CHAPTER II
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R.K. Narayan's Contribution to Indo-Anglian Fiction

Every Writer is known to the public by his notable contribution to the realm of writing. R.K. Narayan, like his closest contemporary Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, is a prolific writer who has contributed thirteen novels, three major collections of short stories, three versions of Indian religious classics (The Ramayana and the Mahabharat), a travelogue, a memoir, and two books of essays to Indo-Anglian literature during his long writing career of fifty years. He is 'one of the most respected novelist at present writing in the British Commonwealth', as William Walsh points out:

"Over a period of fifty years of composition he has built-up a devoted readership throughout the world from New York to Moscow. His writing is a distinctive blend of Western techniques and Eastern material, and he has succeeded in a remarkable way in making an Indian sensibility at home in English art". ¹

Professor K.R. Srinivas Iyengar also has a high admiration for Narayan 'who is that rare thing in India today, a man of letters pure and simple'. ²

When Narayan appeared on the Indian literary scene, he had one confessed doctrinal resolve 'to attack the tyranny of love and see if life could offer other values than the inevitable Man-Woman relationship to a writer.' ³ Undoubtedly, he
has remained consistent in his vision. Sex, violence, racial enmity, communalism and parochialism have got no place in his fiction. Inspite of the fact that he deals only with the middle class people of South India with whom he is well acquainted being a member of this class, he is far away from provincialism. He is a writer fully committed to Indian spiritual values and ideas, with which Indians are basically familiar, and his moral as well as psychological analysis of individual's personality, his comic irony, are all in consistent with his essential moral vision and religious sensibility. His novels and short stories are essentially Indian, as Ved Mehta points out:

"... his books ... have the ring of true India in them. He had succeeded where his peers had failed, and this without relying on Anglicised Indians or British caricature to people his novels".

It was the period of the nationalist Movement for freedom which inspired several Indo-Anglian writers to confine their attention to the acute problem of the country and write political fiction. Therefore, the Indian literary scene was dominated by the nationalist agitation, Ganchian influence and patriotic fervour to drive the British out. R.K. Narayan himself remarks: "... the mood of comedy, the sensitivity to atmosphere, the probing of psychological factors, the crisis in the individual soul and its resolution, and above all the detached observation, which constitute the stuff of fiction, were forced into the background."
Thus it was Mr. Narayan who appeared on the Indo-Anglian literary scene and gave a new turn to the novel proper and confined his attention to the problems and predicament of the individual. Almost all his novels are composed of the stuff for which he pleaded in his article in the Atlantic Monthly. He had a rich background of going through the works of great masters of English literature like Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennet, Richard Haggard, Marie Corelli, Moliere, Alexander Pope, Marlowe and Shakespeare. His constant reading of the current journals which his father’s school-library could provide him also helped him in forming a vision, an outlook which steered him in the selection of his subject matter. Narayan is firmly-rooted in religion and family, and that is why the restoration of the family and that of religion are the main problems in his fiction to be faced by the individual in his progress to normalcy. Acute observation, wit and gentle irony helped to establish his place in the realm of Indo-Anglian fiction.

Narayan brought to Indo-Anglian fiction the novel of 'local colour'. In it he uses a thin thread of plot to connect a series of descriptions in which the natural scenery of a South Indian locality represented by his well-known Malgudi, and the salient features of this middle class community, are faithfully drawn. His novels have a value of their own irrespective of the fact that they appear somewhat in the relationship of the photograph to the painting.
Narayan is the practitioner of the serious comedy, which is not only a difficult art form but also requires a balanced view to be dealt with. His novels are the comedies of sadness. This sadness springs from the painful experience of dismantling the routine self. The comedy arises from bumbling, desperate attempt and absurd approaches applied by the protagonists in the exploration of different experience in search of a new but exquisitely an inappropriate role. It is not difficult to discover that the complex theme of Narayan's serious comedies the rebirth of self and the process of its pregnancy or education. As human life on this earth is neither a tragedy nor a comedy but the mingled web of the two, so are Narayan's novels in which the gay and the serious, the tragic and the comic very often lie close together. Smile comes through tears.

