NARAYAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF MIDDLE CLASS PEOPLE

Professor C.D. Narasimhaiah points out that R.K. Narayan is 'a product of the Hindu middle class'.¹ The whole corpus of his fiction is populated by the Hindu middle class people of his own province, differing in their attitudes, habits, manners, customs and conventions from the rest of classes - lower class and upper class. Narayan deals with the life of this particular class in his fiction, analysing the tensions and conflicts, stress and strains, in human relations within the domestic circle of his own experience, and making them the basis of his works. His early novels are all domestic in tone, presenting psychological studies of the relationships of husband and wife, parents and sons, brothers and brothers. Even in his last novels he again returns to domestic relationships exploring and delineating them to their considerable limit and presenting men more in relation to each other than in relation to God or some abstract idea or politics. Narayan is frequently criticized 'for his exclusive concern with the middle class and very often called 'treacherous' for not having dealt with the 'Indian poor and the dominantly peasant character of the country'.² But such criticism sounds not only meaningless but also baseless when his sincere point of view to deal with the class is taken into consideration.

William Walsh is right in his description that

"... Narayan writes chiefly about the Indian middle-class because he is a member of it, and it is the class he understands best."²
These members of middle-class figuring in his novels and short stories are neither too well-off as not to know the rub of financial worry nor too poor to be brutalized by want and overwhelming hunger. By nature they are religious people, but seldom credulous like the poor or have-nots. They take religion with an easeful understanding, but they have a tendency towards modernity to the extent of murmuring their educated speech in older voices - 'Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, the spouse of God Vishnu, who was the protector of creatures', in the words of Chandran, the hero of 'The Bachelor of Arts' and Margayya, the hero of 'The Financial Expert'. Like various religions of the world their Hindu religion can also be divided into two classes - the religion based on sacred ancient scriptures (the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Ramayana and the Mahabharat and the Puranas), and the religion which results without texts. Narayan himself relying more on the spiritual understanding of religion, seems to have noted the division of two types of religion prevailing in his own province and the rest of the country. The religion based on scriptures has a stronger appeal to the common people who look askance at every word that comes out to them without the authority of the sacred text. Common people of India believe in the religious saying that 'Dharma protects those who protect Dharma' and it destroys those who try to destroy it'. Gods, demons, ghosts and witches have a believable existence for them. As life is said to be a perpetual struggle between the forces of good and evil, the people of Narayan's fiction also believe in the endless struggle between good and evil. Almost every character of Narayan's
fiction is the product of these two opposite tendencies. Even the hard core realist Vasu, in 'The Man-Eater of Malcudi' is not a total symbol of a demon. On the one hand he is a taxi-dermist, a demon incarnate in the words of Sastri, a huge man of six-feet whose 'fist was meant to batter thick panels of teak and iron', on the other, as Natraj has observed in this aggressive man of special design, "He had one virtue, he never hit anyone with his hand, whatever the provocation". There is no doubt that self-assertive people in society are disliked everywhere because their assertion is bound to cause a sense of fear. But they are seldom deprived of having no virtue in themselves. Here lies the balanced attitude of Narayan in the observation of human nature.

The majority of Narayan's fiction indicates that these members of middleclass are psychologically more active, their consciousness is more vivid and they live by virtue of their modesty, lacking in self-confidence. Inspite of some room for independent critical existence, they are always tossed in some kind of tension between this and that as deep source of power to improve their family, as in 'The Financial Expert' and 'The Vendor of Sweets'. Margayya in 'The Financial Expert' embarks on a journey to get-quick-rich and improve his social status; Jagan in 'The Vendor of Sweets' also tries to amass black money for his son Mali. In middle class families, old women represent 'Custom and Reason' and decide what is proper and what is improper. The family provides immediate context in which Narayan's sensibility remarkably operates. The joint-family
system which was considered Indian legacy in the past has presumably disappeared at present. In 'The Financial Exploit' and 'The Man - Moter of Malgudi' scenes of family - disputes are drawn in order to evince how the new wave of western culture has swept away the human relationship in India. Narayan himself points out:

"I fear that the rich subjective life of the individual against the background of that unique institution, the joint-family system, is a subject that has not been properly tackled. There is wonderful material here, whether the setting be the earlier political struggle or the present day political achievement." 4

And Narayan tackles this subject in his 'The Financial Exploit'. When Nargiya receives a card from Shivas containing the incorrect information (incorrect as it is subsequently turned out) of Salu's death, his brother's family comes to his help and solace. Seeing them all in his house and realizing the implicacy of their feud, Nargiya's affected mind for a while forgets everything about Salu's so-called death and prompts a new chain of thought:

"...a ridiculous question (addressed to his brother) kept coming to his mind: 'Are we friends now - no longer enemies? What about our feud?' A part of his mind kept wondering how they could live as friends but the numerous problems connected with this seemed insoluble. "We had got used to this kind of life. Now I suppose we shall have to
visit each other and enquire and so on - -" All that seemed to be impossible to do. He wished to tell him then and there: 'Don't let this become an excuse to change our present relationship.'

