CHAPTER - II

THE SINGLE CONSCIOUSNESS

TECHNIQUE - THE SEEING EYE
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We cannot anticipate classics to appear one after the other in every decade. There may be an abundance of those who take to writing just for their livelihood. But as Flaubert observed, “great literature that is solid like steep high rock, restless like a deep ocean, silently eloquent like the murmuring thick wood, melancholic like the moon lit deserts, appear rarely”, We cannot expect a Vyasa, a Shakespeare, a Goethe, a Russel or a Dostovesky every decade. As the great novelist Henry James reminds us “Art blossoms only when the soil is rich with experience and even for the creation of a small piece of literature, it will have to adopt the complete cultural history and to motivate a writer, it has to have a well organised complex social movement.”

So said M.T. in his inaugural address of a Seminar on Languages organised by Madurai Kamaraj University. M.T. avidly read the masters of world literature and had first hand knowledge of the various experiments undertaken by western writers of the twentieth century to probe into the psyche of the human mind. M.T. held Henry James along with Maupassant and Anton Checkov as his literary ‘acharyas’. M.T. has acknowledged his indebtedness to these great men of letters on various occasions. His literary metamorphosis was both self imposed and conscious. This chapter analyses in detail the effortless mastery with which M.T. handles the ‘Single Consciousness Technique’ propounded and perfected by Henry James.

Modern psychology has made it extremely difficult for a novelist to think of consciousness as moving in a straight chronological line from one point to the next. The novelist rather attempts to see it as altogether fluid, existing simultaneously at several diverse levels. To the modern novelist and the readers who perceive consciousness this way, the presentation of the story in a straight chronological line
becomes unreal and unsatisfactory. People are what they are because of what they have been, and what they will be is because of what they are. We are memories and to describe as truthfully at any given moment means to say everything about our past. Hence a modern novelist has the challenge of evolving new narrative devices that will take him closer to the psychology of the characters presented and also to that of his reading audience. Single Consciousness, Stream of Consciousness and Point of View are some of the most successful narrative tools used by writers like Henry James, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf and Faulkner.

The greatest contribution of Henry James to the technique of novel is his use of narrative at second hand or the Single Consciousness technique. Through this method the story unfolds itself totally in the mental plane. Though the reader is permitted only vague glimpses of what the character thinks, he is able to attain a deeper insight into the moral consciousness and psychological motivation of the protagonist. James was a formidable literary critic as well as a novelist and short story writer. He was firmly convinced that art and life are inseparable. He said that if the novel is to fulfil its highest function of revealing truth, it must be embodied in a suitable form because it is art that makes life, makes it interesting and important. Thus by working on a specialised narrative device to suit the psychological approach, he transferred to his novels the methods of detective novel.

As a stylist, Henry James aims at expressing the exact shade of emotion or apprehension which he wishes to convey. His best fiction reveals unobtrusively the complex, psychological motivations that animate men, the social situations that mould them and the moral dilemmas from which they emerge diminished or enhanced. The later psychological novelists like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Joseph
Conrad were greatly influenced by Henry James’s style as well as the indirect technique of narration.

Henry James attempted to portray the complexities and ambiguities of life through the exploration of the life of the mind, and he as the pioneer of the method of handling the Single Point of View or Single Consciousness, felt that the first person narrative used in the Stream of Consciousness technique puts limitation in the way of self revelation. In third person narrative, events and situations can be recalled which in first person would seem an indulgence. This method of narrating the story through the consciousness of sensitive and perceptive characters helped him to uphold the ideal of objectivity. In his novels, he neither sympathises with nor condemns his characters. James’ insistence on objectivity made him reject the first person narrative which suffered from “a terrible fluidity of self revelation” and therefore in a long narrative “ is a form foredoomed to looseness”.

In the Single Point of View technique, the reader is presented with the materials of the story or the vantage point from which the author presents the story. The point of view is usually called Omniscient if the author serves as a seemingly all-knowing maker not restricted to time, place, or character, and free to move and comment at will. The author may well tell the story in the third person and yet present it as it is seen and understood by a single character which may be major, minor or marginal, and the author also restricts information to what the character sees, hears, feels and thinks. By employing his technique of Single Consciousness, the author can restrict the presentation to the interior responses of the point of view of the character, resulting in interior monologue. He may also present the material by a process of narrative exposition in which actions and conversations are presented in summary rather than in detail. This method is usually called ‘Panoramic’.
The experimentation with ‘Point of View’ by many western writers has been very great.

Joseph Conrad and Henry James wrote technique centred prefaces and since then, Single Point of View or Single Consciousness has been considered the technical aspect of fiction that leads the reader most readily into the problems and the meanings of the narrative. Even in film making, this method is very popular where both the immediate fore-ground and the deep background are kept in focus of the vision of the camera. It is called ‘composition-in-depth’ or ‘deep-focus’. A Point of View shot is that which shows a scene as viewed by the character. Hence it is rightly called the subjective camera.

A conscious artist selects a vantage point from which according to his aesthetic judgement, the action of the story could best be seen and felt. The choice of point of view differs not only from author to author but also from work to work. The choice of the vantage point is decided by the nature of the subject under study and the kind of impact the author wants to produce on the reader.

The purpose of a work of fiction according to Henry James is to create and maintain an illusion of life without which it would seem nearer to philosophy or to propaganda than to art. If the author takes the position of first person, he would be intruding and commenting which will shatter the illusion. The device of Single Point of View from a third person helps the author withdraw from his work and gives the work the illusion that life is being portrayed. This technique intensifies the emotional experience of the reader because the reader confronts and experiences life directly without any authorial intrusion to distract his concentration. Hence the Point of View technique helps the writer in giving the reader not a reproduction of life as it exists,
but a representation of genuine life transformed and created fresh in the form of an illusion which is selective, relevant and meaningful.

The customary passivity of the reader of a conventional novel is disturbed by a novel written in the Point of View technique. The reader is compelled to play an active and responsive role in the action of the novel. With the use of the device of the Point of View in the novels of Henry James and Joseph Conrad, the all-seeing author withdrew giving room to an author, who took a vantage position from one of the character’s view point. The author could no longer stay outside the novel. He became an inside viewer of the novel. This technique has enabled the writer to portray the rich complexities and moral ambiguities of life and has also made the reader involve in the evolution of arriving at the meaning of the experience of life.

Behind every work of art there is undoubtedly the personality of the artist and his own perception of things. Only a great mind with great sensitivity and sensibility can produce a great work of art. "The deepest quality of a work of art", said Henry James, "will always be the quality of the mind of the producer... no good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind". But Henry James while granting personal touch to a work of art insisted on objectivity which should be achieved through the method, the treatment or execution, so as to have an impact on the reader. The novel according to him must not appear to be a novel and so the author must not interfere. He achieved this artistic objectivity by employing a centre of consciousness which filtered the experience narrated in the novel. To live, according to James, means to see and apprehend life. Conrad also had the same idea in his mind as seen in his ‘Preface to the Nigger of the “Narcissus”’. He says “My task which I am trying to achieve is by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make your feel—it is, before all, to make you see”.
Henry James always emphasised a harmony of form and substance, manner and matter. "Form alone takes and holds, and preserves substance". He believed that the device of Point of View succeeds in making the reader see and evaluate the experience. This removal of the intruding and commenting author by the observant, recording and interpreting mind well within the frame work of the novel enhanced greatly, objectivity to the experience.

