Chapter 6
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

6.1. General

India has been glorified all over the world as a land of rich spiritual wisdom, cultural heritage and an illustrious past by virtue of being the origin of such exalted, absolute, transcendental and enlightening scriptures like the Vedas. Most of the Indians are exposed right from their infancy to the Vedic thoughts irrespective of their religion, social status, economic conditions or educational qualifications. So naturally some of the important aspects of the Vedic thoughts may creep into their mind even without their awareness. It is because of this, most Indians seriously think at least at times about life after death, karma and rebirth. They perform funeral rites and pray for the departed soul. But they may not have absolute faith in the transcendental aspects of the Vedic thoughts. Even R.K.Narayan, in spite of the fact that he had a strong religious background with a deep knowledge of the Hindu scriptures, especially The Bhagavad-Gita, did not have absolute faith in the Vedic thoughts till he had the psychic experience of communicating with the spirit of his wife, Rajam. If he had unshaken faith in the Vedic thoughts, the immortality of the soul in particular, he would not have become so sad, disillusioned and listless as he was immediately after the death of his wife. In other words, just like any other mortal in the material world R.K.Narayan too might have thought that the death was the vanishing point of all life till he got confirmed the truthfulness of the Vedic thoughts from the spirit of his wife.
Narayan has described vividly the transcendental experience of communicating with the spirit of his wife in The English Teacher. And this experience had a tremendous impact on his philosophy of life and it is revealed in his subsequent novels.

6.2. The English Teacher as a Turning point

Once one is certain about the eternal nature of the soul, it is only natural on one’s part to indulge in an enquiry about one’s self—‘who am I’? It is being done in Mr.Sampath. And once one gets the right answer to the enquiry that one is not the material body, but a spirit soul, automatically one’s focus may be shifted to one’s karma. Narayan deals with it in The Man-eater of Malgudi and The Guide. The understanding of the significance of karma may lead one to have the realization that one is bound to have rebirth fashioned after one’s karma. That is exactly what is being highlighted in A Tiger for Malgudi. So one may be fully justified if one comes to the conclusion that it is because Narayan has achieved this philosophical understanding of life, and the life after death as a result of the sudden death of his wife and his contact with her spirit soul, he could express it so convincingly in the novels that follow The English Teacher. And so also the question whether The English Teacher can be treated as a fulcrum or transition period in the literary career of Narayan and the philosophy of life of Narayan is answered in the affirmative.

The fact that Narayan has created characters like Srinivas in Mr.Sampath, Nataraj in The Man-eater of Malgudi and Master in A Tiger for Malgudi, who advocate the puranic Vedic thoughts bear testimony to the fact
that Narayan became balanced in the 'post-English Teacher' period and started believing completely in the genuineness of the Vedic thoughts namely the eternal nature of the soul, significance of one's *karma* and the concept of rebirth. Raju in *The Guide* and Lakshmi in *The Painter of Signs* too contribute to this conclusion. Narayan's own words may confirm it. "I could somehow manage to live after her death and, eventually, also attain a philosophical understanding" (*My Days* 1986:135).

6.3. The Influence of Vedic Thoughts

It may be evident from the Post-Independence novels of Narayan that he has been enormously influenced by the Hindu Vedic thoughts. The fact that Narayan frequently refers to *The Bhagavad-Gita*, which is said to be the essence of all the Vedas, may substantiate it. Further, Narayan categorically states in the introduction to *Gods, Demons and Others* that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is, indeed, a prerequisite for a person to understand *The Bhagavad-Gita*, which is generally considered to be the greatest theistic text the world has ever seen. Another fact that may strengthen this point is that Narayan does not refer to the demigods so frequently as he does to Lord Krishna. It is authentically stated in *The Bhagavad-Gita* that the demigods including Brahma cannot be equated on par with the Supreme Being Narayana (Lord Krishna) for, He is the cause of all causes and the proprietor of everything that be. One may infer from these that R.K.Narayan is greatly influenced by *The Bhagavad-Gita*. 
6.4. Pedagogic Element