Margayya did his best to suppress these thoughts - - His brother whispered among other things: "We will send you the night meal from our house".

Such are the characteristics of middle class people and Narayan is not only well-acquainted with them but also has a personal experience of living under joint-family system from the outset to this day. In 'The Man -Eater of Malgudi' Natraj's complaint against his cousin who hates him for staying in their ancestral home is indicative of this family feud, brought about by the break in joint-living.

In the past (still to some extent) it was traditional to live together in joint-family system in India. All the members of a family were supposed to live together under the same roof, inspite of their minor differences. The old people in the family were in charge of laying down the policy with the intention of running the family administration smoothly. But modern culture has started breaking it up not only in the South but all over India. However,

" - - the sense of kinship is strong in a Narayan novel. The most notable example of this is -- Margayya and his brother, though for most of the time not on speaking terms,
are yet next-door neighbours, sharing a wall, and in moments of special joy or sorrow simply cannot do without each other". 7

Apart from religion and family Narayan focuses his attention on private life, the ambitions, success and frustration of middle class people. These people try their best to achieve, in the words of Chandran in 'The Bachelor of Arts' "a life freed from distracting illusions and hysterics". There is hardly any doubt about it that such "distracting illusions" are considerably woven in the fabric of Indian tradition. The crisis of consciousness and its resolution, more often than not, result into several mistake or frustrated attempts.

Amidst a net of human relationships middleclass people display their aspiration towards maturity. They are full of human weaknesses - their craving for money and status, their scepticism, dualistic attitude towards life in general and their anxiety, reluctance to face the truth of their beings - which bring them appear to be made of real stuff of flesh and blood, as all human beings are made of. On the other hand, they are not deprived of human virtues. They are full of life and vitality. It is after personal experience of their self that they come to realize the truth of life. For instance, Chandran in 'The Bachelor of Arts' realizes the truth of life in his total surrender on the altar of parental love and returns to the old values of the middle class society in terms of marriage. Savitri returns to home and husband only when some part of her personality is already dead. Ramani continues to be the hypocritical husband and the unmitigated tyrant of the dark room. He is an exception which can also be
located in the real society populated by ultra-modern people uprooted from their old culture. Sampath, Raju, Natraj, Jagan, Sambu - all are involved in their struggle to maturity to which they reach at last. The world of Malgudi cannot leave them as they are; it turns them what they should be.

Being a moral analyst and having a penetrative eye to look into human nature, Narayan is a past master in giving the reader a picture that strikes him as typical of everyday reality. In this way, he depends on selection and suggestion. He draws a picture of life in such a convincing way as to bring everyday reality. Human oddities, follies and frivolities of middle class people provided so much interest to the operative sensibility of Narayan that he seldom went for his subject-matter beyond his own class. He paints with great skill the surface of life, the externals of characters and manners and passes by the vehement, the profound and the enthusiastic, all that is capable of humorous treatment. Like Jane Austen he worked within his narrow range and relied on his little bit of ivory so many inches wide, remaining a detached observer and testifying his profound vision of humanity. That is why, the inhabitants of Malgudi, despite their discernible local trappings are undeniably human, have their kinship with all humanity. It is nothing but Narayan’s artistic self-control, his broad humanity that enable him to achieve greatness within the limited range of his chosen field. And in this way, he achieves greatness.
Various Types of Characters.

Inspite of his limited range the corpus of Narayan's fiction abounds in a galaxy of immortal characters. His canvas is also limited because like a great artist he does not intend to overcrowd it. However, through his knowledge and experience he depicts students and teachers, journalists and printers, guides and tourists, the champion of emancipation and money-lenders, dancers and temple women, scholar and cramps, taxidermist and Sweet-Vendor, Painter of Signs and the arch-priestess of Family-planning, circus men and beasts and real saint and fake sanyasis with equal felicity and ease. His early novels present students and teachers, bank managers and domestic servants, femmi-fatale and the doting lovers who achieve maturity in the restricted limits of their operative zeal. From 'Swami and Friends' to 'The English Teacher' Narayan remained autobiographical in approach and plumbed the depth of his own memory. But from 'The English Teacher' onward,

"- - we enter an exotic world of half-headed or half-hearted dreamers, artist, financiers, speculators, twistors, adventures, eccentrics, cranks, cinema stars, sanyasis, several of them not Malgudi products at all but straying or imported from outside".

