CHAPTER VIII
It has already been pointed out in the earlier chapters that Narayan is a pure artist, seldom susceptible to didacticism, philosophy and propaganda. Remaining a pure artist at the core of his heart and observing life as it is known to him, he interprets Indian life aesthetically and with unprejudiced objectivity. However, his Malgudi world gives a glimpse of India, rather South India, and invites comparison with the locales of Raja Rao, K. Nagarajan and V.S. Naipaul. In this way, the study of Narayan’s Malgudi, Raja Rao’s Kanthpura, K. Nagarajan’s Kedaram and V.S. Naipaul’s Trinidad is likely to bring about more in common among them- selves than with other fictional worlds of English and common- wealth writing. There are presumably two points which may sound irrelevant for a while, and they are that K. Nagarajan is not as prolific and well-known a novelist as R.K. Narayan is, and V.S. Naipaul appears to fall out of the range of Indo- Anglian fiction. But K. Nagarajan’s ‘Kedaram’ and V.S. Naipaul’s Trinidad are reflections of India as relevantly as are Narayan’s Malgudi and Raja Rao’s Kanthpura. Moreover, some of the novels of all these four novelists evince a similarity in the selection of similar material, undoubtedly with a different treatment. For example, Narayan’s ‘The Guide’ and V.S. Naipaul’s ‘The Mystic Masseur’ (1957) evince the curious
similarity "too obvious to have gone unnoticed". The main motif in these two novels is similar - saint-hood thrust upon an undeserving hero. Ganesh and Raju are the undeserving sons of Indian soil. Similarly, R.K. Narayan’s ‘Waiting for the Mahatama’ and K. Nagarajan’s ‘Chronicles of Kedaram’ and ‘Athawar House’ clearly show the influence of Mahatama Gandhi and the reflection of the nationalist Movement for freedom. Their characters have also a curious similarity as they are an unmistakable blend of the East and the West as all Indians are. Meenakshi Mukherjee aptly justifies this point:

"R.K. Narayan and K. Nagarajan are two examples of writers who have been able to write about life as it is known to them, in their particular areas of the earth - Malgudi and Kedaram - without the need to indulge in any generalizations about what is Indian and what is Western. Their characters are the curious blend of the East and the West which all Indians are, but they refuse to sift the elements. Their (Narayan’s and K. Nagarajan’s) refusal to take sides, to justify, to explain or to condemn, is responsible for a good deal of their success as novelists."

In addition to this, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and K. Nagarajan are South Indians and the region and the people that are presented in their novels and short stories are naturally selected from South India. Since all these three novelists hail from South India, they provide the picture of the same region through different names - Malgudi, Kanthpura and Kedaram. Hence their choice and limitations are far
from being arbitrary and unbalanced as they appear to be. The most important common factor among them all is the projection of India both individually and collectively and that may sound at once as contemporary and timeless.

There is no doubt that creating a sense of place enables the novelist to create a sense of life. Like K. Nagarajan’s Kedaram Narayan Malgudi is an unmistakably effective presence in all his thirteen novels to-date, as much as Hardy’s Egdon Heath and Raveloe society in ‘Sils Marner’, or Middlemarch society in ‘Middlemarch’ or Longbourn society in ‘Pride and Prejudice’. The three locales – Malgudi, Kanthpura and Kedaram – donot sound to be as mere settings of effective backgrounds or presence alone but they have other dimensions too. On the one hand they appear to be particular places, on the other they are miniature versions of a larger India inspite of their regional and local dimensions. They appear to be a curious amalgamation of fact and fiction. Naipaul’s Trinidad is located on the map of the West Indies while Malgudi, Kanthpura and Kedaram are charged with imagination and reality. But there is no denying the fact that Malgudi, Kanthpura, Kedaram and Trinidad present a particularly diversified vision of India, which sounds at once real and fictional and presents a microcosmic image of the microcosmic world, providing the study of man in relation to his environment and the greater cosmos.
Malgudi and Kedaram have close resemblances with each other as both these towns are supposed to be falling in Tamil districts and they have similar topographical and sociological structures. The difference is that Malgudi appears in all thirteen novels and eighty-four short stories of Narayan while Kedaram figures in Nagarajan's two novels - 'Chronicles of Kedaram' and 'Athawar House' and short stories published under the title, "Gold Rice & Other Stories".

As Sarayu is the pride of Malgudi, Nilavani also enriches the world of Kedaram. The resemblance exists in the similar treatment despite the fact that Malgudi is a bigger world than Kedaram. Both these rivers are integral parts of these towns.

