed up the veins on his neck. He was unused to seecacies” (VS 144 ch.12). In this way, the voice of protagonist is suppressed by his own son. It shows that power is not static; it is dynamic so the situation and the people in the suppressed group are also dynamic.

In his fictional writing, R. K. Narayan is neither philosophical like Raja Rao nor angry like Mulk Raj Anand. The social consciousness of Narayan is conspicuous in his novels; the awareness of Narayan is covered with a fine
blanket of irony. He maintains a frontier of norms in his novels and therefore is free from all partiality. K. R. S. Iyengar explains how his artistic excellence is maintained under limitation in the following words:

He is one of the few writers, who take their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instrument, pursuing with a sense of dedication what may often seen to be the of technical perfection. There is a norm of excellence below which Narayan cannot possibly lower himself.

(Iyengar 122)

The cosmic nature of his works is the outstanding achievement of R. K. Narayan as a writer. He is a master of irony and humour. As a writer, he is noted for the objectivity and detachment of his stand, which is one of the essential qualities of a good writer. He is free from a desire to preach, to advise something to the readers. While reading his novels a reader did not get such type of sense. The reader feels, while reading the novel, that he is getting pleasure, which is the real function of art, as mentioned by Aristotle in his Poetics. The novels of Narayan teach, but it is incidental. His plots are built of material and incidents that are neither extraordinary nor heroic, but on very common situation and incidents which are found easily in the day-to-day life, for instance the incidents in his novel The Bachelor of Arts.

The incidents in the life of Chandran might have happened in the life of millions of people and will happen in future. Though the incidents in The Bachelor of Arts are very common in India, there is great interest and beauty in the novel and it is all because of the artistic touches of Narayan. Like Addison, Narayan keenly observes the society and presents the most realistic pictures charged with gentle irony and light humour. His approach to the subject-matter is always marked with intellectual inspirations. The artistic excellence of Narayan lies in authentic exploration of facts and in absolutely uninvolved manner.

Narayan had a special liking for Hindu religious life and hence in all of his novels, sanyasi, temple and Ganges are found. He tried to give spiritual touch to the River Sarayu like that of the Ganges. In The Vender of Sweets Jagan is always found while mentioning about scriptures. The novel itself
based on the concept of four stages of man as mentioned in Hindu religion. The story of Raju, in *The Guide* is of a corrupt tourist guide who becomes a holy man. The mythological stories like that of Bhasmasura and Savitri are used by Narayan in his novels. Of course, family is at the centre of his novels. The novels like *The Bachelor of Arts, Swami and Friends, The Guide, The English Teacher* and *The Dark Room* throw light on family and family matters. Narayan believes that: “To be a good writer anywhere, you must have roots–both in religion and in family. I have these things” (Gilra 11). Malgudi, the fictional world of Narayan, without which it is impossible to imagine the novels of Narayan; is more than a locale; it is a veritable world in microcosm, rich and complex in variety but, at the same time, endued with an underlying sense of stability and continuity. This brings the provincialism in his novels. As a trait it is good and provides easiness in skilful handling of local colour; but it limits his subject matter.

Narayan knows the life of Malgudi, so he restricts only to it. There were different opinions about the creation of Malgudi. Narayan sets all the controversy at rests with this statement: “You know, I remember waking up with the name Malgudi on Vijayadasmi, the day on which the initiation of learning is celebrated” (Gilra 12). In this way Vijaydashmi, the auspicious day for the Hindus, gave the eternal town to all the citizens of English literary world.

Malgudi is the imaginative domain of R. K. Narayan. It is the clever blending of the comic and serious, the fantastic and the realistic. Some of the Malgudians are elite, and some subaltern with different suppressed voices. Some of these voices are heard on different occasions and situations when the circumstances become unbearable to them. It shows the impact of colonialism, Gandhism, nationalism and so on. Here his protagonists, heroines, children and poor live and grow, either faces the difficulties of life and overcome or adjust themselves to suit the circumstances of the life, that makes the Malgudi world very realistic and beautiful. The reader who visits it definitely wants to visit the place again and again through different novels of Narayan.
Within the small compass of his fictional town, Narayan has found enough to write his novels and short stories. The limited location of Malgudi has enabled him to concentrate on self-expression which is the primary concern in his novels and short stories. Narayan is not interested in places for their own sake; his real interest lies in peopled places. Shiv Gilra says, “Characters give meaning to places and make them alive, real and warm” (Gilra 12). Hence the centre of focus is character and not the place in Narayan’s novels.