Students And Teachers

Swami, Chandran, and Krishnan figure in the triology - 'Swami & Friends' 'The Bachelor of Arts' and 'The English Teacher'. They represent the academic world of South Indian schools and colleges. In the first novel, we are introduced to a cheerful
world of young school boys - Swami, Hani, Sanker, Samuel and Rajan. These boys are the students of Albert Mission School. It is through the eyes of the hero Swami that we also look at the fire-eyed Vedanayam and the fanatic Ebenazar boasting too much for the merits of Christianity and demerits of Hindu religion. But Swami & his companions enjoy their juvenile life, with quarrels and compromises, peals of laughter and quells of sorrow, and the important cricket match between the Malgudi cricket club and the Young Men's Union. Swami's parents and the old granny also play very important role in consoling him for the sake of going ahead. In 'The Bachelor of Arts' Narayan takes the reader to the world of degree college youths who make a fuss over the problem whether historians should be slaughtered or not. Chandran, the hero, is a bright student of B.A. Class. After graduation he faces the problem of unemployment. During his aimless rambling on the bank of Sarayu he comes across the beautiful girl, Malathi, and instantly falls in love with her. Weak in women's psychology, Narayan fails to introduce any woman character in this novel except Chandran's mother who sounds interesting from the point of view of showing unwarranted rigidity and conservativeness on the maintenance of time-honoured customs of marriage. Malathi is informed only through passing references and discussions. Owing to horoscopic disagreement Chandran's marriage with Malathi is not possible. Baffled Chandran goes out for a change and becomes a Sanyasi for sometime. He returns home and agrees to marry any girl chosen by his parents. Narayan here indicates how typical customs
of marriage prevail in the middle class society of South India. With the ironic detachment of a true artist he presents the world of family in which human relations depend more on adjustment with one another than showing a sense of revolt. He portrays quite vividly the complex texture of social and religious customs and traditions, extremely governing a South Indian Hindu family. Obscure caste divisions, and sub-divisions, class snobberies, absurd marriage customs, blind superstitions and tyranny of astrological calculations - all are relentlessly prevalent in South Indian middle class society. The third novel of the trilogy takes the reader to the world of Albert Mission College in which Krishnan teaches English to notoriously careless students of undergraduate classes. Krishnan and his wife Sushila are an ideal couple, appearing in 'Mr. Sampath' as Arinivas and his wife, though placed in different circumstances. In this novel Narayan attempts to show the immortality of soul in Sushila's life after death. Professor Gajapathi, Sri Rangappa, Mr. Gopal, Dr. Menon are Krishnan's colleagues on the college staff while principal Brown, the Englishman, continues to appear again in 'The English Teacher' similarly as he did in 'The Bachelor of Arts'. The psychic communion with spirit remains to be the important event in the novel.

Average Characters.

'The Dark Room' introduces Savitri who is the most loveable among Narayan's female characters. The poignant picture of a South Indian middle class family is drawn realistically to display how the life of an old-fashioned but sincere housewife becomes much of a hell owing to the frequent
fits of anger and irritation of her whimsical and bully husband Ramani. In this novel Narayan draws a pair of two opposite human beings who are tied by a matrimonial knot together socially, but they are unable to cope with each other. Savitri and Ramani are really poles apart in matters of taste, temper and in their respective assessment of social reality. The domestic confusion is worse confounded when a butterfly Shanti is appointed in Ramani's office and brings more misfortune to Savitri. Inspite of her revolt against the designs of her husband, Savitri is unable to bring any change in Ramani's nature. She agrees to live with her husband to lead a life of so-called domestic happiness only when some part of her personality is dead. Savitri has neither courage nor independence of spirit like Gauri, the heroine of Mulk Raj Anand's 'The Old Woman and the Cow', who is placed in similar circumstances of helplessness and hopelessness. Gauri, unlike Savitri, never thinks of committing suicide, but runs away from her husband's house to adopt the profession of a nurse in a clinic with a firm decision never to return home. Savitri is an average type of South Indian housewife who is not capable of taking such a bold step as Gauri in Mulk Raj Anand's novel endeavours. Savitri is capable of sulking in the dark room.

More Complex and Crooked persons.

From 'The English Teacher' onwards we are introduced into the world of more crooked and more complex characters. Most of them are imported to Malgudian world. There are roughish, cunning and worldly wise people like Sampath, Marçayya, Raju, Dr. Pal Mafi and Vasu who refuse to accept anything in a
traditional way. In 'The Financial Expert' we watch Margayya rising from a very humble position to be a very big banking magnet. Dr. Pal who helps him in accumulating more and more money by hook and by crook becomes the root cause of Margayya's downfall. He plays the role of a villain, spoils Margayya's son, Balu, spreading the astonishing news of his impending bankruptcy like wild fire. The result is that Margayya's clients start knocking at his gate to withdraw their deposited money from his so-called bank and within a twinkling of an eye he is reduced to the state of destitution.

Sampath is another crook but he emerges as a very resourceful hero. He begins his life as a printer publishing Srinivas' weekly, 'The Banner'. But very soon he is fed up with printing and publishing and manages to attract huge funds for starting the film industry in Malgudi. It is named as Sunrise Pictures. He employs a number of actors and actresses and technicians for this task. The film is named as 'The Burning of Kama' and the shooting of the film begins at the appointed time. But the infatuation of an artist Ravi for the beautiful heroine, Shanti whom he tries to abduct spoils the whole undertaking and brings complication in the whole affair. The result is that Ravi becomes mad and is subsequently removed to asylum. Sampath, left without any choice, bows out of Malgudi.

**Self-Assertive Demon-Incarnate**

In the entire world of Narayan's fiction Vasu (M. Vasu) is the only formidable man endowed with extraordinary physical
strength, firm-determination and a sadistic outlook in inflicting pain all around. Natraj, the hero of 'The Man Eater of Malgudi', describes Vasu’s huge figure which arouses fear in him and in his happy-go-lucky companions.