Narayan is a great humorist whose chief aim is to entertain his readers. His ironical humour is not a device but a way of life through which he explores the oddities and idiosyncrasies of his protagonists' behaviour. He uses mild satire also but it is kindly and tolerant, except at occasions when he satirises outsiders who have disturbed the silent pools of Malgudi. In "Mr. Sampath" he satirises with some bitterness the 'Zani film industry', the capitalists and financiers, the hypocritical nature of Sampath. Like that of Shakespeare, Narayan's humour is of immense variety; it is all pervasive - humour of character, humour of situation, humour of farce, wit, irony.
Like Jane Austen Narayan achieves perfection by recognizing the limitations of his range and keeping within them. Belonging to the South Indian middle class and knowing it intimately, he draws almost all his characters from this class. From Swaminathan of 'Swami & Friends'(1935) to the hermit-Master of 'A Tiger For Malgudi'(1983) there is a beautiful picture - gallery of immortal characters. Ramani & Sampa, Margayya & Raju, Natraj and Vasu, Jagan and Sambu all hail from the middleclass of South India, but they are almost all drawn with a convincing psychological consistency, providing to them life and vitality. His novels and short stories, seldom vehicles of mass propaganda, also delineate the breakdown of the feudal society and confine attention to the changed ideas in conformity with the family as a unit and perpetual struggle between old and new. But as the deeper study reveals the chief concern of the novelist lies in the analysis of the character of the individual in his course through life. There is a constant search for the revelation of the individual's identity. From 'The English Teacher'(1944) Narayan begins to question as to what is man, or fate or destiny or free-will or freedom and just after forty years the answer comes out in 'A Tiger For Malgudi' that man is the maker of his own destiny and it is in his personal choice to attain free-will or freedom. Stripping aside the garb of belonging to the whole humanity in general and external self in particular, man is a living soul, a wonderful creation of the Almighty, noble in reason, infinite in faculties, the 'beauty of the world' and a hidden angel in himself. The Master who saves the tiger-Raja and behaves like a divine person
-- answers all questions which the protagonists of Narayan's earlier novels raise in the courses of their lives.

Inspite of his mixed cultural background Narayan is a detached artist, convincingly impartial and psychologically profound. His sympathy is with the human being who suffers partly on account of his own human weaknesses and partly because of conditions and circumstances in which he is placed by the cycle of birth in a universal order. This point becomes more clear in Narayan's latest novel, 'A Tiger For Malgudi' which throws a great deal of light on the universal order of the Universe and the wheel of existence, between which not only man but also a ferocious animal like the tiger swings.

Narayan's Malgudi like Raja Rao's Kanthpura, K. Nagarajan's Kedaram, V.S. Naipaul's Trinidad, Wordsworth's Lake Districts, Arnold Bennett's Pottery Towns, appears to be a living region. This region continues to figure in thirteen novels and eighty-four stories and appears to be 'the only hero', as Professor K.R. Srinivas Iyengar agreeably suggests, having 'the soul'. Everything else changes in this mortal world; human beings try to live and they, after a certain time, called upon to die; Names change, there is a change of fashions, modes and behaviour, but Malgudi perpetuates from time immemorial. What a wonderful interplay between illusion and reality is presented by Narayan. It is the spirit of Malgudi who saves its people whenever they are tormented by the evil doers. 'The Man - Eater of Malgudi' reveals this fact as Vasu, the bully is ultimately overpowered by the
spirit to strike his forehead when trapping the mosquitoes.
He has proved unbearable to the Malgudian society and disturbed
the normal order. The world of animals has also been ravished
by him. But the spirit of the town seems to bear him no more.
The temple elephant, Kumar is saved and vasu dies like a
mythological demon Mahishasur, because every demon within him,
unknown to himself, has got some seed of destruction, and
therefore, he cannot always remain invincible. Otherwise what
will happen to the rest of humanity?

In Narayan’s fiction there is reflection of beauty
through characterization, locale, comic and tragic devices
which he applies to perceive beauty and distinguishes it
from ugliness of human behaviour. Almost all his chief charac-
ters at last come to the realization of truth of life which
exists in the maintenance of order, descendance on the normal
plane and a sense of belonging to others, to the unknown,
governing the whole universe. Graham Greene aptly reveals that
Narayan’s "Characters .. on the last page vanish into life". 8