The Town Hall is also one of the important landmarks of Malgudi, so is of Kedaram. If Malgudians can boast of their Albert Mission, School and college with an English principal, Mr. Browne, Kedaram too can pride of its Board High School with an English Headmaster and a Girls' High School with an English Headmistress. Both Malgudi and Kedaram are enriched with their cricket elevens, the recreation clubs, government officials, teachers, lawyers and several other significant busy bodies of immense values. It appears that K. Nagarajan has obviously derived inspiration from R.K. Narayan for the creation of Kedaram and the similar handling of novel material in his fiction. But there is no harm in deriving inspiration from one's predecessor, at least in the case of a novelist. R.K. Narayan is also indebted to A. Madhaviah and B. Rajam Iyre in respect of a particular kind of ironic humour. Such considerations have nothing to do with the fact of resemblance between Malgudi and Kedaram.
In spite of several close resemblances at the surface level, Kedaram also, true to the Indian tradition, has its links with a mythic past, symbolized by the Kedareshwar Temple and the river Nilaveni. Nilaveni is considered by the people of Kedaram as the daughter of the Mother Ganges. Malgudi, too, has a close link with the mythic past in regard to the river Sarayu which was forced into existence by Lord Rama while passing through his way to Lanka and staying there in Nallappa's grove. But Nagarajan has done better in highlighting a sense of place than Narayan in respect of a symbol of unchanging permanence in an ever-changing and ever-growing world of reality.

Nagarajan provides the glimpses of the town's mythical past and gives accounts of its more recent military history, and thus sounds better, authentic and adequate. In the consideration of Kedaram the reader is allowed to visualize not only the evolution of the town and its society through the ages but also to look into the Indian society in general from the Vedic period to the present day. Koni, the protagonist in 'Chronicles of Kedaram' reveals that transformation has been too slow and gradual to warrant his tears, shocks and surprises. A good-humoured chuckle recurs in his speaking in regard to the changed times, with the inclusion of widow-marriage, untouchability and other seemingly broken conventions of the middle class society of Brahmans particularly. Koni admits that these changes have occurred because of the need for amelioration, and therefore, Nirmala Chari's step to reject her husband and develop relations with Vasu
coupled with subsequent romantic adventure are typical in view of emergence of the new middle class. Koni represents rather the uneducated people of middleclass who are uncertain in their attitudes and instances. In his narration he draws the picture of the earlier decades of the 20th century in which Mahatama Gandhi was regarded by the average Indian as the champion of liberty. The nationalist’s Movement for freedom and the regeneration of society are also mentioned interestingly. Inspite of the favour shown by the intelligentsia and the cultural elite for all such changing patterns of life and values as widow-marriage, untouchability and the rejection of social conventions, the leadership of Gandhi was still doubtful. It is, therefore, obvious that like Malgudian society the people of Kedaram also display their respect for Mahatama Gandhi as a leader of the Nationalist-Movement for freedom but they have little inclination to accept all social, political and religious changes. They appreciate the Mahatama as a cardinal fighter devoted honestly to the political emancipation of the country. That is why, both R.K. Narayan and K. Nagarajan present Gandhi in their novels more ironical than reverential. It is certainly a different picture of Mahatama Gandhi which we find in Raja Rao’s ‘Kanthpura’ where the whole village is stirred by the impact of the Mahatama and the fervour aroused by him for the nationalist-Movement for freedom. The unscrupulous opportunists and blackguards like Vanchinath Sastri are easily able to impress Mahatama Gandhi and become his trusted lieutenants. It clearly shows how cynicism and hypocrisy had become the common factor in the attitude of the English-educated middle class towards the father of the nation.
Considered in the light of this point of view, Kedaram also presents a true image of India like Malgudi and Kanthpura. The difference between the rural and the urban is on the surface; but the deeper difference lies between two levels of maturity, sophistication and culture. Despite these seemingly divergent versions, Kedaram and Kanthpura and Narayan's Malgudi are the symbols of truer and greater India which has deep roots in timelessness and endurance. It is the India of timeless nature, of wonderful landscape whose beauty and majesty have survived the overwhelming onslaughts of time:

"... the Nilaveni meandered among the rich fields whose rich red earth showed among the circumambient blue. It has a vision of beauty, and it enslaved you and you gazed, drinking it all in. One felt uplifted by the sun and the colour and the life and movement with which all nature seemed suddenly endowed. One can understand the ecstasy of the ancients at the sight of the sun rising and setting; it gave the Sandhyayavanadam a rich significance; it was an outpouring of man's ingratitude from the blessings which came from the sun, the giver of all life, a dithyramb of praise to the all-pervasive oversoul which gave the sun its power."