"The new visitor had evidently pulled aside the poet—Before I could open my mouth, he asked "you Natraj?" I nodded. He came forward, practically tearing aside the curtain, an act which violated the sacred traditions of my press ... He paid no attention, but stepped forward, extending his hand. -- He gave me a hard grip! My entire hand disappeared into his fist — he was a large man, about six feet tall. He looked quite slim, but his bull-neck and hammer-fist revealed his true stature." 10

H. Vasu is a taxidermist by profession. In the very first encounter with Vasu Natraj is able to know the demonic, pugnacious and self-assertive nature of this taxidermist.

Vasu — I knew of his (Guru Pahelwan’s) weak spot. I hit him there with the edge of my palm with a chopping movement — and he fell down and squirmed on the floor — —.

Natraj — You didn’t stop to help him?

Vasu — I helped him by leaving him there, instead of holding him upside down and rattling the teeth out of his head." 11

In another encounter when Natraj goes to Vasu to request him to spare the sacred temple-elephant, he behaves in an aggressively nonchalant way:

Natraj — Perhaps you are worried we might ask (you) about collections — — (for the sacred function at the temple)...

Vasu — +Who? Me worried? (He laughed devilishly) — — A
hundred of you will have to worry before you catch me worried".12
As against the sentimental outlook of Natraj, Sastri and their
companions scrutinize the breakdown of the joint-family system.
vasu toys with a modern scientific outlook of a taxidermist
(not a zoo-keeper), improving on nature with the help of science.
He is a threat to the old Hindu culture of Malgudi.

Vasu's diet confirms how strong he is:

"I had to eat a hundred almonds every morning and
wash them down with half a seer of milk; two hours later six
eggs with honey, at lunch chicken and rice, at night vegetables
and fruits. Not everyone can hope to have this diet, but I
was lucky in finding a man who enjoyed stuffing me like that.---
In a few months I would also snap chains, twist iron bars, and
pulverise granite."13

Whenever Vasu returns to Natraj's attic of the press
which he had occupied not as a tenant but a guest, his jeep is
loaded with bloody objects. He keeps a wooden chest filled with
eyes, round ones, small ones, red ones and black circles. William
Walsh rightly observes:

"Vasu is not only the present as opposed to the past,
he is also a darker influence opposed to light and grace. Natraj
and his friends express a style of life and habit of sensibility
sanctioned by the experience of generations --- Vasu disrupts
arrangements --- He has a nihilistic and menacing air which
becomes in the Indian context a force not negotiable on human
terms".13
That is why, Vasu takes his place in the "Malgudi community as a rakshasa, a demon, the formidable side of life. It is nothing but his death which brings about freedom and comfort to Malgudi and its simple but self-centred community. The frailest of animals, the mosquito, helps in killing this demon-incarnate. It all shows how Narayan is a skilful artist in presenting such a self-assertive man as Vasu who dies by his own hammer-fist hand and the terror-stricken people of Malgudi once again heave a sigh of relief.

Fake Saints and Real Sanyasis.

Fake saints and real sanyasi have also attracted Narayan to delineate them in his novels. Right from his second novel, 'The Bachelor of Arts' he has dealt with the problem of renunciation with abiding interest. Chandran, the hero of 'The Bachelor of Arts', goes out of home and becomes a sanyasi for sometime. His conscience disallows him to deceive the innocent village folks who take him to be a real sanyasi. As a result he throws out the ochre-coloured garb and returns home to begin with a new life of a normal and hopeful man. This theme of renunciation is similarly further explored in 'The Dark Room' in which Savitri runs away from home and husband and begins to serve in the village temple as a sweeper. She also returns to her hateful home and sulks in the dark room creating little effect on her erring husband. Narayan introduces the fake sainthood thrust upon Raju in 'The Guide'. The unscrupulous Raju is overtaken by Nemesis and in the process he finds himself in prison for a small fraud of forgery. After
He soon becomes famous and attracts a crowd of devotees. The critical circumstances force him to undertake fast for a number of days during which he is allowed by his conscience to let his mind roam and touch the depths of morbid and fantastic thought. It is not the compulsive philosophy of Raju which moulds him into a real saint but the constant service of Velan and the seething humanity of Bengal which moves his heart to make the penance a thundering success:

"Why not give the poor devil a chance?"

Raju said to himself, instead of hankering after food which one could not get anyway. He felt enraged at the persistence of food thoughts. With a sort of vindictive resolution he told himself, "I will chase away all thoughts of food. For the next ten days I shall eradicate all thoughts of tongue and stomach from my mind".14

This resolution gives him a peculiar strength and he is able to develop on these lines:

"If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly? For the first time in his life he was making an earnest effort; for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application, outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested. He felt suddenly so enthusiastic that it gave him a new strength to go through with the ordeal".15
Raju achieves martyrdom at last when a real saint emerges in his heart to serve the humanity and the universe. It is owing to the transformation of his character; his personality is relatively passive. Desirelessness is the ultimate outcome of Indians, and in this way Raju has realized the Reality, by renouncing everything.