The language of the works of Narayan is very precise, easy and metaphorical. Conciseness and expressiveness are integral traits of his writing style. By means of a single phrase, and at times by a single word, the writer is able to specify an object, a person, and a phenomenon very vividly. When, for instance, Raju sees Rosie in a faded cotton sari, without makeup, with uncombed hair and eyes red with tears, caused by the quarrel with her husband Marco, then he decides to flatter her like this: “You may come out as you are and no one will mind it. Who would decorate a rainbow?” (qtd. in Gilra 12) Raju uses the right missile to target Rosie. No beloved can be flirt better than this. It is one of the fine examples of Narayan’s beautiful writing style.

The novels of R. K. Narayan are highly artistic and realistic works. He understands his literary task as follows: “All I can settle for myself is my protagonist’s general type of personality –my focus is all on character– (protagonist). If his personality comes alive, the rest is easy for me: background and minor characters develop as I progress” (qtd. in Gilra 12). So the emphasis is given on chapter two, which is based on the protagonist in the present research. The study of the novels of Narayan shows that his primary focus is on the protagonist. Even the titles given to his novels are either of the protagonist’s names or something related to the protagonist for instance, *Swami and Friends* here the name of the protagonist is used in the title of the novel. *The Bachelor of Arts*, here the degree that the protagonist is pursuing is used. *Mr. Sampath* is the name of the protagonist of the novel. *The English Teacher* and *The Vendor of Sweets* and *The Guide* these are the names of the professions of the protagonists of the novels. In the novel, *The Dark Room*, kitchen is made
a dark room by the protagonist of the novel for his wife. In *Waiting for the Mahatma* Sriram waits for the permission of the mahatma to marry Bharati.

Narayan’s favourite artistic method of writing is to display life as though from inside through the experience of the protagonists in his novels. His novels are the stories of the protagonists. Narayan’s main focus is on the protagonists; other characters in the plot are merely either to assist the protagonist or to move the story forward or merely to fill the gaps. Even the heroines are also not given importance in his novels; Bharati in *Waiting for the Mahatma* and Rosie in *The Guide* are the exceptions to it. Though the novel *The Dark Room* is entitled after the place where the heroine always retires after getting insulted from her husband, also could not give much justice to the heroine Savitri. She remains only as a passive sufferer, a victim of tradition and inhuman behaviour of Ramani.

R. K. Narayan’s novels can be divided in to two periods: the pre-colonial and post-colonial. This division is justified, says Ranga Rao. He analyses the division on the basis of *sattvic* temper of the pre-independence books, and in contrast to it the post 1947 novels of Narayan are dominated by *rajasic* passions. The heroes of the earlier phase are gentile, sensitive, aspiring, and truth-seeking. The later protagonists are different breeds: passionate, obsessive, restless, capable of doing *un-sattvic* acts. With such heroes, the latter novels present a *darker world*: a mysterious landscape with a hundred evil possibilities of an ambience of a thousand other sins. “Malgudi is progressively a country of unexpected depths of duplicity,” says Ranga Rao (Rao 7). The depth of R.K. Narayan increases in the art of characterization so to his Malgudi. It grows with each new novel of Narayan.

In Narayan’s pre-colonial novels, *Swami and Friends*, his first novel, the readers meet Swami as a delightful school boy who captures all the freshness of boy-hood days. In his second novel, *The Bachelor of Arts*, readers meet Chandran who makes them smile for his adolescent groupings. Krishna, the protagonist of *The English Teacher*, is not satisfied with his teaching assignment, and this disturbs his vital balance; which results into his
resignation from the post of Professor in English at Albert Mission College. A study shows that these characters are very close to R. K. Narayan.