Narayan’s art of novel differs from the contemporary
practitioners of commonwealth fiction. He has got his own
originality, individuality, and intellectuality to perceive
the truth, beauty and love, which he finds being reflected
in human beings, even in wild beasts, animals and birds.
There is a mirage of perfection which the discerning reader
can be able to perceive. Narayan is indispensable because
he is a pioneer of Indo-English fiction; he is indispensable
because his sensibility is without any stress of influence of
others; he is essential because he portrays eternal India with a considerable justification to initiate that normalcy lies in the integration of all good points scattered in the East and the West. Yet it is too good to be deep-rooted in Indian Hindu culture which is based on the principles of Truth, Love and Beauty, forbearance, magnanimity of heart, refinement of soul, selflessness, detachment and renunciation. In this way, Narayan’s art is reformatory far from being revolutionary. Santè Rama Rao who admires Narayan’s art of fiction and comprises a group with him, is right in her affirmation that the ultimate aim of the Hindu is not happiness in the western sense but the absence of desire. Narayan’s presentation of the Hindu faith is very much in conformity with what Santè Rama Rao affirms. Narayan’s rising popularity is the result of his devoted service to the cause of Indo-Anglian fiction which has surpassed the British fiction of this period and has found a place in the annals of world fiction. His great contribution to the development of Indo-Anglian fiction would remain indispensable for centuries to come.

**His Evolution As A Writer of Fiction.**

**First Phase** — There is no doubt that Narayan earned prominence with the publication of his first novel, 'Swami & Friends', but a writer of maturity was born in him with the passage of time. The first phase of his writing career begins from 1935 and ends in 1945, and during this period he published four novels — Swami & Friends (1935), 'The Bachelor of Arts' (1937), 'The Dark Room' (1938), and 'The English Teacher' (1944). All these novels
are preliminary attempts to transcend to a higher plane and this plane was achieved after the end of the First World War. There is a gap of around six years between the publications of 'The Dark Room' and 'The English Teacher'. This gap was caused by the sudden demise of Narayan's wife whom he has portrayed in 'The English Teacher' as Sushila, and has shown her to have come back to the hero, Krishnan. He has recorded this experience in his memoir and has described how impassionately he was able to 'manage to live after her death, and eventually, attain a philosophical understanding'.

This understanding, that death cannot be the end of everything as it seems and the decay of the physical body through disease or senility may mean nothing more than a change of vehicle, helped Narayan in plumbing the depth of his own heart. His search for greater truth of human life was intensified further after the end of the first phase. He became objective in his approach and by dint of Non-attachment and renunciation he was able to invent more significant characters and situations to enrich his fiction. Now he was no longer interested in writing about school and colleges, teachers and the taughts. But it is interesting to note that Narayan could not altogether detach himself from his old matter. For example, Sampath, the protagonist of the novel, 'The Printer of Malgudi', seems to have been developed on the line of the loveable eccentric, Kailas who appears for a while in 'The Bachelor of Arts', and Srinivas of the same novel also has his prototype in Swami, Chandran and Krishnan.
Second Phase: The second phase of Narayan's brilliant career begins after the independence, with the publication of his fifth novel, 'The Printer of Malgudi' (1949) and ends with the coming out of 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi' (1962). It was during this period that Narayan grew in importance and wrote more interesting novels and short stories which brought him great name and fame both at home and abroad. It was a period of freedom and peace in India because the Britishers had been shunted off once and for all from the country. Narayan's rising success had also resulted into happiness and peace. The tragedy of his wife's death had now descended to the bottom of his heart and he had started turning from the inward to the outward with the intention to present an objective observation of life in his novels and short stories. In 'The Printer of Malgudi' (1949) this new change can be envisaged in the balanced and comprehensive view of all humanity which is perceived by Srinivas. And Srinivas is the protagonist with whom the novelist identifies himself and reveals his philosophy of life in this universe:

"His mind perceived a balance of power in human relationships. He marvelled at the invisible forces of the universe which maintained this subtle balance in all matters. —— If one could only get a comprehensive view of all humanity, one would get a correct view of the world, things being neither particularly wrong nor right, but just balancing themselves." 10

This balanced view with all its comprehensiveness and universality evinces a tremendous advancement in Narayan's vision, a mature way to look at things of the world with disinterestedness.
and passivity. His knowledge of human nature, about its
different aspects, began to grow discerningly. The reason for
this perceptive change was that Narayan was trying to cut him-
self aloof from all bitter influences of the past, and his grow-
ing sense of detachment was sharpening his instrument of
expression so convincingly that he was able to produce interes-
ting novels concentrating on the hard-boiled money-hunting
men of the world, during the second phase of his career.