In 'A Tiger For Malgudi' Narayan uniquely combines the elusive and timeless quality of Hindu legend and depicts Raja as the hero of this fable. Surprisingly enough Raja is not a man but a tiger possessed with the soul of an enlightened human being who tells us the story of his life. Raja starts his life as a beast in the Mempi hills, becomes motherless, leaves the den only to find himself being captured and made to perform in a 'Grand Malgudi Circus' and on a film set. Everything goes against his wishes, and eventually he escapes, only to be recaptured - but this time voluntarily-by the hermit. The two of them leave the town and return to the Mempi hills where they pass their days in sweet philosophical discourse until old age overtakes Raja and he is forced to give up his freedom altogether. It is here that Raja is enlightened. He has assumed a new appearance, other than that of his species, but indicative of some general beatitude.

In the character of Raja, which is symbolical, Narayan yearns to know 'who am I' The "Tiger Hermit" is a real sanyasi whose deeply compulsive philosophy of life has already enabled him to get enlightened. Since he is enlightened, he also employs his powers to save the tiger, the ferocious beast, and transforms him inwardly. He does so
On the basis that, deep within, the core of personality is the same inspite of differing appearances and categories, and with the right approach you could expect the same response from a tiger as from any normal human being.16

The 'Tiger Hermit' is the best creation of Narayan, indicative of his traditional way in matter of characterization. It will not be an exaggeration to state that it is Narayan who knows to transform the common man into the exceptional being. Of course, there are no Hamlets and Othellos in his fiction, no great intellectuals or statesmen among his characters, but he is well-acquainted with the glory of Indian saints and seers. He seems to believe that the self-improvement is the best improvement and here lies his greatness both as the man and creator of unique personalities.

Women characters.

Narayan has already pointed out in his interview with the onlooker that he has 'no heroines' in his fiction. However, among his female characters, he generally relies on portraying two kinds of women as is the case with men. And these two kinds include typical Indian housewife and ultra-modern, fashionable, butterfly type of women. Among these heroines, Savitri, Sushila, Meenakshi (appearing respectively in 'The Dark Room', 'The English Teacher' and 'The Financial Expert') fall in the first category. These women are traditional, docile, modest, gentle, religious and affectionate. They are deeply concerned with the welfare of their husband's and children.
Among these women Narayan also presents a variety at times such as Krishnan's mother and Chandran's mother (in 'The English Teacher' and 'The Bachelor of Arts'). These women though equally loyal to their husband and children, are, however, more dominating and free in their actions. As opposed to these wise and loving housewives, Narayan frequently portrays nagging women like the headmaster's wife in 'The English Teacher' and the captain's wife in 'A Tiger For Malgudi'. The grandmothers and aunts are also portrayed with a realistic touch as in 'Swami & Friends' 'Waiting For the Mahatama' and 'The Painter of Signs'. Sambu's mother in 'Second Opinion' though standing as a pole apart from her son in the matter of marriage is really Indian mother. This variety of women is rare in Narayan's novels.

There is another variety of women - Shanta Bai (in 'The Dark Room') Shanti (in Mr. Sampath), Rosie (in 'The Guide') and Rangi (in 'The Man-Water of Malgudi') who belong to the seductive or butterfly-type of women. Shanta Bai belongs to the species of artful and cunning flirts, whose only vocation lies in satisfying their own whims and caprices. She is able to tempt Ramani in her seductive grip. Shanti also does the same and the domestic harmony of Sampath's family is at stake. Being a professional dancer Rangi is crude and seldom feels ashamed of her alluring designs, acts and ways of life. Rosie too is obsessive and does not come up to the mark of a domestic woman.

There is another type of self-assertive heroines who appear in 'Waiting For the Mahatama' and 'The Painter of Signs.'
Bharati and Daisy are devoted to their missions and at the same time they exhibit no reluctance to boy-friends. Daisy, more particularly, is a strange girl who knows perfectly well how to tackle a simple and feeble-minded Raman and get his whole-hearted co-operation in her mission. Both Srima and Raman appear to be docile to their lady-love. The post-Independence period has produced such self-assertive women who can show manly-prowess better than men.

Minor Characters:

Apart from these chief characters, there is equally a galaxy of minor characters in Narayan's fiction. They appear to be unimportant and the lower people of Malgudi (South Indian) society. Mari and Ponn in 'The Dark Room', the cart boy and his companions in 'Swami & Friends', Kanni and Gurupad in 'Waiting For the Mahatama', the common people who are Narayya's clients in 'The Financial Expert', Muthu, the potty tea-shopkeeper in 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi' and Gaffur and Velan are some of the examples of this unimportant section of society.