In the pre-independence novels of Narayan, the family connections are strong and harmonious for example *Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher*. But the post-independence novels like *The Financial Expert* and *The Guide* trails of the broken Indian joint family are found. In these novels, Narayan looks out, not within, but without. The social mores of the post-47s novels change from pure marital love to manifestations of overt sexuality which is found in *The Guide*, the extra-marital relationship between Raju and Rosie, the wife of Marco. In the pre-independence novels the readers meet Narayan as the more mature artist; so his protagonists and other characters too. In these novels Narayan, as a writer found much objective and detached. The autobiographical elements which are frequently seen in his earlier novels are seldom seen in these novels. Thus Narayan is found as much detached writer using much artistic feeling which goes in making his works much famous and the best.

Narayan’s novels are full of social consciousness. He accepts the reality as it is present before him. He sees the society and its developments with an artistic ironic detachment and accepts reality ungrudgingly. He sees no point in attempting to criticize or correct the things because it seems to him a futile and useless occupation to analyse, criticize and attempt to set things right anywhere. Through his novels Narayan exposes the ills of the society, and probes them too, but never for sadistic pleasure or for setting disgust in his readers. His chief aim is to highlight the hypocrisy of ideals, ambition and pride; and not to guide the society in any particular direction but simply to make the readers realize and know what is true.

The protagonist of this realistic author tries to get rid of a difficult situation in which he is caught. “Narayan’s individuals moving under the prevailing social customs and traditions revolting and accepting defeat in the end with the sense of resignation …” says a critic of Narayan (Ramteke xii). Narayan’s protagonists are not heroes, for neither their deeds are heroic nor
they are endowed with heroic qualities; but most of them are weak, poor and subaltern.

Narayan, widely known as a detached observer of life, never seriously involves himself in the activities of his protagonists, except Krishna of *The English Teacher*. He maintains the detachment while portraying not only the protagonists but also the other minor characters. However, his pre-occupation with the delineation of South Indian orthodox Hindus, the class and the caste to which they belong, is clearly seen in his novels. Narayan is intimately familiar with the range of characters as portrayed in his novels with Malgudi as a setting; which has an imprint of a conservative Hindu society, vastly changing under the impact of modernization, and yet showing the perpetuation of old social values with a little or no interest in pushing the society on its onwards march. In short, Narayan’s protagonists with a few exceptions, have a fixed role to play with little scope for a fuller growth of their individuality.

The roles assigned for the protagonists seem to be pre-ordained, and they appear sometimes as helpless creatures torn by desires and tossed this way and that by the caprice of fortune and sometime revolting defiance, who want to change their fortune. Heavily burdened with the weight of customs and traditions, and therefore totally frustrated with their life and the surroundings, most of his protagonists run away as a revolt against the authority that may be custom, society or the typical mentality of parents but return home thoroughly chastened accepting defeat in life, as it is clearly seen in case of Chandran of *The Bachelor of Arts*. They simply cannot withstand the collective force of the traditional society, and are forced to lead their life like a well-dressed, life like clay models moving along a predetermined mechanical track. They meet this end as they are not strong, dominant; on the contrary, they are weak, submissive and suppressed subalterns. It is their mental makeup that makes them to face this situation.

Born and brought up in a conservative Hindu family, Narayan could not help portraying protagonists of the same class and castes of which he is a member. The Indian child of this class and caste is introduced to the classical Indian tales, myths and Vedic poetry very early in life, and they are woven into
his consciousness giving an ultimate shape to his life. “It is so because from the very childhood our minds are trained to accept without surprise characters of godly or demonic proportions with actions and reactions set in limitless worlds and progressing through an incalculable time scale” (Ramteke 97). Under such social condition, it is but natural that the readers meet protagonists who are eager to follow the social values which they listen from their early childhood. They start their day with prayers to some God, as it is clearly seen in The Vendor of Sweets. Naturally, in time of difficulty their thoughts run to gods or goddess which they believe would relieve them of their difficulties.