Along with Henry James, Conrad and Flaubert, Turganev also believed in maintaining objectivity in a work of art. Flaubert felt that the personality of a writer always reduces a work. In a letter to George Sand dated December 5, 1866, he wrote: ‘I believe, even that a novelist does not have the right to express his opinion on anything what so ever’. Turganev also believed in objective art and held a view that the vital aspect in composing a novel is to cut the umbilical cord connecting the authors’ characters with his own person. These writers emphasised on de-personalising personal experience.

The author using the device of the technique of Point of View achieves an aesthetic distance from his work which may be moral, intellectual or emotional depending upon the nature of the theme or the kind of effect intended. The novels using the technique of point of view replace the real author by an implied author, who interacts with the narrator or the Point of View character, other characters in the novel and the reader.

The post-world war society insisted on viewing a work of art with objective orientation. Cleant Brookes and Robert Pen Warren in their ‘Understanding Fiction’ (1943) approached works of fiction as autonomous works of art. ‘The Theory of Literature’ (1946) by Rene Welleck and Austin Warren also hold the same view.
This view regards, "the work of art in isolation from all external points of reference, analyses it as a self-sufficient entity constituted by its parts in their internal relations, and sets out to judge it solely by criteria intrinsic to its own mode of being".

The objective view is founded on the concept that the work of art is amply self sufficient, and it has its own internal rules to sustain it, and it evolves in accordance with its intrinsic qualities of order and organisation. Its in-built autonomy exercises special poetics by which it is made. To quote Cleanth Brookes, "one of the critical discoveries of our time - perhaps it is not a discovery but merely a recovery- is that the parts of a poem... are related as the parts of a growing plant".

Henry James held remarkably similar view of art as he delighted in "a deep breathing economy and an organic form". He ascertained that a novel is a living thing all one and continuous like any other organism and in each of the parts, there is something of the each of the other parts. Turganev also believed that a true work of art sprang organically from life like fruit from a tree. The device of Point of View essentially highlights the organic view of art, which in turn highlights a complex interplay of various elements in a work of art. The device is a part of a work's internal mechanism and is not something brought to it from out side and thrust upon it. It serves to intensify the consciousness of the character with whose perceptions the reader invariably identified himself.

As T.S. Eliot observes:

Henry James was a critic who preyed not upon ideas but upon living things. It is criticism which is in a very high sense creative. The characters, the best of them are each a distinct success of creation... the general scheme is not one character, nor a group of characters in a plot or merely in a crowd. The focus is the situation, a relation, an atmosphere, to which characters pay tribute, but being allowed to give only what the writer wants. The real hero, in any of James' stories is a social entity of which men and women are constituents... James' critical genius comes out most tellingly in his mastery over his baffling escape from ideas; a mastery and an escape which are perhaps the last
test of superior intelligence. He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it.

M.T.'s masterpieces, 'Naalukettu', 'Vanaprastham' and 'Irruttinde Atmavu', focus on 'situation', a 'relation' and an 'atmosphere' to which the characters contribute both minimally and generously. The narrative device of M.T. like James' fiction, results in an intimacy of address to the reader. M.T. neither ignores his readers out of concern for objective integrity of his novel, nor is content simply to tell and show the reader things. The Single Consciousness technique helps him to arouse interest to woo the reader, to make the reader believe or entertain the fiction and be entertained by it. M.T.'s intimacy, while using this technique is the intimacy of a novelistic form, placed in the near presence of the reader with a strange combination of caution and candour. M.T. retains his own privacy throughout his narrative mode. His characters, even in their innermost psyche remain costumed, compelling the reader continue listening to the unsaid words of the author.

In the Single Consciousness technique, characters whose actions are the object of narration can in turn engage in narrating the story. Within his story, there may be yet another character who narrates another story and so in infinite regress. The narrative level to which the narrator belongs, the extent of his participation in the story, the degree of perceptibility of his role and finally his reliability are the crucial factors in the reader's understanding of an attitude of the story. Modern self conscious texts often play with narrative levels in order to question the borderline between reality and fiction. The technique of Single Point of View or Single Consciousness gives extreme freedom to the writer for interchangeability of narrative levels. Christine Brooke-Rose's 'Thru' (1975) pictures this autonomy of narrative levels enjoyed by the authors thus:
The novel repeatedly reverses the hierarchy, transforming a narrated object into a narrating agent and Vice Versa. The very distinction between outside and inside, container and contained, narrating subject and narrated object, higher and lower level collapses, resulting in a paradox which the text puts in a nutshell: “who ever you invented, invented you too”.

In ‘Naalukettu’, ‘Vanaprastham’ and ‘Iruttinde Atmavu’, one finds M.T. employing inter-changeability of narrative levels with optimum skill. In these novels, the narrator is above or superior to the story he narrates and hence is extradiegetic. It is precisely M.T.’s non-participation in the story he narrates, is that which gives him higher narratorial authority. His absence from the story and yet his relation to it gives him, the omniscience. He is familiar in principle with the characters’ innermost thoughts and feelings; has detailed knowledge of the past, the present and the future and is also present in locations where the characters are supposed to be unaccompanied and finally has complete knowledge of what happens in several places at the same time.

Single Point of View transforms the reading audience into a viewing audience. As has been already stated, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Flaubert and Turganev insisted on making use of the power of the written word to make the reader hear, feel and above all, see. M.T. has mastered and exploits the technique of Single Point of View to tell and show, to render a summary and to paint a scene. Showing is a direct presentation of events and conversations, and the narrator seems to disappear, allowing the reader to draw his own conclusions from what he sees and hears. M.T. chooses to ‘show’ his reader sometimes and chooses to ‘tell’ him on other occasions. While ‘telling’, he becomes a narrator, whose presentation is mediated and instead of directly and dramatically exhibiting events and conversations, he talks about them and sums them up.
The unique opening lines of the major fictions of M.T. take for analysis in this chapter, ‘Naalukettu’, ‘Vaanaprastham’, and ‘Iruttinde Atmavu’, make the reader a viewer too. The narrator chooses to view the story from the protagonists’ point of view. The novels begin with interior monologues of Appunni in ‘Naalukettu’, Karunakaran Master in ‘Vaanaprastham’ and Velayuthan in ‘Iruttinde Atmavu’ respectively, attempting to fathom their immediate emotional requirements articulated through passion packed words. Appunni’s soul-burning aspiration is ‘to grow, to grow up into a muscular man with strong arms, to proudly toss his head up to answer anyone who questions his lineage, to declare with swelling ego’,

“I am Appunni, Konthunni Nair’s son”. Then will certainly meet Saithalikutty. That is the time to avenge. When Saithalikutty struggles for life in the strong arms, then will ask “Aren’t you, Aren’t you the one who.... my.” (Naalukettu .p.7)