In this passage K. Nagarajan has insinuated the very roots of Indian life and culture. The ultimate source of spiritual emancipation, the inner stability and strength to mystic communion, and the unbreakable rapport with the cosmos are implicitly reflected in the above passage. Our ancient native culture also teaches us to establish the sir
rapport with the cosmos, because the abiding beauty of nature is able to draw the attention of the being in a magical way. These sources provide a look into the perennial beauty which is composed of spiritual strength and is able to charm the Indians to return to it when they find themselves too much in the world and have little time to stand and stare. The old parents of Koni and his wife symbolize the old Hindu order that can still prove instrumental in the preservation of this ancient culture of the Vedas and the Ramayana. The temple of Kedareswar and Forty-five Sannidhi Street stand for the two bowers of peace where the disillusioned and benighted can find ultimate retreat for protection and comfort. Professor M.G. Krishnamurti's observation is quite appropriate in accordance with this argument:

"The temple like his parents, symbolizes for Koni some eternal verities which give meaning to his life and which help him accept his experiences." 4

But the same sun in V.S. Naipaul's novel, 'A House For Mr. Biswas' hurts Mr. Biswas's eyes and makes all others sweat because of unbearable heat:

"The sun came through the open windows on the ground floor and struck the kitchen wall. Woodwork and frosted glass were hot to the touch. The inside of the brick wall was warm. The sun went through the house and laid dazzling stripes on the exposed staircase. Only the kitchen escaped the sun; everywhere else, despite the lattice work and open windows,
was airlessness, a concentration of heat and light which hurt their eyes and made them sweat. 

Though situations are different in K. Nagarajan’s ‘Chronicles of Kedaram’ and V. S. Naipaul’s ‘A House For Mr. Biswas’, the sun is the same. To the former the sun is ‘the giver of all life while to the latter a source of sweat and fatigue. Koni and Biswas stand in contrast to each other.

In Raja Rao’s ‘Kanthpura’ the central point is the place and this ‘sthalapurana’ turns eventually into a Gandhi-purana. The small village Kanthpura nestles among the blue mountains up in the western Ghats, and like Hardy’s Egdon Heath it has stood isolated, remained cut off from the rest of the world outside, and kept far far away from the ignoble strife of the maddening crowd. Nevertheless, it is not devoid of stability in its own social structure, a timeless culture representing unchanging patterns of life which the life-giving waters of Himayathi have survived along with the bountiful goddess Kanchamma. The people of Kanthpura are rooted in the ancient Indian culture and have abiding faith in the protective power of the goddess who has saved them time and again from many a calamity. On the one hand, Kanthpura has been steeped in obscurity and ignorance and has accepted its abstruse Fate placidly, on the other hand it has also maintained the old legacy of religion and spirituality with the help of rituals, worship, Harikathas and celebration of festivals along with the lighting of Kartic lamps. It is on account of these symbolic acts and beliefs that the people
of Kanthpura have shown their liking and allegiance to Avatars or incarnations and felt the presence of their Eternal Light. They have unshakable faith in the existence of incarnations like common people of India and believe that the presence of the 'Eternal Light' would not only protect them from calamities but also save the world at large from darker powers. The emergence of Mahatama Gandhi, as the protagonist Kowthry justifies and lets the people of Kanthpura see, cannot be a political event on the Indian scene but a religious experience in conformity with the Hindu incarnations. This serves as a key to one's understanding of India. Sri Aurobindo points out in his 'The Renaissance in India' that every movement in India, whether political or social, begins only as religious or spiritual movement. C.D. Narasimhaiah has also argued out in a similar way:

"religion becomes the nucleus of social regeneration in Kanthpura in the true tradition of India where social reformers have been profoundly religious men".

Therefore, it is obvious that Raja Rao's Kanthpura presents the image of eternal India as Narayan's Malgudi and K. Nagarajan's Kadaran do, the differences lies in the diversified approaches of these novelists. C.D. Narasimhaiah's observation is apt enough in this regard:

"Kanthpura is a India in microcosm; what happened there is what happened everywhere in India during those terrible years of our fight for freedom".
Kanthpura stands for India in microcosm in another sense. It is a typical village of India when we consider it from the viewpoint of physiographical, civic and socio-economic structures. Raja Rao has woven the fabric of social relationship and living so strongly that the perpetuating ills of society such as strong sense of casteism and untouchability are the part and parcel of this fabric. The deep-rooted poverty in the village life has given rise to usurpers like Linga Chetti, Ram Chetti who grow prosperous and exploit the poor people for their selfish motives. The life up in the Chettis and Skaffington Coffee Estate abounds in the evil of exploitation brought about by the despotic attitude of the European planters and the assistance provided by panderers like Sade Khan. It presents the picture of India under the terrible rule of the Britishers, a hot-bed of tyranny on the one hand and unwanted servility on the other. Moorthy serves as a symbol of small Gandhies of the innumerable villages, who were bent upon to uproot the evils of society and side by side stood for animating the masses to revolt against the repressible rule of the Britishers. Thus, 'Kanthpura' stands for the miniature version of India, the resurgent Sharat, marching forward to make a pilgrim's progress to freedom and bearing on her shoulders the burden of poverty, hunger and exploitation. Above all, it symbolizes the poignant vision of human predicament, corresponding to that of piers the plowman and rising above the regional tone than what it seems to be on the surface.
The developments of Narayan's Malgudi are slow. It does not rise to the level of swiftness and completeness of Kanthpura and Kedaram. Narayan does not intend to indulge in the lengthy details of the place and its history. He is seldom in a hurry to do so. From 'Swami & Friends' (1935) to 'A Tiger For Malgudi' (1983) Narayan lets us watch from one novel to another the slow but steady growth of Malgudi. As Nirmal Mukerji observes:

"It is through little offhand details thrown in here and there that he creates the illusion of the reality of his setting."