In The Swami and Friend, there is a scene. Swaminathan needed three paise to give the coachman to convert it to six rupees so that he can get a hoop. He tries to get it from his father and granny, but he could not get it. Then he took a cardboard box and placed a couple of pebbles in it, and went to god with a request to convert them in to paise so that he may help him.

Swaminathan stood before the gods and with great piety informed them of the box and its contents, how he expected them to convert the two pebbles into two three-paise coins, and why he needed money so urgently. He promised that if the gods helped him, he would give up biting his thumb. He closed his eyes and muttered: ‘Oh, Sri Rama! Thou hast slain Ravana though he had ten heads, can’t you give me six paise?...If I give you the six paise now, when will you give the hoop? I wish you would tell me what that herb is...Mani, shall I tell you the secret of getting a hoop? Oh, Rama! Give me six paise and I will give up biting my thumb for a year…’ (SF 69 ch. 10)

After some time Swaminathan thinks that he should give the gods some time. He gives half an hour to the gods to convert the pebbles into paise, but to his great surprise the pebbles remained as they were. Then he is filled with rage. “He wanted to abuse the gods, but was afraid to...they might make him fail in his examinations, or kill Father, Mother, Granny, or the baby (SF 70 ch. 10). Here it is important to note that Swaminathan is less God loving and more God fearing. In this sense Swaminathan is dominated by the god’s wrath, and his voice could not raise against the God, who could not listen his request.
A similar situation occurs in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, when Natraj and his friends fail to check Vasu’s nefarious activities; he and his friends have nothing left, but to pray Lord Vishnu. Margayya in *The Financial Expert* is shown as childless for twelve years and then he prays God, and his wife conceives, and gives birth to Balu. The similar situation is confronted by Jagan in *The Vender of Sweets*, when his wife does not conceives for two years then his parents decide to take Jagan and his wife to the goddess on the mountain to pray so that they may get a child. So many examples of this kind can be cited from the novels of Narayan.

Caught in such cultural surroundings, many of Narayan’s protagonists, particularly of the new generation find themselves chocked up under the combined weight of irrational customs and traditions prevalent then in India. Sometimes they make attempts to rebel against the old social values, and try to assert their individuality. Sometimes they simply cannot face the collective force of the traditional orthodox society. It is a pity that almost all the protagonists of Narayan, who make feeble attempts to rebel, return to the former positions accepting defeat in life. “Happiness in submission seems to be the motto with them,” says Ramteke (Ramteke 98). This statement shows the mental set up of the central characters of Narayan. They become comfortable when they surrender to something which higher in rank, it may be some person, a situation, custom or the society in which they live. They do not control the event, but they are controlled by the events.

There are certain writers who do not bother about the effects which their books may create, but some writers are there who bother about it. They write with a safe hand; their works please and teach, but never create any type of controversy. The works of Jane Austin’ *Pride and Prejudice* and Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Vicar of Wakefield* are some good examples of it. One thing is clear that “…Narayan shies away from the world which by its portrayal might arouse controversy are antagonism, and in the processes he reveals his weakness as an author” (Ramteke 100). Narayan’s works never arouse any type of controversy. They simply please and their teaching is incidental and not forced or pre-decided. Raju’s fast unto death for bringing the rains during the
drought, in *The Guide* and Margayya’s acquiring of wealth through Laxmi worship in *The Financial Expert* and Jagan’s decision to leave the house and business, solely on the responsibility of the cousin are the good examples which make this point vary clear.