M.T. tactfully employs the device of Single Consciousness that no definite clue is given of who the speaker is, though the speech is an interior monologue. Adequate care is taken to avoid pronouns of both first person and third person to increase the intensity of the suspense. The arrival of the clue is toward the close of the monologue with the single word ‘ende’ meaning ‘my’. The narrator immediately becomes extradiegetic in nature by introducing the character, Appunni, the protagonist, from whose point of view he intends viewing the panorama of human emotions and relationships. “When Appunni think of these, his eyes well up with tears” (Naalukettu.p.7) M.T. juxtaposes the techniques of showing and telling, presenting the interior emotional landscapes of an individual presented through his own words and recording objectively the plight of the presenter. Thus the narrating agent becomes the narrated object, and the distinction between subject and object positions disappear and appear simultaneously. The paradox of being and non-being though is initially brain teasing, allows later the reader to gain a cosmic perception of the narration, the narrator and the narrated.
M.T.'s major novel 'Kaalam' is also set against the backdrop of the disintegrating matrilineal Tharawad system of the Nair community of Kerala, a theme which also forms the matter of study in his other novels, 'Naalukettu' and 'Asuravithu'. The novel 'Kaalam' opens with a very minute description of the night fall. Until the end of the chapter, M.T. gives no clue to the identity of the narrator. He once again tactfully avoids pronouns that may hint at the identity of the narrator, the reader is fully conscious of the fact that it is a first person narration, yet there are no words referring to first person singular. In the sentence 'swayam sasichupokunn - meaning 'self reprimanding', 'swayam' may well be taken as 'one self' or 'myself' or 'himself'. The reader is forced to stay alert to grasp the skill with which M.T. employs the device of Single Consciousness. Until M.T. projects Sethu, the protagonist through the sentence 'Sethu washed his legs and face,' the reader is left guessing. The narrating agent now is transformed to the narrated object. All of a sudden M.T. abandons his intimacy with the protagonist and distances himself to maintain the artistic objectivity, which was always insisted by Henry James.

The novels could not have been narrated in the first person completely because of the limitation of self-revelation. The Nair Tharawad on its decline with its petty rivalries and perennial problems, internal conflicts and emotional upheavals, provided M.T. with an inexhaustible reservoir of ready material. The Sambandam system of marriage was still in practice when M.T was a child. This system made marriage for many men a simple contract, which conditioned them to be visiting husbands with no strong emotional bonds with their wives and children. M.T draws heavily from his own personal experience as a witness-participant of a disintegrating system of the Nair Community. His emotional recording of this inevitable rapid decline in the social order is well articulated through Appunni of 'Naalukettu', Sethu of 'Kaalam' and Govindan Kutty of 'Asuravithu'. M.T. is one of the first writers in Malayalam to
use fiction with a dimension that went beyond the description of events and characters and aimed at probing into the ever enigmatic and elusive inner-self of man.

The Single Point of View device allows M.T. a greater canvass of freedom because his observations and understanding of human psychology blended with personal confessions of the characters, could give authenticity to the narration. M.T.’s characterisation of his protagonist is so close to that of Henry James’ because James was also preoccupied with obsessed types possibly because they lend themselves to intense and dramatic situations and is intrinsically interesting. Appunni, the protagonist of ‘Naalukettu’ is in his early teens when the reader meets him. Through M.T’s words and Appunni’s self analysing monologues, one gets a glimpse of Appunni’s adolescent mind battling against innumerable complex emotions. His apprehensions and suspicions about his father Konthunni Nair’s untimely and unnatural death, his mother Parukutty Amma’s pitiable plight of earning her lively-hood as an errand woman; her past glory as the daughter of aristocratic parents; her excommunication from the ‘Tharawad’ due to her socially unacceptable runaway marriage with a man of poor status, Appunni’s impoverished every day life; his inaccessibility to his pompous relatives; the repeated sympathetic remainder offered in the name of words of consolation by the neighbourhood; Sankunni Nair’s intimacy with his mother; his own unreasonable urge to avenge his father’s death; the furious urge that surfaces every time he meets Saithalikutty; the surging inferiority complex and jealousy which drown him every time he meets Baskaran and Krishnan Kutty; his infatuation for the serpentine beauty of his uncle’s daughter Ammini; the provocative denouncement of him by his maternal uncle- all these torture the delicate sensitive soul of Appunni who is obsessed with one and only desire to win back his Tharawad, the Naalukettu.
M.T. in his Author’s forward to the English rendering of ‘Asuravithu’ (Translated into English as ‘The Demon Seed’) says...

The changing seasons in human behaviour have always fascinated me. The complexity of human nature never ceases to astonish me. The unexpected tenderness shown by a man whom everyone considered the apotheosis of cruelty stuns me into disbelief. The dark doings of a man, who had always been projected as the symbol of goodness, leaves me gaping. I am trying to understand the complex creature man when I use human situations as my material. Only when I understand him can I understand society and the times I live in. I have told myself repeatedly that it is not enough to analyse human frailty with clinical detachment. I must understand with empathy.  

M.T.’s narrative process is very taxing for an average reader who is used to the normal way of narration because he introduces no information or other story elements except those which come within the range of consciousness of the person selected as a point of view. He does not provide the setting out right but gradually constructs it from the glimpses that fall under the observation of the character at specific times. In spite of the regular visits to past and future, the characters of M.T compel the reader to be conscious of a continuous present. The basic reason why M.T. favoured the consistent Point of View technique is because it enabled him to master the magnificent indirectness that improved the dramatic intensity.

M.T. employs the Single Point of View technique in a pictorial as well as dramatic method. In the pictorial method, he is like a painter carefully filling in all details. He uses language as an artist uses paint. He provides vivid and concrete details with metaphors and symbols that render the concreteness of well-known paintings. Henry James excelled in this technique of presenting pictorial elements in his novels. In his ‘Portrait of a Lady’, James’ style is symbolic, poetic and figurative. It is also indirect and regal. He manipulates the dialogues to achieve maximum excellence.
Henry James’ pen picture of an English country house is shown in the tea-taking episode of the novel ‘The Portrait of a Lady’. The description of the houses at Gardencourt, Albany, Florence and Rome are used by Henry James to create a vivid atmosphere, rendering the novel a pictorial quality. These verbal pictures are constructed on the basis of a central consciousness and the resultant inner soliloquy. In all his novels, James employed some thing of a painting technique. M.T. also presents his characters with a sketchy outline but throughout the novel he is seen filling in the sketch, adding shadow nuance, trying various shades of bold and pale colours of emotion, offering the reader delights of vision and reading.

M.T.’s picturesque description of the worship of serpents in his novel ‘Naalukettu’ bears testimony for his mastery over the language. The description transports the reader to a world of fantasy, painted with vibrant colours and populated by strangely familiar characters. The People, one comes across in everyday life, transform into characters that evoke awe and fear at once. Bare breasted young girls in the early teens decked with flowers and exquisite jewelery, clad in fine silk round the waist, are seated near the paintings of serpents, there by creating an atmosphere of ethereal beauty. Appunni, the protagonist gives a camera view to the readers what he sees, hears and feels. Ammini, who is senior to Appunni by few years, bewitches him by her serpentine charm, reminding him of a being with a woman’s head on a serpent’s body. The dull, smoky night adds to the eerie atmosphere which is both bewitching and bewildering.