It is evident that Narayan, to a great extent, is traditionalist in respect of characterization. However, he has a large variety of loveable characters who emerge from the soil of South India and in course of their knowledge and experience develop a sense of belonging to the whole humanity. They are a believable blend of virtues and weaknesses as all human beings are.
Narayan's view of Life As Reflected Through His Characters

Sarathushtra declares that life "is an eternal struggle between the forces of Good and Evil". In literature the forces of evil are discomfitted by the forces of Truth, Love and Beauty, symbolizing Good. At times the forces of evil seem to be gruesome and too formidable to have gone their own way, vanquishing the good. But it is only the appearance, the reality is beyond it, on the other side of the coin. In 'Othello', Desdemona sustains a fatal death, Cassio suffers a loss of reputation and physical injuries, even Maria suffers a lot and is killed eventually, but what Iago, the arch-villain, suffers is certainly more than what all suffer on the whole. His whole life at last is a mockery, a perpetual detest, and overbearing to live on. In reality, Iago is in the living hall of this world. It is, therefore, evident that Good is victorious at last, it may appear to be defeated for a while in the beginning or the middle. Francis Bacon who has been called by Alexander Pope 'The wisest, brightest and meanest of mankind' also lays a great deal of emphasis on goodness in man:

"Certainly, it is heaven upon earth, to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth".

It means that man's mind should be controlled first before allowing it to wander into unwanted regions. Narayan's protagonists also try to lead a life free from 'disturbing illusions and hysterics', but they are bewildered by unwholesome
irrationalities of life. At times life is really treacherous, unbearable, detestable and what not. But, on the whole, it is a strange blend of sorrow and happiness. It is not wholly a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, nor is it a bug-bear to trouble endlessly. On the whole it is promising and acceptable. It is acceptable because the dynamics of man's experience induce a pietistic feeling in him for life's continuity. For instance, Krishnan's wife, Sushila dies in the prime of her youth, abandoning her husband and the only child in 'The English Teacher', but her death proves a boon in disguise as the husband is able to win her soul and realize her perpetual presence at home. Krishnan is no longer agonized now. On the contrary, he has a strange kind of beatitude, as he expresses himself:

"The boundaries of our personalities suddenly dissolved. It was a moment of rare, immutable joy - a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death".

There is no doubt that such experiences are rare in human life, but in Narayan's world of fiction, and more truly in the world of his imagination, they have a vital place. They depend upon the man's endeavour, his personal character, sincerity of purpose, purity of thought and action, patience of mind and the force of love. Narayan points out time and again through his protagonists that the life can be lived without distracting illusions and hysterics unless one demands nothing more than the bare facts of life. It shows passivity of mind,
a strong hold on the workings of human mind, which is a rare characteristic, on the one hand, on the other, it sounds meaningless in the present day world where the desire is supposed to be the fountainhead for all achievements in human life. Narayan’s way of life is rooted in the Hindu culture of eternal India.

In 'The Financial Expert' Margayya’s ambitions have no bound, but he returns to his original self only after having experienced shocks and surprises of misfortune. It is the power of love which brings him to the passive existence of life at last. He returns to the bunyan tree with his knobby tin box.

Professor K.-Venkatachari points out:

"It is not resignation that connotes passivity but acceptance that characterizes the attitude which the Narayan hero comes to adopt in the face of experience. Although Narayan hero does not become a 'Sthitaprajana', one who on account of his 'settled spiritual condition' becomes immune to the shocks and surprises of life".

But Narayan hero has evidently a feeling for the continuity of life. He does not show inclination to reject it altogether. In the recent novel, 'A Tiger For Malgudi' this feeling of life's continuity is expressed in the words of so cunning a creature as the jackal who advises the protagonist Raja to believe in sense of cohesion, because life is not at all to be meant for ending in scuffle:
"If you cannot discover a reason to be enemies, why don't you consider to be friends. How grand can you make it if you joined forces - - - if you combined you could make all the jungle shake". 22

Narayan's characters live in their ivory towers so long as they are not tested on the touchstone of life by chance and circumstances which they face in course of their experiences. But Narayan seems to exhort them like Robert Browning not to reject their lives full of ifs and buts and overwhelming irrationalities. They are led to see the "last of life for which the first was made". Life is a journey through sorrow and happiness, and this journey can be made worthwhile only by the forces of Truth, Love and Beauty, already present in the human soul.

Continued Indian Atmosphere in His Works And Descriptions:

Narayan's novels and short stories breathe an aroma of the typical Indian life. This Indianness is reflected in a content and form so identical as to guarantee the artistry of the whole. The value system and point of view emerge in a different kind of narrative, plot structure, dialogue and characterization. The middle class people who populate his canvas mark his works as Indian from within and outside all the way. Narayan is seldom self-conscious, particularly unimmitative in regard to Western attitudes and styles seen in some of his contemporary writers - Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and V.S. Naipaul. He does not insist upon cause-and-effect
psychology, the worldly humanism, affirmation of reality and importance of empirical things. Inspite of his focus of attention to see absurdity in human behaviour, he has a little sense of tragedy, no passion to reform the people and institutions. Narayan seems to consider that the novel is the least satisfactory form for dealing with social ills. And in this way, he differs from Mulk Raj Anand who reflects his passion to improve the society.