Malgudi provides a sociological verisimilitude and a vivid physical impression of South India. The most important point is Narayan's responses to his Kysore surroundings which serve as an essential part of his imaginative life, without displaying little consciousness of his contributing or calculating such an effect.

"Malgudi is quiet, dusty and uneventful, lacking political and social problems, sexual outrage, and hundreds of other things, among them the fast moving hands of the clock. The dominant force in Malgudi is ineluctable fate playing one ironic trick after another on the simple inhabitants who rise and fall a little blandly as fortune dictates. But the bland cosmos of Malgudi is blessed with grace, because its people are innocent and comic - copies of Narayan, with his dazzling smile fixed on their faces."
There is no denying the fact that Malgudi of earlier novels is quiet, uneventful and having no social problems such as communalism, sexual outrage and the like, but its people are not as entirely innocent as Ved Mehta has pointed out. For instance, Ramani, Vasu, Balu, Dr. Pal, Margayya, Raju, Shanta Bai, Sampath, Shanti, Daisy — all are composed of busy burdened minds which will never let them rest. But as Narayan has a balanced attitude towards life, he creates on the other hand, an atmosphere of placidity, spiritual order, and a qualified assurance of man's essential goodness, complementing the perturbations, chaos and human failings which are very much part of day-to-day life of the town. This point of view, for instance can be acknowledged in the observation of Srinivas (in 'Mr. Sampath') who has a deep-rooted belief that life and human relationships obey a law of cosmic balance:

"... things being neither particularly wrong nor right, but just balancing themselves. Just the required Number of wrongdoers as there are people who deserved wrong deeds, just as many policemen to bring them to their senses, if possible, and just as many wrongdoers again to keep the police employed, and so on and on in an infinite concentric circle." 11

On the other side of the picture, Malgudi grows in importance with the introduction of the railway, Albert Mission High School which develops into Albert Mission College, and the appearance of the Taj Hotel with its roof gardens, fashionable shops, and hair-cutting saloons, photo-studios, Boardless Coffee House, Sunrise Pictures, circus and zoo and
so on. The emergence of new currents and cross-currents disturbs the serenity of this town - life insomuch that trouble and disaster become the common occurrences here. The intrusions of outsiders bring about confusion and chaos in the placid atmosphere of Malgudi. We also watch the impact of Gandhian Movement, Family planning Drive, moving the people of the town and disturbing its equanimity. Therefore, the whole history of the town is given through a series of novels. Though Narayan avoids philosophical abstractions except they are relevant and required to a given character's attitude towards life, Malgudi being characteristically Indian serves as a metaphysical idea as well as a geographical reality. Physical setting is permeated by legend and history. Narayan has remarked himself:

"I can't write a novel without Krishna, Ganesh, Hanuman, astrologers, temples, devadasis, or temple prostitutes - - that has turned out to be my India". 12

The existence of Thirupathi and Kampi hills and the river Sarayu indicates Malgudi's spiritually meaningful equivalents of the Himalayas and the Ganges. The local deity presides over the Thirupathi Hills while the Sarayu is the ancient river that was created by Lord Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu, when he scratched a line in the sand with an arrow. While the older generation of the town considers the river sacred, the younger generation finds the river as a means for relaxation, conversation and romance. The town also bears the signs of the impact of more recent history, as Nirmal Mukerji comments:
"With the ancient river Sarayu -- on one end, and the Westernized Lawley Extension area on the other, Malgudi seems to be a curious mixture of the traditionalist East and the ever-changing West. Like the rest of India it is in a state of slow transition. It is changing, no doubt, but unwillingly. It can neither reject nor accept the modern ideas."