The two young girls approached the pandal holding a lighted lamp in a glittering bowl filled with rice and a bunch of palm inflorescence. ‘Offer your prayers facing eastward’ They followed Raman’s instructions. ‘Cleanse your eyes and feet with the water offered by the Priest’
'Go round the 'Kalam' thrice. Sit down facing the painted serpent's hood'.
Accordingly, they sat at the tail of the painted serpent.
'Offer rice and flower to the serpent and meditate'.
'Hold the bunch of Palm flowers in your hands'.
They sat holding the flower in their hands and starring at the hoods of the painted intertwined serpents.
Appunni watched the girls with his awe struck eyes, dilated. On his left sat a dark thin long faced girl. He could not get a clear glimpse of her because of the column. The other was a thin and good looking girl. Her body which was of the colour of the palm flowers was bare above her waist. He wondered initially if the girls weren't ashamed. But as he kept on looking at her, it appeared as if the brilliant rays of the lighted lamp were twisting and turning on her bare breast. Her eyes were half shut. Only on keen observation could one understand that she was not asleep. Watching her gave him the delight of beholding an exquisite thing of beauty.
'Who is that', he asked Maalu.
'She is Amminiyedathi, isn't she? The last daughter of the eldest uncle. The other is Thangedathi. Let the other be anybody.
The crescendo of music accompanied by the thunder clap of the drum gradually grew.
By now the serpents of the serpakkavu would have woken up and be dancing with their hoods held high...
Some one said softly. From the side where children were seated, some one said softly. 'Crane, here comes the crane'.
A man with his head covered with a white cloth, holding in his mouth a palm sheath for the beak, came hopping into the pandal making noise like a crane. So, that is what the crane is.
'The crane will attempt to amuse people around and cause distraction', along with others Maalu also commented. The crane hopped around for sometime and left the scene taking away in its beak a coconut from the offerings made.
He went on looking one after the other at the intertwined serpents painted on the ground and at the girl seated star hng at the painting, the girl who was as brilliant as the dancing flame of the lamp. The jewel worn tightly around her neck was shining brilliantly ... The dancing flames' reflection fell on her bare breast... Slowly, very slowly the pandal, the courtyard and the people around disappeared from his vision. Now he is a Prince in a wooded wilderness. The Prince is seated on a high bough of a lofty tree. On his head is a golden laced turban. He is dressed in shining silk, studded with brilliant precious gems. Down below, the horse is seen grazing. The Prince has come to see his Kingdom. Reaching the forest, he has lost his way. His Minister's son is also not with him...
Some how, this night must be waded through.
Then only he saw. A serpent came crawling making the entire forest shivers... A girl is seated on the hood of the serpent.... There glitters a
diamond studded jewel on her neck... She is dressed in golden laced clothe... Her hair is like a cascade of wild cataract... half shut eyes...
The drum beats stopped all on a sudden. 

The settings are constructed by M.T in an elaborate fashion with adequate care given to even the minute detail. Setting here is much more than just a backdrop. It may be instrumental like another character in leading the protagonist to behave in a particular fashion. In American fiction, it has always been very prominent, a kind of a gothic tradition that descended through Hawthorne to Faulkner, found copiously in Edgar Allan Poe and Mark Twain. Poe paints an eerie picture of the ‘House of the Usher’ in his short story ‘The Fall of the House of the Usher’. Mark Twain records every detail about the river and the raft in his ‘Huckleberry Finn’. M.T in all his novels takes extreme care in creating specific settings because the locations where events occur with their distinct characteristics get transformed into specific places. As a result, features of this setting may be either cause or effect of how characters are and behave. By the way of reinforcement or symbolic congruence the setting behaves like a character or characters in some respects.

Appunni’s emotional personality transforms as and when M.T chooses to be present or absent from the ambience. In the Single Point of View technique, the exterior landscape has visible impact on the interior landscape of human psyche. The characters have predictable specific behaviour when they are in specific contexts along with specific other characters. This is the reason why the setting becomes symbolic.

In the novel *Kaalam*, the river is as crucial a character as any other because the river in spate and the river totally dried up symbolise the emotional well being of the protagonist Sethu. Sethu’s quest for identity, appreciation and love demands
perennial attention. His craving for appreciation always leaves him dissatisfied. Curiously, the protagonists of the major novels of M.T. occupy the position of the second best. For no specific reason, they are compelled to put up with a status much lesser than what they worth. Their emotional evolution suffers invariably a serious set back, and they are continuously at war with their nagging internal demand for recognition and reward.

In 'Naalukettu' Appunni, is introduced to the reader through his word that expresses his urgent need for physical maturity and manhood which will enable him to challenge Saithalikutty. M.T uses the technique of 'flash forward' to show the reader the deep rooted desperate desire of Appunni, the protagonist. His low self esteem was the direct outcome of an undying hunger for recognition from his family, who reside at the Naalukettu. Legitimately, he along with his mother should have been the happy residents of the Tharawad. His mother being treated as a family outcaste and his father’s death under dubious circumstances constantly leave him sleepless at nights. His only consolation is a mental projection of himself as a grown up young man challenging Saithalikutty and gaining entry into the Tharawad.

Desire for recognition is the prime driving force of the hero of Kaalam also. Calculated indifference on the part of the other characters when Sethu arrives home after getting to know his success in the school final exam appears to him unpardonably criminal. His achievements not only go unnoticed by his kith and kin but also the failures of his elder brother are duly weighed with concern and compassion. His own mother was generous with excuses when Sethu’s elder brother Parameswaran was a disaster as a student. She attributed his failure to his ill luck and inauspicious time. Sethu’s teenage personality crumbles, when it confronts the
beastly indifference and lack of concern of his family. The words he had rehearsed many times to celebrate his victory go unsaid. Like Appunni, Sethu is also a victim of repeated emotional implosions, the lava of which corrodes his sense of security and well being. The urgency to prove one's worth to the insensate society is ironically a constructive as well as a crippling aspect. The protagonists of 'Naalukettu', 'Kaalam', 'Ausravithu' and 'Randamoozham' suffer from a strong craving for recognition, for they feel that they worth more than what they receive. The more the deprivation, the greater is their desperation.

The Single Point of View technique has helped M.T save his characters from being judged by others. Appunni of 'Naalukettu' is generous with his opinion and criticisms about those who were favourable as well as unfavourable to him. His crude selfishness is conveniently camouflaged as low self esteem. He did not hesitate to emotionally exploit any one who holds him dear to heart. He accepted contemptuously the help offered by his mother, Sankunny, Maalu and Saithalikutty pretending that he accepted the help so as not to offend them.

Like Henry James, a story alone will never suffice for M.T., and the reader pursuing the protagonists of M.T.'s creations will find his subject eternally elusive. This aspect makes M.T.'s novels relatively difficult to read. An average reader will suffer from misdirection of attention as M.T. requires his readers to become involved in the technique of the novels. The reader must be familiar and thorough with the artistic dimensions of the novel. For M.T, how a novel is written is as important as what it says. More important than the plot of the novel is the effect of the action on the major character and of course, on the reader. M.T. is really concerned with the reflections, the reverberations, the vibrations, the ripples that spread out after the
momentary splash. Hence the summary of his novels will be relatively futile. Unless a reader pays adequate attention to M.T's technique; use of landscape and buildings; use of things and especially his use of metaphor, the real subject matter of the novel will escape his attention.

For Henry James, how one looks at the object and how one looks at the situations are closely related. Therefore the depth of a character's perceptions toward landscape, paintings or buildings is often an index of his ability to perceive truth or depth of other situations. M.T also maintains a similar strategy to provide a comprehensive portrait of Appunni. Like the other characters of the novel, Naalukettu, the ancestral house is also used to help the protagonist realise his purpose. The characters around him have been useful only to focus and sensitise him more towards his target. His mother is a constant reminder of the reason behind his present predicament; Saithalikutty reminds him of his need to avenge his father's death; Sankuuny reminds him of his chances of missing his mother's love; Maalu's love reminds him of his inability to win Ammini, who is senior to him by a few years. The deserted hillock, where he took refuge whenever he felt low, and the Naalukettu, its dark corridors and rooms in their ruinous state, the suffocating atmosphere with sharp rancid smell that filled his nostrils- all these were regular reminders of what he is and what he should have been.