Herein lies the clue to Narayan's Indianness. His characters are bewildered by the problems of existence and they get happiness and freedom only when the mundane world appears to them in fact ultimately insignificant. For them the real world is the Eternal Static World of Absolute Being, when they have been confirmed fully about the irrationality of the worldly existence of human beings. It is then they come to realize that the man of wisdom, the sage is capable of viewing the turmoil of existence with serenity, detachment and tolerant amused, faintly, pitying curiosity, Narayan tries to fictionalise the permanent and transitional values through the comic and ironic mode of fiction. In this way, his fiction mirrors modern India deep-rooted in ancient traditions and caught up in the crucible of change. The Sarayu river, the Nempi hills, the Nempi forest, the caves and temples are depicted not just to compose the texture of the external landscape; they signify the elements of consciousness and deep-rooted, affirmative Indian vision.

The typical Indian protagonist of Narayan novel begins as a fallen angel having a marked potential or unconquerable
will for the quest of truth. He evolves gradually the necessary vision. That is why, his characters move from innocence to innocence. Raju in 'The Guide', Margeya in 'The Financial Expert', Jagan in 'The Vendor of Sweets' move from innocence to
wisdom, symbolized by the 'Still Point', the 'Calm of mind',
the placidity in attitude with all passions spent.

Narayan does not depict the horrors of the partition
days in his novels and in this way his India is free from the
problem of communalism. He depicts the struggle for independ-
ence under the leadership of Mahatama Gandhi only in 'Waiting
for the Mahatama' but his concern is little with the proper
movement. The portrayal of Mahatama Gandhi signifies only in the
matter of untouchability. In this way, Narayan's India is not
very much different from the real India. Since Malgudi is
populated by the lower middle class people lost in the problems
of their own lives, on the surface it appears to be the partial
depiction of India having no place for the down-trodden and the
sophisticated people of upper class society. But Narayan is
one of the few writers who don't overstep their self-imposed
boundaries of creative endeavour. Politics, war, sex, crime,
topical problems and the like which a novelist generally exploits
to keep pace with the moving wheel of time have little tempta-
tion for him. To him war seems to be the negation of life.
It has little place in his positive acceptance of life. Incidental
descriptions of sex in accordance with the requirement of the
themes occur in 'The Guide', 'Waiting For the Mahatama' and 'The
Painter of Sings'. The 'Man-Eater' Vasu in 'The Man-Eater of
Malgudi' and Kailas in 'The Bachelor of Arts' are shown to have
criminal passion in themselves. But they appear to be exaggerated as their actions are limited to their personal whims. Kailas is a drunkard and debauch and Vasu is not a man-eater in the real sense of the term as he is referred to by Sastri time and again. He is an embodiment of a perverted modern man who has little sense of Indian morality rooted in the ancient culture of the Ramayana and the "ashabharat.

The world of Narayan's fiction is populous with the examples of buffoons, prostitutes, adulterers, pick-pockets, money-grubbers, drunkards and would-be gangsters, but there is no dearth of virtuous people in it. There is the astrologer who 'said things that pleased and astonished everyone' because his mystical psychology is based on sagacity and shrewd guess work with a matter-of-fact realization that:

"Mankind's troubles' could be analysed in terms of marriage, money and the tangles of human ties". 23

The postman who is acquainted with everyone's business and is

"- - - a part and parcel of their existence, their hopes, aspirations and activities". 24

There is the 'Talkative Man' who is an irrepressible storyteller relying on anecdotes, a jack of all trades who once brought the municipal statue of Sir Frederick Lawley; Dasi, the bridegroom, who was teased into believing that a Madras film-star was inclining to marry him. There is Muni, the mighty-good-for-nothing, who for ever failed his school
examinations yet secretly pitied his classmates' because he believed that he got valuable hints from the school clerk who was not only the 'Omniscient' but also knew all the questions in her son's papers. Swaminathan's Granny, when her grandson disappears, prays to the God of the Thirupathi Hills for his safe return, and on his reappearance prepares to make offerings to the God 'to whom alone she owed the safe return of the child'. There is Savitri in 'The Dark Room' who rebels against Ramani's bullying and indifference by running away from home and prematurely attempting to enter the third stage of Hindu life. Her cook who always has a perennial excuse for being late for work because 'no two clocks agree'. If she wants him to be punctual, she should buy him a watch. All such happenings are usual in India and in this way the whole atmosphere of Malgudi is charged with the aroma of the typical Indian life.