The vision of Malgudi as a miniature India is more or less complete after the consecutive analysis of his novels and representative short stories. The vision is total not only historically, socially and culturally but also from the viewpoint of providing several valuable insights into the average Indian character, such as Indian attitude towards political and spiritual leadership, love, marriage, home, human relationships and values, fashions and foreigners, life and death and life beyond it, and the more engaging questions of sin, redemption and regeneration. Therefore, the vision of India as it appears after the integrated study of Narayan's novels and short stories is a profoundly philosophical vision. It is mainly because every novel of Narayan ends in a clear-cut message of return, reunion, restoration of normalcy, order and harmony, serenity and peace. It is philosophical in the sense that Narayan brings out clearly that lost moral and spiritual values, when restored, are bound to result into redemption and regeneration of mankind. In this way, Malgudi is the symbol of India not only as a geographical reality alone but also a social, cultural and spiritual entity."
In comparison to Malgudi, Kathpura and Kedaram, V.S. Naipaul's Trinidad does not appear to be a mythical region. Trinidad can be located on the map of the West Indies and hence it is not like the fictitious creation of Malgudi, Kathpura and Kedaram. However, it draws the picture of India as it is still lived in the West Indies, represented by the Indian people having migrated there during the British era. We are little concerned with what Trinidad is in reality, our main concern lies in the fact how Naipaul has presented it as the valuable part of India in his novels - 'The Mystic Masseur', 'A House For Mr. Biswas' and 'Miguel Street'. The Indian society living in Trinidad is a colonial society which is, on the one hand, part of Trinidad society and on the other hand, it has roots in Hindu culture. This Hindu society still living in Trinidad is engaged in a struggle to preserve its Indian identity. People have retained their Indian names and they still observe Hindu rituals, festivals, cling to several old superstitions, irrational beliefs - such as magic and miracles, ghosts and spirits. Naipaul, being a product of Hindu Brahminical culture, tries to show how the colonial Hindu society is immensely conscious of superiority of the Brahmin and has preserved not only a social and caste structure in accordance with unmistakably Indian tradition, but also several age-old institutions of joint family & conventionally arranged marriage based on the system of dowry. In this society expensive feasts have got their own importance particularly on occasions of childbirth, marriage and funerals. Inspite of all such customs and beliefs, these people seem to have equally preserved the
Indian poverty and some mistaken notions of status, honour and prestige. There is no doubt that they are well-versed in Hindi language, but the recurring impression that the reader gets after the integrated study of Naipaul's 'The Mystic Masseur' and 'A House For Mr. Biswas' is that their medium of communication is English. But this English as spoken by Naipaul's Indian characters has a special brand of their own; it is queer, funny, having nothing in common with Indian English as it is spoken particularly by the characters in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, K. Nagarajan and Raja Rao. Therefore, Indian society living in Trinidad speak a different type of English, having little Indian flavour and brand. Their English is funny and bad as such sentences - 'I glad you learning gratitude', 'I not going to tell you', 'what you go and do now'? - clearly indicate.

There are some characters like Mrs. Tulsi in 'A House For Mr. Biswas' who are accustomed to speak good English:

"Our family is unlucky that way. Think of the worry I had when your father died" -- And when you marry your girl children you can't say what sort of life you are letting them in for. They have to live their fate. Mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law. Idle husbands, wife-beaters."

Inspite of Indian feelings and sentiments expressed here, the language has nothing Indian about it except an odd coinage like 'wife-beaters', nevertheless, the Indian section of society living in Trinidad is primarily Indian. The
fictional world of "The Mystic Masseur" is India in miniature and so is of "A House For Mr. Biswas", though they represent a different vision of India which appears not only superficial and full of contrivance, but also incomprehensive and far from being profound. Naipaul's fictional world presents India which is transplanted on the one hand and on the other hand it is still engaged in finding its roots. The preservation of cultural identity by means of a conscious revival of 'rituals and unifying symbols' indicates that the Indian society of Trinidad is not only ineffective but wanting in spirit which we find in abundance in the Hindu societies presented in the novels and short stories of Narayan, Rao and Nagarajan. In "The Mystic Masseur" Ganesh tries to construct a miniature India in Fuenta Grove and the people living herein are extremely impelled by an anxiety to preserve their identity in view of their old culture. Ganesh's India appears to them as a substitute for real thing. But even this sort of India is taken from them by Ganesh himself who on the failure of Indian rituals here is driven to transfer these rituals to England and becomes G. Raeesy Muir, the colonial statesman. In this way, "The Mystic Masseur" is an allegory, presenting the history of the Hindu community in India. The bitter experience of Ganesh in "The Mystic Masseur" seems to be the common experience of the entire Hindu community living in Trinidad. The novel, most probably, tells the story of its author, Naipaul, who is driven to his own struggle and engaged in finding his roots and discovering his identity. Thus,
Naipaul’s India appears to be a metaphor of identity which he found ‘an area of darkness on reiterated visits to this ancestral land. On the contrary, the fictional characters of Naipaul – Ganesh and Mr. Biswas more particularly – have no expectations to visit their ancestral land and hence they accept Fuentes Grove or Hanuman House as their real India.

The difference between Naipaul and Narsayan in relation to Indian Hindu culture lies in the fact that the former is unbeliever while the latter has firm belief in ancient culture of Hindus. In ‘An Area of Darkness’ Naipaul gives us the background of his childhood:

“I came of a family that abounded with pundits. But I had been born an unbeliever. I took no pleasure in religious ceremonies. They were too long and the food came at the end. I did not understand the language – it was as if our elders expected that our understanding would be instinctive – and no one explained the prayers or the ritual. One ceremony was like another. The images did not interest me; I never sought to learn their significance. So it happened that, though growing up in an orthodox family, I remained almost totally ignorant of Hinduism”.