Henry James's description of lands and buildings in the chapters One and Three in his novel, 'The Portrait of a Lady' and his references of objects are significant indexes to sensibilities necessary for the movement from naivety to awareness. Osmond as a collector of objects represents a threat to anyone because James reveals him as a man who uses objects unaesthetically and who merely tries to
dominate them physically by collecting them rather than appreciating them or taking aesthetic pleasure from them. The treacherous relationship of all the objects in Osmond’s Villa to himself identify the great Jamesian Crime, recognition of which finally allows is able to understand the profound villainy of which she has been a victim. Impatient readers, who find James’ narration difficult to follow, may often have set their sights on the wrong course, for it is in these very elaborations and embellishments of a situation that Jamesian concern lies. As James says:

This is a difficult situation. I want to show it to you in all its complexities and many of its depths; pay attention pay close attention. The satisfaction and responsibilities of awareness, like the ruins of Rome are no place for the casual tourist.15

M.T.’s technique of narration, where he shows and tells his readers his story, is a merging or mixing of indirect narration with direct characterisation. This technique compels the reader to ask the crucial question in focalization, “Who speaks? and Who thinks?” In the direct speech it is definitely the character, who speaks, in indirect speech it is definitely the narrator who speaks and this narrative approach helps M.T. to make his choice of Point of View. He uses direct interior monologues which is the Stream of Consciousness and also indirect interior monologues where he retains many marks of narrator’s voice and presence. This dual voice renders a realistic effect to his novels.

Appunni after his stay away from his mother and the ‘Tharawad’ return to settle his score with the society. He came back to prove his present social standing to the inmates of the ‘Tharawad’ and thereby ascertain that he has grown up to be a somebody. He came to know of the irony of fate that has compelled his elder uncle to sell away the prestigious symbol of past pomp and glory to the Muslim buyers for a sum of four thousand rupees. His elder uncle has to let go the Naalukettu to save himself from a debt of five hundred rupees. Appunni enjoys every second of this
reversal of fortune by offering to buy the ancestral property. He derives a vengeful joy to win back what he had lost from the man who had chased him out of the corridors of the same Naalukettu as if he were a ‘scabid dog’. He also came to know of the death of Ammini and the misfortune met by Thangamani, whose husband had rejected her, and the ill luck of almost every inhabitant of the tharawad gave Appunni a strange sense of satisfaction. He is crude and cruel to his younger uncle, the man who had once saved him from the wrath of his elder uncle. Even Mānu, the woman, who deserved better treatment from him, received nothing but contempt and scornful sympathy. Unknown faces which once belonged to the Tharawad came to him now asking for very petty favours. Appunni reacted with spite and venom making them cringe and crawl. He appeared to relish these moments of triumph, as if he had been waiting for such situations throughout his life.

M.T uses Interior Monologue technique to make Appunni read his own inner self. The cruel satisfaction derived from vanquishing emotionally his relatives is short lived. Overwhelming bitterness of his own moral degradation taunts him. The narrator says “as he sat pondering over the past, he felt contempt for every thing including his own nature, which rejoiced in taking revenge” (Nalukettu, p.183) Thus, this interior monologue is one, in which Appunni is opening his mind to the reader, revealing his most intimate thoughts.

M.T’s language is so carefully delineated to give various shades of meaning and motivations that a summary of the chapters will appear to be prose statements on poetic piece. The meaning of the last two chapters is not in the events or topics discussed, but in the shadings and refinements of thought as revealed by the tensions of the language. M.T uses the interesting technique of dramatizing and describing simultaneously to get an insight of the character’s thoughts through its own self
analysis. The last chapter is synoptic as if to present in a nutshell the aftermath of the acquisition of the *Naalukettu* by Appunni. He brings back his mother along with Sankunni to reside in the *Tharawad*. His sense of triumph overwhelms him because his mother’s marriage with the man she loved made her family disown her. His happiness is like the vengeful recapturing of one’s lost empire. Sankunni’s feelings are mixed, as he is visibly apprehensive about Appunni’s emotional ups and downs. Appunni decides to demolish the ‘*Naalukettu*’ and to build in its place a small compact house with free access to air and light.

The technique of Single Consciousness as used in ‘*Vanaprastham*’ a very popular fiction by M.T. proves to be a very effective narrative tool in the hands of M.T. The story revolves round two main characters and a few pale and insignificant minor characters. The point of view is from that of the protagonist, a sixty one year old retired school master, Karunakaran. The protagonist’s name is mentioned only once in the entire story in an inconspicuous fashion, for the reader has no specific need of it. The story begins with an extremely crisp and emphatic sentence that instantly arouses the curiosity of the reader, “May be, she had not come”.

Dorothy Van Ghent observes thus of James’ handling of the richly qualitative setting:

> It is characteristically significant that he suggests visual or scenic traits almost always in such a way that the emphasis is on modulations of perception in the observer. The “look” of things is a response of consciousness and varies with the observer; the “look” of things has thus the double duty of representing external stimuli, by indirection in their passage through consciousness and representing the observer himself.\(^\text{16}\)

M.T in ‘*Vanaprastham*’ also uses the technique of ‘seeing’ because the theme of the story is that of developing consciousness to one’s own hidden self. Most of the human responses are dependent on the act of seeing. The decisions also depend on
one’s response or reaction to what has been seen and there by perceive. The external eye registers surfaces and makes it an internal aesthetic experience. The protagonist of ‘Vanaprastham’ sees his thoughts objectively and subjectively, consciously and unconsciously.

The story, like any of the works of M.T is colourfully picturesque, peopled adequately who communicate through both silence and eloquence. The setting is at Mookambika or Mookambi, a renowned place of worship near Mangalore in Karnataka. The main deity is the goddess, Mookambikai, worshipped by ardent devotees throughout the year. The protagonist has arrived there, after having received a letter from an old student of his, Vinodini. The protagonist during the early years of his career as a teacher had had soft sentiments for Vinodini, who was seven years younger to him and was doing her tenth standard. She had always addressed him ‘Master’ as she continues even now. Master could never bring himself to reveal his love for the girl and was playing hide and seek with his own emotions. As a twenty three year old young man, he was not sure enough about either his future or his love.

Vinodini, a young beautiful girl in her teens was the daughter of a rich local landlord. She had admiration and reverence for her master as expected of any girl of her age. Her family had fallen from grace after her father lost his lands and property to the tenants as a result of the land ceiling act. She got herself employed at Madras after her graduation. She has been working for a paltry sum of three hundred rupees a month and has been offering tuitions to some students so that she can manage to send home money for her mother’s medical expenses. She had been greeting her master almost regularly through letters on every New Year day. In her last letter, she had made a mention of her visit to Mookambi and her wish to meet her master in person.
Master is a grandfather now with his son and daughter, happily settled in life. His wife, Ammalu, son Raghu and daughter Radhika have given him a blissful happy family.

...Had economised severely even on food and had taken tuition classes morning and evening in order to admit Raghu in an Engineering college. The land that Ammalu had been allotted as a share of family property had fetched a good price so that Radhika’s wedding was conducted without much difficulty. The post office account is the only one that has not been disclosed to Ammalu. (Vanaprasram. P.15).

Master has withdrawn fifteen hundred rupees, much to the surprise of the post master, exclusively for this trip to Mookambi to meet Vinodini. The interior monologue used here by M.T. reveals the inner most cherished memories of Master thereby making the reader his confidant. Previously, Master had visited Mookambi when his daughter was six months old. Now she is married and is receiving money from her husband who is employed abroad. Master is escorted by a little boy of eleven years, Kumaran Kutty in his long journey from his native place, Ottappalam to Mokambi and Ammalu is angry and surprised when he told her about his trip. She has stopped saying her evening prayers and visiting temples long ago because her children are happy and life is peaceful. She has even begun to declare confidently that since God has given her everything she wanted, it is enough if she says her prayers in her mind.