The departure of the British has brought about greater changes in Malgudi. These changes are symbolized by the new challenges occurring in the placid pools of the town. The old generation continues to act as if nothing has happened, the new generation of their grown-up children is too aware of a world outside India. The validity of horoscopes is interrogated in 'The Bachelor of Arts'. However, the marriages of unlike castes. The young quarrel with the old, go away from Malgudi to England, America, eat beef and marry foreigners. They return sometimes to vex and haunt and disturb the uneventful atmosphere of the town. The inward glance of Malgudi is related to India which is being disturbed by new changes.
With the rapid growth of the town, industry arrives. The revolt of the generations marks the arrival of the twentieth century. It is no longer the same old Malgudi of pious people whose love had got no bounds. It is crowded by adventurers, film stars, femmes-fatales, pimps and prostitutes. On the one hand, they pollute the atmosphere of the town and corrupt the simple and common Malgudians, on the other hand they evoke pessimism through their activities and affect the natives with a number of problems. But as the spirit of Malgudi protects its citizens, the outsiders are overpowered and reduced to nothing as Vasu is killed mysteriously by his own ego and the deeply-hidden seeds of self-destruction in his overbearing personality. In this way, Narayan seems to emphasize time and again in a series of novels and a number of short-stories that those who are uprooted from their own indigenous culture and are led to revolt against the well-established social order have to face unaccountable trials and tribulations. This happens almost to all outsiders-Rosie in 'The Guide' is left by her husband Marco for treachery she has committed along with Raju, Dr. Pal in 'The Financial Expert' is belaboured by Nargayya when he is caught with Balu and undignified women of the town, Grace in 'The Vendor of Sweets!' finds herself nowhere when Mali is apprehended by the police for having gone against the rules of excise. Shanti, the butterfly-actress in 'Mr. Sampath' is also led to frustration at last. It is only Shanta Bai in 'The Dark Room' who remains unaffected and unpunished by the spirit of the place. But she is an exception. And exceptions are everywhere.
Archer Rosanne aptly points out how Malgudi brings alive the India of foreigners' dreams:

"Here is India alive: the bazaar shops, decorated with pictures of Gandhi, selling spices, chickpeas, twists of sugar, pockets of cigarettes; streets crowded with children, bullocks, children, dogs and buses; small smoky temples, full of faded marigolds and the sound of drums; the curds, the rice, the little fried cakes; the horoscopes and marriage -- the marvellously practical mysticism. Here are the townsmen, their roots in the village and their sons in Albert Mission College".

Narayan's India... is fascinating and filled with contradictions: ignorance and wisdom, poverty and lavish ritual, and above all the humour of absurdity.

Narayan portrays the contemporary India in 'Waiting For the Mahatma' which revives the memory of the days of Indian struggle for freedom. In 'Swami & Friends' the children echo the vociferous slogans of their elders, and ponder over the problem of slavery under the British. But as the author shows little sympathy 'for the agitators or what they agitated for', his interest is kindled by the brave talk of the youngsters, whom he ought to have seen during his school-days, collecting in street corners and echoing the hyperbolic words of their elders. Even in 'Waiting For the Mahatma' Narayan's focus of attention is centralized on the love-affair of Sriram and Bharati. However the troubled times are portrayed realistically. In 'The Painter
of signs' the family-planning campaign, that washed off the congress government of its feet in 1977, is projected in order to give a glimpse of India of late Mrs. Indira Gandhi's period. How film-producers make a fuss over their shots and what happens in the process is shown both in 'Mr. Sampath' and 'A Tiger For Malgudi'.

Apart from his novels, Narayan's short stories also provide a glimpse of India lived by astrologers, pickpockets, hoarders, artists, wayside vendors, labourers, gamblers, film actors, black-marketeers, beggars, and school teachers. It is certainly in India that we have a pickpocket like Raju (in 'Trail of the Green Blazer') who feels a sense of pity for the motherless child and tries to put the purse back in the pocket of its owner. But he is caught in the very act and handed over to the police. Both 'Astrologer's Day' and 'Lawley Road' are suffused with Indian atmosphere from beginning to end.

It is, therefore, clear that Indian atmosphere continues both in Narayan's novels and short stories. Human relationships, particularly domestic relationships are treated interestingly and whenever the accepted norms are violated, the normalcy is at stake. The influence of the family is conducive in the restoration of normalcy and the establishment of order. The stress on the role of the family is unmistakably Indian.

Popular superstitions, rituals and beliefs in gods, demons and ghosts, much that is fantastic and imaginary, provide a glimpse of the rural India as depicted in 'The Guide' and 'The Bachelor of Arts' and 'The Painter of Signs' communication
with the spirit of the dead and fasting to the extent of
propitiating the rain-god and the credulous faith of Indians in
Sadhus, sanyasins are still prevalent in Indian society, more
particularly in South India where people are religious first and
anything else thereafter. Such beliefs are unmistakably woven
into the fabric of Narayan's novels, which recognizes little
logic. Frequent references to Indian myths and legends, the
exploitation of such motifs as cobras and dancing girls, as
devadasis, the Indian wild life (as in 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi')
and ('A Tiger For Malgudi'), river, lotuses of different colours-
are symbolical and continue to dominate the atmosphere of Narayan's
hypothetical world of Malgudi. But it is evident that they are
depicted, more by way of implication than by way of advocacy.
Individual feelings, emotions and actions, explorations of hidden
human conflicts, human relations within the limits of the family
tend to kindle Narayan's imagination vigorously.
NOTES & REFERENCES.

(10) Ibid. ... P.13.
(11) Ibid. ... P.17.
(12) Ibid. ... P.172.
(15) Ibid. ... P.238.
(18) Thus Spake Zarathushtra : Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras : P.XII.
(19) Francis Bacon : Of Truth : P.46.
(24) Ibid. ... P.9.
(26) Ibid. ... P.117
(29) Review : Kirkus Reviews, 29 (1 December, 1960), 1008.

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