Narayan’s protagonists are made to play their destined life role, during the course of which they, either mature in the process or rebel, or simply drift, or again chastised or even destroyed by a characterized inner weakness. Chandran, the protagonist of *The Bachelor of Arts*, initially has enough courage to revolt against the irrational custom of tallying horoscope for marriage. On one occasion Chandran asks indignantly that why should be they cared and nuzzled by our elders? He fails to face his family orthodoxy and he has to leave his home taking up *sanyas* as an escape from the reality. However, Chandran, after immense experience, returns home and marries another girl named Susila as per the wish of his parents. Chandran, who once said, “Malathi had no double in the world” (BA 83 ch. 9). It is important to see the change in him at the end of the novel. Chandran goes to see a girl Susila from Talapur. The difference between Malathi and Susila is that the earlier is Chandran’s choice and the latter is the destined girl of his parent’s choice. “He saw her face now. It was divine; there was no doubt about it. He secretly compared it with Malathi’s, and wondered what he had seen in the latter to drive him so mad…” (BA 161 ch. 17). The young who once tries to revolt against the customs of society finally gets merged in the flow of the customs of the society. Chandran as a young college going boy once set out to set an example by marrying Malathi, finally thinks that all that was the mischief of the empty mind. Initially when Chandran tries to convince his mother, it seems that he will marry this girl Malathi or will remain without marriage; but in the course of the novel he changes and acceptance the customs and the norms of the society; and surprisingly laughs at himself for his own past, and convince himself that all that was stupidity.

Raju, the tourist guide turned spiritual guide deceives himself and others by playing a real role of a pseudo-saint; and the gullible masses of Mangla. In fact, he has no morals to follow in his life. First he grabs the wife of Marco,
and later grabs Rosie’s jewellery by making forgery for which he is sentenced to jail by the judge, for a term of three years. The ex-convict Raju or jail return Raju is mistaken for a *sadhu*. Such types of examples are common in India. However, his confession to Velan, a villager that: “I am no saint” reveals his helplessness in the situation in which he is caught; and it also reveals his sense of guilt. Raju is thus sacrificed in the end. It is very important to note here that, the miracle that happens is not that the rains have come but that the bogus holy man changes into a dying god.

The end of the novel is seen from different angles by the scholars. The film Guide, made on the same novel, has a different ending. The director Vijay Anand of the film takes the film to spiritual height, by purifying the heart of Raju the fraud into a pure soul, who can have anything at his will, but now he has no desire for worldly things. Raju’s heart is shown as purified which is converted into some cosmic soul which has the capacity of bringing down the rains; and the rain comes by the end in the film. The end of the film *Guide* is very opposite to the novel’s end.

Each writer has his own area of writing. He has his own views about life and the people who live in the society. Some writers prefer to write about the rich class and the hearts of some writers are moved by the pitiable conditions of the poor people, like Mulk Raj Anand. But the study of Narayan’s novels reveals that “Rich people rolling in wealth have no fascination for Narayan, nor does the poor and the down-trodden class of workers inspire Narayan with imagination” (Ramteke 103). In fact, while working as a reporter of a daily newspaper called, ‘The Justice’, Narayan has had so good occasions to get mixed with the people belonging to non-Brahmin poor classes who were subjugated, trampled and treated worse than animals from centuries. The newspaper was stared with the intention of promoting the cause of the non-Brahmin people. It not only made easy, but also provided Narayan an opportunity to mix up with them. However, for reasons best known to him, Narayan failed to do any justice to the profession of a journalist of ‘The Justice’. He could not take up the cause of the non-Brahmins, the poor and the down-trodden people, either in the newspaper or in his novels except a small
incident where the Mahatma decides to go the place where the untouchables live, in *Waiting for the Mahatma*.

The self-detaching nature makes Narayan a great writer. While talking about poetic process, T. S. Eliot in his famous essay ‘Tradition and Individual Talent’, says, “the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates…” (qtd. in Prasad 235). Similarly, Narayan never involves himself with the activities of his protagonists.

The protagonists and other characters of Narayan instead of facing the reality and doing something concrete for the betterment of caste-ridden traditional society, they taken refuge in philosophy. But taking refuge is not the final step for them. Before taking the final step, which is generally taken at the end of the novel, they make so many efforts to set the things right. They try to change bad customs and make society free from the caste-ridden tradition, but as they are of subaltern mentality; they try to revolt against it, and being meek and submissive by taking the refuge in the philosophy, surrender themselves to the dominant group either it may be society or some custom or some person.