Master took up this tedious journey upon himself only to meet his ‘Vineetha sishya’ (respectful student) after thirty six long years. After reaching Mookambi, his memories are no longer in the past as he relives them intensely and passionately while his eyes are anxiously scanning for K.S. Vinodini. His words convey the desperate longing to have a glimpse of the girl who meant so much to him, strangely who still means so much to him. Thoughts about her continue to be the fountain head of pain and pleasure, an emotional experience to which he is a willing victim. At the age of
sixty one, he can still harbour the passions that are typical of a young man in his post-adolescence. His memory is brilliantly vivid that relishes recollecting little Vinodini as a girl of fifteen with two braids, clad in a violet coloured half-sari. He remembers how he anxiously awaited her visit one evening when he was her teacher. M.T portrays not only the tangible external world with specific setting, but also the abstract powerful interior emotional landscape of his protagonist through the internal monologues. Passions and emotions are painted verbally that when the protagonist vocalises them, the reader could feel the pulsating pangs of love.

Percy Lubbock observes how Henry James in his masterpiece ‘The Ambassadors’ recorded the intricate performance of thought of the protagonist to the reader.

No longer a figure that leans and looks out of a window, scanning a stretch of memory – that is not the image suggested by Henry James’ book. It is rather as though the reader himself were at the window, and as though the window opened straight into the depths of Strether’s conscious existence. The energy of his perception and discrimination is there seen at work. His mind is the mirror of the scene beyond it, and the other people in the book exist only in relation to him; but his mind is his own thought of them, is there absolutely, its restless evolution is in full sight.17

This observation of Percy Lubbock is true of M.T. also. M.T’s protagonist, the Master, not only allows the reader to see his life, but also compels him to ‘listen to his thoughts’. As a result the author does not tell the story of the Master’s mind, he makes it tell itself. He dramatizes it.

The story passes in an invisible world, the events take place in the man’s mind; and we might have to conclude that they lie beyond our reach and the we cannot attain to them, save by the help of the man himself or of the author who knows all about him. 18

The reader is watching not the protagonist, who is concealing and betraying his thoughts, but watches the thought itself, the hidden thing, as it twists to and fro in
his brain – watch it without any other aid to understanding but such as its own manner of bearing may supply. For example, the occasion when the Master received the Teacher’s Award while working in the Tamarassery School and his photograph appeared in the newspapers, along with the congratulatory messages from old colleagues, he had noticed an inland letter also.

Looked at the last line first. Your respectful student Vinodini. Address was 
Miss. K.S. Vinodini, 16 Mundakkanniamman Koil Street, Madras-4. Miss. Vinodini! 
Happy that the old student still remembers. Replied her on the same day. (Vanaprastham. pp 21-22)

The reader has a direct glimpse into the inexplicable, not so clean happiness derived by the Master when he makes a mention ‘Miss. Vinodini’, highlighting her marital status. He was irritated on knowing that she was working for a company run by a Malayali – an irritation for which he had no moral allowance. He was possessive of not only his past memories of her but also her present social standing. He derived cruel pleasure in imagining her to be flirting with the Malayali Proprietor about whom there were scandals. He chided his student silently thinking that his ‘respectful student’ rejected marriage in order to play coquette and have a good time. Only when he meets her in Mookambi does he come to know that she was employed because her mother was related to the Malayali proprietor. She was paid a paltry sum of two hundred and fifty rupees with no increments. “The image of the beautiful girl speeding in a car with the proprietor of the company suddenly faded. Reproached myself for having carried around this morbid fancy” (Vanaprastham. pp 24)

The world of silent thought is thrown open and instead of telling the reader what happened there, the novelist uses the look and behaviour of thought as a vehicle by which the story is rendered. Just as the writer of a play embodies his subject in visible action and audible speech, so the novelist, dealing with the situation represents it by
Henry James' 'The Ambassadors' and his other later novels used the methods of single consciousness by which the picture of a mind is fully dramatised. 'The Ambassadors' is entirely concerned with Strether's experience of his unique mission to Europe, but the experience never passes outside the circle of his own thoughts. The whole story is from his pint of view. Only the brain behind his eyes can be aware of his experience and the innumerable changes it undergoes. James was fully aware that the subject in his hand is a purely pictorial subject. Similarly, M.T by his method secures the effect of a drama even though his 'Master' is apparently in the position of a narrator throughout.

'Vanaprastham' is another story from M.T which is seen from one man's point of view, yet a story in which the point of view is itself matter for the reader to confront and to watch constructively. The Master hires a jeep to visit Kudajadri, a place of pilgrimage thirty two Kilometers away from Mookambi. His mind insists on an absolute private trip to that place of worship with Vinodini and hence he tries all tricks to dissuade the little boy Kumaran Kutty from accompanying him. He is surprised at the workings of his own psyche because thirty six years ago, he had wished to receive Vinodini in his quarters alone. He had even given his servant boy two rupees to go for a film so that he could be by himself. Then too, he had not the courage to tell Vinodini, "I will be alone, come and see me". He was afraid that neighbours would see his student visiting him and spread scandalous reports. He decided to pretend that it was a chance meeting although he was ready with a box of chocolate to offer her.
The Master's present mental make up is in no way better than what it was decades ago. He could remember how by late evening, when he was sure that she would not come, he felt more relieved than disappointed. Now Vinodini is an old woman and he an old man and still he was afraid of Kumaran Kutty, his fifteen year old escort. The master felt extremely disgusted with himself. M.T allows the reader to understand the mind of the Master and his hide and seek play with his own conscience.

The Master often wishes during their trip to Kudajadri that she would no longer talk about her impoverished state at Madras as it distressed him immensely, but would recollect something pleasant and beautiful from her memories of the past. His keen eyes record every change that has come over Vinodini's appearance, however minute or insignificant it may appear to be. Every time she laughed, he noticed the black gap between her teeth clearly; her hair that had been yellowed slightly due to the use of dye; her light grey eyes that had not changed; the tattered lace that edged her underskirt as she gathered her sari tightly around her legs in order to get a firm foot hold on the step of the jeep and the wandering strands of grey hair that loop over her ears. He remembered her star as Visakham, much to her own surprise. Like an adolescent lad, he wished for her to decipher how he came to know of it. He even enjoyed a look of surprise on her face and pretended not to have noticed it. He did not remind her about the time she had brought a tin of sweets because it was her birthday, and distributed them under his supervision. He tells himself, "Let her try and remember, let her find out herself".

The Master is visibly delighted whenever Vinodini made observations about his personal habits.

"You smoked a lot in those days, didn't you?"
He passionately recollects how she used to stand in her house smiling, her face pressed against the iron bars of the window upstairs, while he walked slowly down the lane with a lighted cigarette in his hand. He would imagine with the arrogant fancy of a twenty three year old that she felt his kiss on her moist lips. He avidly recollects his memories of her and strangely finds himself thrilled and excited about his stay with Vinodini, thrilled as if he is a twenty three year old man once again.

The priest at the Kudajadri temple mistakes Vinodini for the Master’s wife and asks him, “It’s almost time for the pooja, hasn’t your wife come back?” The Master does not correct him. He just wonders what would have been the reaction of Vinodini, had the priest said the same in her presence. The thought amuses him.