Sudha Rai points out that "Naipaul is an Indian Brahmin twice removed from the land of his origin by virtue of his grandfather having migrated to Trinidad as an inden- tured labourer; he is a west Indian by birth and upbringing in Trinidad (though the crucial childhood years were marked
by a Brahmin way of life); lastly Naipaul is an expatriate in London, because of self-chosen exile, both from the country of his ancestors and the country of his birth. 16

This fact clearly justifies that Naipaul's India cannot be the real India which we find in K. Nagarajan's 'Forty-five Sannidhi Street' in Vadaram, or in an age-old rural world of Kanthpura, or in the world of Nalgudi where scholars and scamps jostle with each other and people are conscious of their ancient Hindu culture. R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and K. Nagarajan know and discover a greater India than Naipaul can. Raja Rao, even more particularly, seeks to discover a greater India inspite of the fact that he too is an outsider and expatriate. But men like V.S. Naipaul fail to discover the real India because of their negative sense of understanding about the reality of this country. Hence R.K. Narayan is not only a real delineator of India as it is known to him but also a true novelist who seldom believes in distorting the reality. However, Raja Rao, K. Nagarajan and V.S. Naipaul have done well in projecting the image of India very much in common with the fictional worlds of other Indo-Anglian writers. Since Naipaul is an expatriate and more critical than R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and K. Nagarajan, he presents a concept of India more in common with the Britishers than Indo-Anglian writers. A passage from his 'The Over-crowded Barracoon justifies this point clearly:

"Yet there remains a concept of India - as what? Something more than the urban middleclass, the politicians,
particularly when he draws his material from his own locality. He approves of India's Swamis, sadhus, holy men and miracle man despite their charlatanism, insincerity, hypocrisy and fraudulence. He knows very well that however indifferent, insincere, hypocritical and fraudulent a man may be, he is bound to improve at last. That is why, every novel of Narayan is at last a message of harmony, acceptance of life, normalcy and the restoration of peace. He does not lay emphasis on the improvement of society as a whole but brings out that the improvement of the individual is bound to ameliorate the society of which he is an unbreakable part. Throughout his writing career, spanning nearly fifty years, Narayan has remained uncommitted, unattached, objective and with an ideological neutrality. His art of fiction thus lays greater emphasis on reformatory than the revolutionary outlook. But he is firmly committed to the aesthetics of comedy and the ideological acceptance of irrational life as it is in this world. But his undeniable commitment to the ideological acceptance of life is based on the integration of norms, both Indian and Western, in want of which no individual can be able to sail successfully through the ocean of life in this universe. Narayan measures that the Hindu norms of Dharma, Karma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, if integrated with the Western norms of individuality, liberty and fraternity, are bound to bring about the restoration of normalcy, order and peace in individuals. But it can only be possible when the individual remains firmly rooted in his own culture and accepts side by side some ennobling features of Western culture as well. He lays
emphasis on the philosophy of detachment and renunciation because the predicament of the individual mind can only be washed off by the wisdom of the past. That is why despite the local trappings, his novels abound with implicit message of universal validity - to accept life as it is and live in this world freely and happily.

Narayan's continual exploration in regard to the relation between India's classical past and her contemporary society remains a dominant aspect of his form of fiction. He is a perceptive interpreter of the contemporary Indian society which has repeatedly faced the onslaughts of Western culture making deep inroads in the life of the common man. He does not step beyond a set of moral and cultural values which have remained India's legacy from time immemorial. In this way, he is traditional, seldom affected by Western modes and ideas in fiction. That is why, his novels can be read by all and sundry, having no distinction of age and outlook. They provide a flash of hope to those who are bewildered by the pangs of sorrow in their lives and direct them to live without anxiety. But there is a restriction regarding the balance of mind without which the predicament of life cannot be eliminated.

Narayan is basically a yogi and he emphasizes time and again that the misery that we suffer springs from ignorance, from non-discrimination between the real and the unreal. It has become a tendency among human beings at length to take the bad for the good, the dream for the reality, and thus remain perpetually confounded to seek their way into the vast sea of life in this universe. As implicit in his latest fiction,
he emphasizes that soul is the only reality and we have forgotten it due to the worldly temptations which automatically become meaningless when the sparks of wisdom enlighten our beings. As Narayan points out time and again in his novels and short stories that human body is an unreal dream and we are sorrowful and miserable because we think we are all bodies. Hence this non-discrimination is the cause of all human misery. It is undeniably caused by ignorance. When ignorance is eradicated by equilibrium, it brings strength and happiness to accept all sorts of irrationalities which the ironic life is bound to shower on human fate. In 'The English Teacher' Narayan presents the protagonist Krishnan who experiences the ecstasy of soul and thus comes to understand the deeper meaning of life and solve the mystery of death. Raju in 'The Guide' also experiences at last the vitality of his inner being and enjoys redemption, only after going through a series of developments which are required for a Yogi when Raju comes to realize that the soul depends on nothing in the universe, from gods to the lowest atom he is hastened to isolation and perfection. Now he is not at all bewildered by the pangs of sorrow. He attains this state when the mixture of purity and impurity called sattva (intellect) has been made as pure as soul. Similarly, the tiger who is illumined by a real hermit also passes through a series of developments and comes to realize at last that within the forbidden exterior of this body lies the greatest being. In this way, 'A Tiger For Malgudi' divulges a greater mystery of this human life and
provides a deeper meaning which would have persistently concerned the novelist after the publication of 'The Dark Room' in which he brought out how helplessness resulted into the realization of the self. The protagonist Savitri attains spiritual freedom by means of sacrificing herself on the altar of parental duty and thereby remaining subsequently unmoved by the pangs of sorrow. So long as she is attached to her traditional pride of womanhood at home, she is driven to distrac- ting illusions and she considers her life to be a burden on this earth. The moment she comes to realize that happiness lies in doing her own duty well without being driven to impressions which her pitiable condition at home has brought forth, she attains individual freedom. Therefore, Narayan's characters who are common human beings of middle class society reach perfection at last through the illumination of their inner being and here lies Narayan's greatness as a novelist choosing the ordinary material and making it a piece of perfection. That is why, William Walsh favours him with a sympathetic evaluation:

"- a writer of character and maturity" 16

V. Panduranga Rao also confers well-deserved praise on Narayan as a writer of greater commitment.

"Narayan is a writer with full commitment to .. spiritual values and ideas, with which Indians are normally familiar. Narayan's vision is essentially moral, for the problems he sets himself to resolve in his novels are largely ethical. This is not to underplay the comic irony of an
artist much admired in the West; On the contrary, it is his comic vitality that humanizes Narayan's grand vision. The elusive charm of his success is the direct result of a rare combination of comic sense and religious sensibility.10

Rao's views are fully agreeable because the deceptive simplicity of Narayan's fiction has a latent meaning within and this can only be found out by constant exploration carried out to recognize a rare combination of comic sense and religious sensibility. He is a rare genius, inimitable, sincere, modest, diffident, curious and disciplined. That's why, in spite of his regional art as a novelist, he is able to win the attention of a larger reading public outside India, remaining at the core of his heart primarily an Indian.

The purpose of this research has been obviously achieved with a noticeable tendency that Narayan applies a regional approach to his art of fiction because he aims at delineating the life of South Indian middle class people with whom he is personally acquainted and whose psychology is not alien to him. This marks his honesty, sincerity and true approach to deal with the reality. It is through the provincial and localized life of Malgudi that R.K. Narayan achieves a universal vision.

On the one hand Narayan is not a committed writer because he is detached from the definite ideology of Mulk Raj Anand to improve the society, on the other hand he is committed to some moral principles of character and conduct. V.S. Naipaul's remark that 'the India of Narayan's novels is not the India
that the visitor sees. He tells an Indian truth is in accordance with what the visitor can be able to have a glimpse of surface reality. Narayan, in Naipaul's view tells the truth of 'Indian confusion', 'personal bewilderment' of 'the dead horses and immobile chariot of the Kurukshetra temple' where 'Shiva has ceased to dance' may be partially true with respect of changes brought about by industrialization, political set-up and semi-westernization of Indian society, but the reality is that through his novels Narayan depicts how the individual is overwhelmed by the pressure of such changes and the only way to save him from this unwanted pressure is to keep a subtle balance in life; harmony of such incompatible conditions as involvement and detachment, delusion and understanding, materialism and spirituality, vices and virtues, reason and emotion. Thus his art of novel is not 'purposeless' but full of purpose, and it is in line with the Indian tradition.

CONCLUSION

Narayan occupies the highest place in the annals of Indo-Anglian fiction today and his novels and short stories are being tested on the touchstone of universality by a numberless scholars engaged in research work on his fiction. A.K. Narayan once remarked that like a true reality he has become "many things to many people". This indicates his happiness for being a versatile genius and impressing the world of readers by means of abiding interest which permeates his fiction. He is the most fortunate fiction writer having been highly respected in his lifetime and explored by the world of professors and
Though he is hardly convinced with the judgments which are given on his art of fiction by several scholars of the country and of abroad, he is a happy man all the same. His memoir reveals the secret of his perennial interest in writing from the outset. It also throws a great deal of light on his childhood being spent under the protection of his grandmother who was not only a great storyteller but also a great teacher. It is here that he began to take interest in the company of pets - a monkey, a peacock, succeeded by a kitten with a bushy tail, a mynah, a green parrot and a little hairy puppy bought for one rupee from a butler who served in a European house. His uncle was a zealous photographer, one of the earliest as this art was not common at the very dawn of the 20th century which produced this great novelist. Narayan was very often taken together with his friend, the monkey, whom people called Rama, and the boy clearly discerned with delight a marked facial resemblance between himself and the monkey in his uncle’s photographs. He had a clear hope that others would also do the same and detect the likeness too. His great granny was horrified at the idea and had taken the gloomy view that being photographed was to shorten the subject’s life. This all indicates how Narayan was a born visionary having so much interest for the world of imagination. This world of imagination was broken asunder by the school and college life which not only distracted him with unwarranted illusions but also disgruntled him to turn his eyes to the inner illumination of his own being. The result was that his fondness of writing grew day by day and a sort of reluctance towards academic education remained a life-long whimper in him.
That is why, we find rootless intellectuals in his novels.