Above all beneath the veneer of the so-called comic vision for which Narayan is so highly praised one detects an extreme mistrust of life, a reluctance to accord to the average and the ordinary any kind of face saving device, a desire to put them in their place, a need somehow to prevent the average and the ordinary from triumphing. (Ramteke 104)

The above statement by Ramteke is bold enough to attack Narayan for remaining partial toward the touchable. But the close study of Narayan’s novels shows that he has restricted himself to certain areas, his main concern is middle class family, and the daily happenings in their family. Neither he is very serious about the downtrodden nor the certain national cause. For example *Swami and Friends* he deals with very simple situation that come in the life of any child of that age. Family is at the centre of the novel. The same is the case of *The Bachelor of Arts*. In the novels like *The English Teacher, The Dark Room* and *The Vendor of sweets* again the family is at the centre. Even in the novels like *Waiting for the Mahatma*, the national cause is kept in the
background and love story to have a happy family is at the centre of the novel. The concept of life is very big one, it covers so many things in it; hence it will be much bolder to say as stated by Ramteke in the above statement. Instead of saying one detects an extreme mistrust of life; it will be much better to say that Narayan has a binocular view of middle-class life.

Narayan’s characters, especially the protagonists are fatalistic, God fearing eccentric, moving in the traditional society of Malgudi. Disgusted with themselves or with the life around them; they make half-hearted attempts to assert themselves. They are found criticizing some of the old social values, which they feel, have chocked them in life. However, they miserably fail to cope with the collective forces of the traditional society and finally began to live normal life by accepting the same. They have nothing in their hands to change their faith; and make their life happy and better. Naturally, their thoughts turn to some divine agency to solve their problems and then observing fast and praying to some invisible forces and the gods which is most commonly found in Hindu society. They are true to the statement—Indians are sentimental about the invisibles—made by Raja Rao in his novel Serpent and the Rope. Many of them either run away to escape from the reality, or resign to their fate unquestioningly; and some become sanyasi, some seek refuge in spirituality after making a feeble rebellious attempt. On the whole, Narayan’s protagonists along with the other characters are conservative in their outlook, reluctant to accept the new changes in society. It appears that they move with the passage of time passively with no will or determination on their part, treading along the predetermined mechanical track. Narayan’s three characters, Sampath, Margayya and Raju are morally flowed men. These three anti-heroes find themselves in the company of unheroic-heroes like Swaminathan, Chandran and Krishna.

Narayan’s protagonists may well be divided into two categories. First types of characters are simple and straightforward and found easily in the society. His protagonists like Swami, Chandran and Krishna belong to this category. They are simple, kind and considerate; but they are weak and hesitative. They lack self-confidence and determination which is required to do
some difficult act. They are unable to assert themselves. They are on the whole passive characters and un-heroic heroes who do not act, but are acted upon. They are the one, who did not control the events; but one to whom the events control. At the outset it seems that they will change the situation and set everything as per their will and wish; but in the course of the novel, they are found helpless, weak and having nothing in their hands other than accepting the situation and surrendering to it unconditionally. These characters are not difficult to understand, after a close study of some early chapters of the novel one can predict the nature, behaviour and future of these characters. The second types of characters are rather more mature, complex, difficult to predict; in short they are the next generation of these characters.