Everything in this story by now is dramatized, be it a page of dialogue or a page of description because even in the page of description, nobody is addressing the reader, nobody is reporting his impression to the reader. “The impression is in acting itself in the endless series of images that play over the outspread expanse of the man’s mind and memory”.23

Said with a feeble smile. “They have spread the bed for both of us together”
She did not say anything. Her face was dark and the expression was unreadable. After a while she said.
“It doesn’t matter”
“I am tired. I’ll go to bed”
Moving one of the pillows to one side, he lay down and pulled the shawl up to his neck.
She sighed and got up. “The lamp, Sir?”
“Lower the wick. I don’t usually get up at night, but still…”
Vinodini placed the lamp near the back door and lowered the wick.
Master closed his eyes. Vinodini said “Amme Bhagawati” softly and lay down on the other half of the sheet.
“Don’t you want a shawl?”
“Mmm”
“It’s not as cold as we thought, is it?”
She did not answer.
The voices in the Varanda had stopped.
“Sir…”
“Yes?”
“Are you asleep?”
“No”
“They made a mistake about the Pooja, didn’t they?”
“Mm”
She said after awhile, “I think what they performed was a *Dampathi* pooja, for a married couple”.
“Mm”
“That may have been our destiny in the past life”, murmured Vinodini
“When the young swami asked me to call my wife, I....... I didn’t try to explain that we’re…”
Spoke as if asking for her forgiveness… His eyes were closed, but he clearly saw the tamed animal inside him step out from its cage, prowl through the wilderness of his old dreams, stalking its prey, and come back to its cage again. He noticed that she had not covered herself although it was cold. Should she be told? A sobbing sound could be heard.
“Cover your self”
The sob became louder.
“Vinu... What is it?”
“Mm... Mm”
“What is it?”
“Nothing Sir ... I ... I curse my father everyday ... There’s no use of cursing any one ... is there?”

Thus as the story passes from the scenes of dialogue to the settings of description, there is no break in the method of single consciousness. The story is absolutely pictorial, an indirect impression received through the Master’s intervening consciousness beyond which the story never strays.

Master walked to the lodge, preparing little lies he would have to tell Kumaran Kutty. Ammalu would learn of his visit to Kudajadri from the boy and would have innumerable questions of her own. He was delighted to have a secret to hide. Forgetting the weaknesses of old age, he walked briskly towards the Adigal’s lodge. The sound of the Nagara drum that was part of the pooja ritual in Mookambi temple filled the air. Master said to himself: “It was Amma who had decided everything. She had decided long ago.”

(*Vanaprastham*. p.45)
M.T portrays the haste and guilt ridden urgency with which Vinodini and Master resume their normal course of life as soon as they come down from the hills of Kudajadri to Mookambi.

Vinodini expresses her fear of the old woman who had accompanied her to Mookambi and the need for telling lies to appease the old woman’s curiosity. Similarly the Master feels uneasy about his teen aged escort. Yet, both the Master and Vinodini carry back in their minds moments of companionship and anguish. ‘Vanaprastham’ shows M.T the artist who is so sure of his world and who can play with it objectively as all great story tellers like Turgenev, Flaubert, Dostovesky, Conrad and Henry James have played.

In ‘Iruttinde Atmavu’, the novella first published in 1957, the readers can see M.T., the master craftsman employing the technique of Single Consciousness. It was acclaimed as a masterpiece by readers as well as critics as soon as it was published. This novella has been translated into English as ‘The Creature of Darkness. The story depicts the life of a mentally retarded young man in a matrilineal Nair Tharawad, who suffers physical abuse and confinement under the callously unsympathetic eyes of his family. Velayuthan, the protagonist is regarded as not ‘normal’ and receives abominable treatment but his cousin Ammukutty cares for him, but watches him helplessly as the pain and punishments increase. The narrative questions the norms of the so called ‘rational behaviour’, while inexorably building to a dramatic finale. M.T always considered ‘Iruttinde Atmavu’ his personal favourite. The ‘Seeing Eye’ technique has helped him to project a protagonist, who is ‘different’. Art repeatedly reminds man that Nature insists on difference, because difference is not a defect.
Ezra Pound in his note on Henry James highlights the reason why James insisted on a unique form to be invented to enhance powerful communication.

Peace comes of communication. No man of our time has so laboured to create means of communication as did the late Henry James. The whole of great art is a struggle for communication. All things that oppose this are evil, whether they are silly, scoffing or obstructive tariffs.

And this communication is not a leveling; it is not an elimination of differences. It is recognition of differences, of the right of differences to exist, of interest in finding things different. Kultur is an abomination; philology is an abomination, all repressive uniforming education is an evil.20

Henry James' invention of the Single Consciousness Technique became the 'Seeing Eye' through which the mind of the protagonist can be viewed and reviewed by the reader. The technique dramatises the mind by reflecting the life to which it is exposed, but itself performing its own singularly private life. M.T had used this technique with mastery in portraying protagonists, who suffered from various emotional impediments. They were fully aware of the reasons behind their suffering. Though they took to charging the society for their predicaments, they were also reasonable enough to accommodate periodical introspections about their personality traits which stood in their way to success. But 'Iruttinide Atmavu' has for its protagonist, Velayuthan who is not 'normal', at least according to the parameters used by the society to measure one's sanity. Normality, to society, meant conforming to even inhuman methods resorted to by the so called 'humans' in curing someone who is mentally retarded. The technique of Single Point of View aspires at probing into the hidden alleys of human mind. M.T uses this narrative tool with professional expertise in looking into the mind of the 'not normal' protagonist. Thus, like Henry James M.T uses the art of narrative to communicate that differences have the right to exist.
The protagonist Velalyuthan is introduced watching timidly and curiously the lump in Achuthan Nair’s throat moving up and down when he snored. His big hairy arms and fat fingers enraged Velayuthan because they reminded him of the cruel assault and the pain of which still persisted as Velayuthan stroked his neck. Velayuthan could not recollect when exactly Achuthan Nair beat him. “Was it not with this hand, yesterday... Was it yesterday? Or many days ago? (Iruttinde Atmavu. p.165).

Velayuthan wished to chop off that hand one day without anybody’s knowledge for which he has to keep a big hatchet ready. With one stroke he should cut away that rough hairy hand that inflicted so much of pain on him. Velayuthan knew that he was no small boy to be given a bath by Achuthan Nair. He was really grown up, a twenty one year old man; still Achuthan Nair dragged him and poured on his head three big cauldrons of water. Velayuthan cherished a secret desire of emptying all the three cauldrons into a little gutter to see a spring gushing. But Velayuthan was always beaten when he executed this desire into action. Veliamma, his dead mother’s elder sister, always thought that beating is the best medicine to cure Velayuthan of his sheer impudence. His Grandmother would always wipe her eyes with a shawl and say “All ill luck... ill luck. God will curse you Achuthan; you know he is not normal.” Velayuthan always thought of using Ayyappan’s sharp hatchet to punish Achuthan Nair by cutting off his hand as he slept. It would be great fun in the morning to see Achuthan Nair raising his hand to beat Velayuthan, but to his horror finding his hand missing.

As M.T encourages the reader to see through the eyes of Velayuthan, the reader does not find the arguments and apprehensions of him illogical. The reader does not even in his mind attempt to correct Velayuthan by stating that Achuthan Nair will know the moment his hand is cut off, and need not come to know of it the next
day morning while attempting to thrash Velayuthan. The narration is from an idiot's point of view which has its own logic and reason. The mind of the protagonist follows its specific thought sequence which is logical enough for him.