Himself a product of the British-imposed education, he shows
an understanding of the problems of these rootless intellectuals.
Chandran in 'The Bachelor of Arts', Krishnan in 'The English
Teacher', Srinivas in 'The Printer of Malgudi', Dr. Pal in
Man-Eater of Malgudi' — all face innumerable problems of
employment and are not able to adjust happily in Indian social
order. Narayan himself was not able to settle in any pro-
fession after he secured a degree of the Bachelor of Arts from
Mahanraja College, Mysore, but such difficulties paved the way
for his writing career.

Indo-Anglian fiction before the emergence of Ambedkar,
Raja Rao and Narayan was in a tentative state; it was struggling
like a toddling child. Narayan appeared on the Indo-Anglian
scene with a firm determination to write social comic novels.
He was clear that the Indian sensibility was different to a
large extent from that of the west. He found that 'The pure
delight of watching a novel grow can never be duplicated by
any other experience'. Later when he was writing 'The Guide'
in the United States, lodging for three months at a modest
hotel in Berkeley, paying seventy-five dollars per-month he
was supplied with a single bedroom and study, and daily room
services and a hot plate for cooking his food. He describes
his regimen:
"Nothing much to record, the same routine. I have got into the routine of writing - about one thousand five hundred to two thousand words a day anyhow. I have the whole picture ready in my mind, except for some detail here and there and the only question is to put it in writing. Some days when I feel I have been wasting time I save my conscience by telling Kaplan at the desk, "I am going to be very busy for the next few weeks trying to get on with my book. A restatement of purpose is very helpful under these circumstances. Graham Greene liked the story when I narrated to him in London."
This becomes a major obsession with me. I think of elaborate calculations, a thousand words a day and by February I should complete the first draft. In order to facilitate my work I take a typewriter on hire; after three days of tapping away it gets on my nerves, and I lounge on the sofa and write by hand with my pen. Whatever the method, my mind has no peace unless I have written at the end of the day nearly two thousand words. Between breakfast and lunch I manage five hundred words; and while the rice on the stove is cooking, a couple of hundred, and after lunch once again till six, with interruptions to read letters and reply to them, or to go out for a walk along the mountain path, or meet and talk to one or other of my many friends here."

The workmanlike air, modesty and candour of this passage draw the picture of Narayan as man and writer. He is a dedicated writer, not to any ideology in respect of social uplift, but to his vocation. He presents like an intellectual
the middleclass life of South India at close quarters, but with distinct individuality which preserves his originality. His limitations are: he is confined to a limited range beyond which he is unable to depict depths of pathos that move the very inner fibre; he is good at under-tones but bold and dramatic flashes have no place in his fiction, he seems to have no experience of the drags of poverty, the crushing load of misery, the helplessness and hopelessness springing from communal animosity and the like. That's why his fiction is one-sided, depending solely on the action and reactions of the individual, and subsequent repercussions which force him to recoil into the bower of beatitude. But none is free from limitations. Despite these limitations Narayan is the exquisite master of the art of story telling.

It is obvious that literature satisfies two standards - it attains artistic excellence and serves the humanity in different ways, sometimes giving pure delight and at times improving the society. Literature that is recognized as great by its universal appeal and total avoidance of narrowness in approach, consists of beauty and serves the interest of humanity. Beauty and humanism are the two characteristics of every great literature, and Narayan's fiction keeps a subtle balance between the two. That is to say, there is a balance, harmony and order between Narayan's sense of beauty and humanism. Despite of the fact that he does not assert to eradicate the caste, he suggests to deal with it more cogently and turn towards the eternal India of the times of the Vedas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharat.
The modernity brought about by new ideas, industrial progress, political upheaval and technological amelioration is bringing the world closely together as an organic whole. But this modernity is only the one side of a coin, the reality lies on the other side, in the ancient world of order, balance and harmony, without which the whole progress would eventually lead to disorder and disharmony. Narayan’s novels throw a great deal of light on this fact. Shelley declares that power like a devastating pestilence pollutes whatever it touches, but Narayan suggests that worldly power controlled by spiritual power would neither pollute nor end in devastation. Narayan’s is a clarion call to the suffering humanity, and here lies his sense of balance which is the best contribution to bring the world together as an organic whole. As life is an endless struggle between the forces of evil and good, it is the forces of good which triumph ultimately and convince humanity that the forces of evil are temporary and hence they are bound to be eventually defeated.
NOTES & REFERENCES


8. Ibid. • • • P. 43.


10. Ved Mehta: The Train Had Just Arrived At Malgudi Station; P. 74.
11. R.K Narayan: Mr Sampath: PP. 63-64.

12. Ved Mehta: The Train Had Just Arrived At Malgudi Station; P.54.


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