Secondly, there are more complex characters such as Raju, Mr. Sampath, Margayya and Vasu. They are mysterious and unpredictable in their ways and so difficult to understand. They are self-centred, inconsiderate and selfish in their plans and actions. Money and sex are their pre-occupations. The words of Raju are very suggestive in this connection. He says to Rosie, “If we don’t work and earn when time is good, we commit a sin” (Guide 195 ch. 9). To them money is god and luxurious life is the goal of life. In their pursuit of their objectives they are ready to sacrifice everything and even their brothers, wife, mother, children and friends along with the values. To them, they and their own desire are important and nothing else. In pursuit of his objective (i.e. Rosie), Raju sacrifices his shop, occupation of tourist guide, his old friend Gaffar and his mother. They are not villains; they have much good in them, for they do not harm others intentionally, and recognize and repent for their misdeeds. Raju harms Marco but unintentionally. Upon getting a golden touch of Rosie; there is a mental conflict in Raju’s mind, where he says, “A part of my mind went on saying, ‘No, no. It is not right. Marco is her husband, remember’” (Guide 77 ch. 5). They are dynamic, intelligent and shrewd, who make determined efforts to get their objective; but they are not villainous. All the misdeeds of them are unintentional and by chance. They do not govern the situation or event, but governed by the event or the situation. It is the situation that forces them to do so. Their misdeeds are the result of the situations and not of their own doings.
It is also to be noted that Narayan is a keen observer of character traits, and he is able to distinguish different varieties of the same characteristic. His characters like Mr. Sampath, Raju, and Margyya apparently seem to be the same; but a close study shows that they are different. The unfaithfulness of Ramani to his wife and children is quite different from Mr. Sampath’s neglect of his wife and children. The shrewdness and cunningness of Margayya, the financial expert, is different from unscrupulous money hunting nature of Mr. Sampath or Raju, the tourist guide. These interesting characters are the ordinary men with human eccentricities, incongruities and oddities. They are taken from the real life and are not abstractions of good or evil, virtues or vices. They are like the real human beings with all the human feeling and the emotions. In this sense, there are no *heroes or villains* in the conventional sense in Narayan’s novels. There is an under-current of humanism enlivening even the darker facets of life in the novels of Narayan. His heroes are having certain strengths; but they are not free from human voices and weaknesses of greed, avarice and covetousness.

It is true that Narayan’s focus is on the centre of the circle, but every circle has some radius; a number of other points come in the circle that widens the circumference of the circle. If the central characters in the novels of Narayan are considered as the centre of the circle then the other points that complete the circle are the other major and minor characters in the novel. The centre of the circle is unique and very important, similarly other a number of points in the circle are also important and essential to give the proper meaning to the centre of the circle. It is true that the novel is a story of the central character and not of the other characters that come in the story, like the various points that come in the circumference of a circle. They not only give the meaning to the centre but provide an opportunity to the central character to act and to react. Hence they also deserve the attention.

A reader meets a number of major and minor characters while making a journey through the Malgudi world. Some come in the full-fledged form like Bharati, the Mahatma, and Municipal Chairman, Mr. Natesh, etc. in *Waiting for the Mahatma*; Marco and Rosie in *The Guide*; Susila and the headmaster in
The English Teacher; Mali, Ambika, Gracy and the cousin in The Vendor of Sweets; Chandran’s mother and father, his friend Mohan in The Bachelor of Arts; Rajan, Mali, Swami’s father and mother and Granny in Swami and Friends.

Some characters are even without names to make the portrait complete on the canvas. The unnamed characters and the characters in the background are like the different shades of a colour that a painter uses to give some mood and meaning to the main theme of the portrait; for example the people of Malgudi who gather on the bank of the River Sarayu to protest against the arrest of Gauri Sankar, a prominent political worker of Bombay; and the students in the class of Swaminathan in Swami and Friends; an unnamed woman who comes to the shop, the children at the ashram of Mahatma Gandhiji who are named after the flowers in Waiting for the Mahatma.

The readers meet the different female characters in the novels of Narayan like Malathi, Susila, Chandran’s mother, in The Bachelor of Arts; Krishna’s wife Susila, his daughter Leela, his mother, the headmaster’s wife in The English Teacher; an unnamed woman at the shop, the wife of Mr. Natesh and Bharati in Waiting for the Mahatma; Rosie, her mother and the all the women of her family, Raju’s mother etc in The Guide; Savitri, Shantabai in The Dark Room; Granny and Swaminatha’s mother in Swami and Friends; Sita, the wife of Nagaraj in The World of Nagaraj. All these women play significant roles in the novels.