Velayuthan has immense capacity to feel for him as well as for others. He is seen deeply musing over his pitiable plight, and every aspect of his thought process ends with a fear for pain. He has special emotions for every individual of the household and his emotions range from deep love to loathing and revulsion. When even he saw his grandmother's body, he felt revolted because it appeared as if it was covered with fishy scales. But he is never angry with her. She had not beaten or scolded him like the others. Everyone else at home had beaten him, even Gopi and Sankaran Kutty who were just children; Velayuthan takes the reader by surprise with his logic that “Children are not supposed to beat the elders”.

Like every normal being, Velayuthan is scared of darkness. He wonders how even at noon the room where he is kept in isolation was dark. Grain filled chests and baskets were kept in that room in a corner.

Would there be devils hiding there? What if Uncle himself was hiding there? Then, he was sure to have a piece of palm branch also with him. Uncle preferred to beat him with that. But if there were devils, how could uncle also hide there along with them? (Iruttinde Atmavu. p.167).

Velayuthan's pertinent question is full of innocence and the reader sympathises with the protagonist because through his cruel and inhuman behaviour the Uncle can be more devilish than the devils.

The members of the household are presented to the reader through Velayuthan's interior monologues. Sankaran Kutty, his cousin would report to the uncle if Velayuthan is found wandering in the courtyard. Then all hell would be let
Velayuthan used to get nauseated at the very sight of his Aunt's lips with white leucoderma patches on them. He wished he could collect a good number of white marble stones from the hilltop and the moment she starts calling "Achuthan Nair" in a sing-a-song voice, he should stuff her mouth with them. He wanted to give a good knock on Kutty Sankaran's shaven head with the grinding stone.

The reader finds Velayuthan's mind recording every little detail of his emotional experience thereby helping the reader to understand that there is a strange coherence in the thought pattern of an insane individual. Velayuthan recollects vividly the warning against Karineeli who might be sitting with her hair spread all over her back, killing lice. His mind swiftly travels from one thought to another while recollecting his experiences of both distant and recent past. He remembers his mother who now lay buried near the wild palmyra tree. Often his mind draws his attention to his anatomy. More often he affirms that he was a grown up, really grown up. While crossing the door he even has to bend a little, so that his head would not hit the door frame. His face was covered with profuse growth of stubby hair, which was rough and itchy.

Ammukutty, his uncle's daughter was the only person who had compassion and sympathy for him. She called him 'Kuttiettan' and her very presence filled his mind with happiness which was otherwise terrified with the fear of pain and punishment. He could never understand why, but when he saw Ammukutty smiling he felt like crying. The parents of Ammukutty evoked mixed emotions in his mind, for he felt happy and shy, confused and sad. Her pink finger tips reddened with check reminded him of ripe pomegranates. Her rosy cheek reminded him of ripe red mango.
She never laughed at him with sarcasm when he sought her permission to touch her once. His mind continues to linger on the appearance of Ammukutty that gave him great happiness. His insane mind was not insensitive to beauty and love. Ammukutty reminded him of his own appearance and he felt ashamed. Her clean body and sweet fragrance of screw pine flowers and incense contrasted with his body covered with mud, his chin with coarse stubble and his arms that stank of poultry waste.

M.T's Single Point of View technique is the most complicated and the most elaborate for he is capable of great concession. Individual words, synoptic phrases and crisp statements help him to convey concretely and convincingly the attitudes of his characters. The success of 'Iruttinde Atmavu' as a novella was exclusively because of the technique of Single Consciousness. It clearly exemplifies the way in which M.T insisted that the subject of the story dictate its structure through which it could become a pulsating, organic, artistic whole. No other technique could have succeeded in taking the reader not only close to the protagonist's mind but also into it. With this technique, M.T exploits the fertile theme in his hand to the optimum benefit.

The later chapters of 'Iruttinde Atmavu' are marked with some dramatic scenes which have been framed and presented with utmost care and skill. Each scene contributes to the accumulating pathos of the plight of the protagonist. Each scene comes with a force of revelation of the brutally inhuman behaviour of the 'normal' people and the scenes produce disturbing impact in the minds of the readers with a freshly heightened awareness and sensitivity. The technique has undoubtedly given M.T, a deeper understanding of psychology, the sense for situation and minute observation.

Velayuthan's plight rapidly deteriorates because people around him come heavily on him with their concept of 'normality'. He is regularly and ruthlessly
beaten, kept in dark confinement, deprived of basic necessities including clothing. He even loses track of time and wonders what has come of him. He is shocked at his nudity and begs pitifully for a piece of cloth to cover himself. His memory now fails him very often and every news shocks and confuses him. He knew of neither his grandmother’s death nor how he came to be chained in one of the dirtiest and dingiest rooms of the house. All these trouble him but they are nothing compared to the news that Ammukutty has left for her uncle’s house and is going to be married very soon. The knowledge of her absence urges him to break loose and go in search of her, whatever it may cost. Even then, his boiling mind is capable of dreaming. He dreamt of a Prince who went to save a Princess in chains, a chain which could be neither melted down nor cut. The Prince used his magic dagger and freed the Princess. The Prince and the Princess rode over a white house to the seven-storey mansion on the top of a hill. On reaching Ammukutty’s Uncle’s house after undergoing unspeakable sufferings, Velayuthan to his great shock, finds Ammukutty terror stricken at the sight of him. She screams ‘lunatic’ and wouldn’t listen to his saying that he is not one. The novella comes to a dramatic close with the protagonist declaring piteously “I am insane, please put me in chains”.

The Single Point of View technique thus opens up a new way of presenting a theme where the all knowing and all seeing author is replaced with a human eye within the work itself. The ‘Seeing Eye’ or the character of Point of View neither sees everything at once nor does he know everything. Like an average human being, he attempts to view things according to his ability and power of perception. His relationship with other characters along with the reader’s comprehension of the gradually unfolding drama, play a crucial role in interpreting the value and significance of the experience portrayed. The absence of an authorial voice puts a special burden on the reader compelling him to actively participate in evaluating the
experience of the protagonist. The technique offers a deeper insight into the complex reality which cannot be understood or pictured in a simple or straight way. It allows the author to enjoy total artistic objectivity to even the most subjective experiences and responses.

The scientific and psycho-analytical discoveries have contributed greatly for the evolution of new techniques in fiction. With the collapse of the certainties and community of values, the modern fiction writer could no longer depend on old tools to fathom the secrets of the evasive inner self of man. In this search for new methods of narration, the focus got shifted from the God-like author from the external vantage point, to a human viewer within the frame work of the novel. Henry James and Joseph Conrad went in search of devices to suit the changed intellectual temper of modern times. M.T, the artist is well aware of the present age which being one of doubt, non-conformity and skepticism, knows that no simplistic solutions can be offered to the complex human problems. He also knows that the modern reader wishes to enjoy a novel on his own terms. Hence he too is in search of a suitable technique that would convincingly invest his reader with the responsibility of sharing the experience with the writer. The technique of Henry James proved to be an appropriate tool to M.T., the master story teller who in ‘Naalukettu’, ‘Vanaprastham’, ‘Iruttinde Atmavu’ has thus exploited the technique of Single Point of View and through counter point, parallelism and contrast, ironic juxtapositions etc, and has been able to represent objectively the complex human dilemmas.
NOTES


19 Ibid. 145.

20 Ibid. 146.