Any writer who has got a very sound religious background and strong faith in the Vedic thoughts may naturally be tempted to impart them to the readers. Narayan is not an exception. The way he has designed and developed his characters like Srinivas and the old landlord in Mr. Sampath, Nataraj in The Man-eater of Malgudi, Raju in The Guide, Master in A Tiger for Malgudi may substantiate this point. They advocate the Vedic thoughts either in a serious fashion or in a comic manner. And it may also be noted that all his characters except the spiritually inclined ones are distressed and disillusioned. This factor may motivate his readers to a very large extent. It may also be acknowledged that Narayan does not attempt either to impose his ideas on his readers or hurt the religious sentiments of people of other religions. One may be unable to cite an example from Narayan's novels to refute this point. This may amount to say that Narayan tries to practise what he preaches. It is also specifically stated in The Bhagavad-Gita that only a self-realized person might be qualified to preach spirituality. Narayan may not be a self-realized person to the extent of reaching the stage of a liberated soul. But it may be evident from his Post-Independence novels, especially the novels under this study, that he makes a conscious endeavour to impart the transcendental wisdom imbibed from the Vedic scriptures, The Bhagavad-Gita in particular, to his readers.

6.5. Employment of Myth

Narayan's novels are full of references to Hindu Mythology. The faith in myth is a part of the consciousness of the people of India. In other words, it is
a living mythology of one sixth of the world's population. Narayan has used myth both technically and thematically in his novels. It may be noted here that his early novels namely *Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts, The Dark Room* and *The English Teacher* seem to lack the sustained mythical pattern found in the novels that follow *The English Teacher*. Employing myth seems to be one of the most effective devices employed by Narayan to express the Indian sensibilities in a western medium. And also it is a device employed by Narayan to effortlessly educate his readers in the Vedic thoughts. Pandurang Rao puts it aptly when he says: "Narayan is a writer with full commitments to certain spiritual and religious values and ideas, with which Indians are normally familiar" (qtd. in Ramteke, 2000:14).

6.6. Indian sensibilities in a Western Medium

The problem of expressing Indian sensibilities in a western medium like English is faced by all the literary figures in Indian writing in English. But Narayan's craftsmanship lies where he does it with an ease and almost perfection. Professor Srinivasa Iyengar touches the right vein when he discusses the way Narayan handles this problem. "He is of India even of South India: he uses the English language much as we used to wear dhoties manufactured in Lancashire—but the thoughts and feelings, the stirrings of the soul, the wayward movements of the consciousness, are all of the soil of India, recognizably autochthonous" (1962:359). When Narayan gets such an outstanding compliment from a renowned critic, Professor Srinivasa Iyengar,
one can assess how effectively and perfectly Narayan handles English as a medium for his fictional work.

It is obvious from the present study that Narayan’s objective is to entertain and enlighten his readers in a simple style. He achieves his objective by choosing the themes mainly from *The Epics* and *The Puranas*, introducing words of Indian origin, translating Tamil expressions, proverbs and aphorisms into English, using redundant exclamations, portraying a God-conscious society and faith in astrology, varying the style to suit the context and by using humour with irony. In addition to these he shows a tendency to use sentences without any complicated embeddings and they are mostly conjoined by the common conjunctive ‘and’ and offers the readers a style easy to understand and elegant to read. Phrasal and clausal embeddings scarcely find a place in his writings. The amount of popularity being enjoyed by Narayan and the bulk of the commentaries written on him, his work, and the research work done on his works may prove that Narayan has succeeded to a remarkable extent in expressing the Indian sensibilities in a western medium.

The present study is an attempt to approach Narayan’s work in a Vedic perspective. The Hindu Vedic scriptures are so vast and the Vedic wisdom is so deep that the novels of Narayan may unfold new regions of research work if one approaches them in a similar perspective.