There are some poor characters like the shopman known as Kanni, the reception committee members and an untouchable boy and his fathers in Waiting for the Mahatma; Gaffur, the taxi driver in The Guide; Ganapathi Sastrigal, the match maker of Malgudi in The Bachelor of Arts; Mali, the policeman and the cook at the house of Rajam, the coachman and his son in the Swami and Friends.

There are some children in the novels of Narayan. His first novel Swami and Friends is full of child characters; there are children like Swami, Mani, Rajam, Sankar and Samuel. Apart from this novel one meets children like the untouchable boy in Waiting for the Mahatma, the children of the headmaster.
and his students in *The English Teacher*; Tim, the son of Gopu in *The World of Nagaraj*; the son and daughter of Savitri and Ramani in *The Dark Room*.

It is true that for Narayan the central character is very important. As he said that if the central character comes to him clearly, then the rest of the things come to him automatically. But it is also true that the other major and minor characters provide varied reasons for the actions of the central character. These characters widen the circumference and fill the vacuum of the circle with different colours and extend the radius of it. So they are also essentially important and deserve attention.

The unnamed stranger woman who meets in the bus to Krishna’s mother has a very minor role in the novel, but she gives a shade of a colour to Krishna’s life. Her words strengthen the customary typical Indian mentality of not living a young man as a widower. Because of her words Krishna’s mother forces him for remarriage, it is another thing that Krishna does not marry; but the words of that stranger woman felt important by Krishna’s mother. To any average reader they may appear true like that of Krishna’s mother. In this sense, the meeting of the stranger passenger woman with Krishna’s mother is very significant one. Narayan, the keen observer of society, beautifully portrayed the stranger woman. He portrayed her purposefully without giving a name to her. Anyone can find such type of characters in the day-to-day life in India. This character is very minor but gives a realistic touch to the novel *The English Teacher*. There are some other characters like her in the novels of Narayan.

The teacher who meets Krishna, changes the track of Krishna’s life completely. Such characters are also found in the day-to-day life. The teacher is known as the headmaster. He symbolizes the strong desire of some of the Indians to be independent. It is the desire to break down the shackles of the British rule and its impact on the education system in India. It is a type of revolt against the education system implemented purposefully by the British in British India. It is an attempt made by a subaltern to reject the British *Raj* and the education system in the British India implemented by them. After going closer to the headmaster through Krishna the readers appreciate the
headmaster’s innovative teaching methods, invented not to convert the students into clerks but something else as they deserve. Narayan here also purposefully does not mention the name of the headmaster even though he is a major character who changes the track of Krishna’s life and his attitude of looking towards the life and the education system then in India, which is unfortunately mostly, remained the unchanged even today.

The characters like Jagan’s parents, his wife, his son Mali, the cousin, the captain, the cook, Gracy, an American girl who came with Mali in the novel *The Vendor of Sweets* make the life of Jagan complete; and provide different dimensions to his life. These characters provide varied reasons to Jagan to act and react. They bring ups and downs, joys and sorrows; and make him dominant at a point and subaltern at another.

Somu, Mani, Sankar and Samuel are the friends of Swaminathan. They make the child world of Swaminathan beautiful. His father and the teachers expand the imaginary world of Swaminathan. Granny of Swaminathan knows everything about Swaminathan by sitting at home through her little narrator Swami. She is the only person at home with who he shares all his feelings. His mother always remains a source of sustenance for him.

In *The Bachelor of Arts* Mohan and Malathi make the adolescent world of Chandran romantic and colourful that shakes by the harsh social realities and disturbed completely by the customs of tallying the horoscope. Susila comes like an anchor in the life of Chandran, after a great storm. She brings stability in his life by bringing him on the track of normal life.

After the death of Krishna’s wife Susila, his life changes; but it is his daughter Leela who becomes the centre of his life. She becomes the cause for him to live life with some purpose. After meeting the headmaster a new chapter of his life starts that ends on his resignation after the death of the headmaster. In this way these characters are very significant. All these characters are studied from the modern perspective, in detail in the following chapters. Attempts are made to listen to their suppressed voices.
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Famous Indians


Image of Malgudi.


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