The first reward of this growingly broad outlook was
'Mr. Sampath' the novel of a loveable rogue'. This period from
1946 to 1962 was so fertile that Narayan produced masterpieces
of fiction. 'The Financial Expert' (1952), 'Waiting For the
Mahatama' (1955), 'The Guide' (1958) and 'The Man Eater of
Malgudi' (1962), 'Astrologer's Day and Other Stories' (1947)
and 'Lawley Road' (1956) elevated Narayan at the climax of his
glory. He became famous all over the world of readers. 'Mr.
Sampath' caught the attention of the Indian film producers, and
a popular Hindi film was produced in 1952. Motilal, a renowned
actor of his times, played the role of Mr. Sampath. Narayan's
growing popularity in India and England caught the attention
of the American reading public that also seem to constitute
the largest segment of Narayan's foreign admirers. He was first
introduced to the United States by the Michigan State University
Press. During 1953-55 the press had published his five novels -
'The Financial Expert', 'The English Teacher', by another name
'Grateful to Life & Death', 'Swami & Friends', 'The Bachelor
of Arts' and 'Mr. Sampath' as 'The Printer of Malgudi'. These
novels 'were extremely well received by the critics'.

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In 1956 Narayan got the invitation from the Rockefeller foundation to visit America as a visiting Professor. 'It was not only his first visit to that country but his first trip outside India'. This visit proved a means of varied experience 'as the happy novelist now spent the winter of 1956 and most of the following spring in America, meeting most of the world-renowned personalities, from Aldus Huxley to Greta Garbo. It was here that Narayan wrote his most interesting and award-giving novel, 'The Guide' within three months. It was published by the Viking Press in 1958, and was made into a film in 1964. It also brought to him Indian Sahitya Akademi Award, the country's highest literary honour. At the zenith of his fame and contentment, Narayan had now become the novelist of the public both at home and abroad.

He turned his attention from all worldly success for which he had aspired for since his college days, and looked into the deeper meaning of life. He read Hindu mythology and deduced that 'life is a perpetual struggle between the forces of good and evil'. The result was 'The Man Eater of Malgudi' in which Narayan considerably exploits some of the principles which make the classical myths what they are. The destruction of evil and the inevitable triumph of good, the law of Karma form the major themes of both 'The Guide' and 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi'. He himself explains how classical myths are relevant to modern life;
"With the impact of modern literature we began to look at our gods, demons and sages, as not some remote concoctions but as types and symbols possessing psychological validity, even when seen against the contemporary background."

Third Phase: After the resounding success of 'The Guide' both as a novel and the film Narayan contemplated to write something of abiding value and the three versions of classical epics - The Ramayana and the Mahabharat - engaged his attention most. 'Gods, Demons and Others' (1965), 'The Ramayana' based on Kamban (the Tamil poet) and the 'Mahabharat' can be read as much interestingly as his novels.

'From the publication of 'The Vendor of Sweets' (1969) onward Narayan grew deeper and deeper and concentrated on the principles of non-attachment and renunciation. In 'The Vendor of Sweets' the principles of non-attachment and renunciation form the main basis of the plot of the story, but the experiment is in the preliminary state. The protagonist of the novel, Jagan, the sweet-vendor is not able to renounce the whole of his worldly possessions. In his next novel, 'The Painter of Sign' the principles of non-attachment and renunciation are applied more relevantly in the persons of Raman and Daisy who are poles apart in their views towards the world in general but convincingly identical in their perceptive understanding of the principles of non-attachment and renunciation. In 'Second Opinion' (1982) the hero Sambu and his dominating mother are also poles apart in almost all worldly matters except the bond of love. The theme of renunciation does not grow deeper
than it was expected to be. But the latest novel, 'A Tiger For Malgudi' indicates the finest possible treatment given to the principles of renunciation and non-attachment. The art of the novel is finely ameliorated in accordance with the requirement of the matter of passivity which the novelist exploits subtly to reach the altitude of the Hindu view of life in the most convincing manner. It is certainly the expression of the subtle experience of Narayan woven in the fabric of the story so intensively that the deeper meaning - of Indian asceticism is conveyed through the genuine 'Tiger Hermit' who employs his supernatural powers to save the tiger and bring about its inward transformation. Eight kinds of supernatural powers - invisibility of being, levitation, transmutation of metals, travel in space, control over animals or men, living on air, on water and all kinds of control over the elements - had already attracted the novelist's attention as early as 1942 when he met Paul Brunton who came to India to study Indian philosophy and mysticism. Narayan points out in his memoir, 'My Days' : "

"When I met him I found him a genuine person. I found that many of his experiences, which had sounded improbable, were true... under the guidance of certain practitioners of the esoteric arts in Egypt, he had attained mastery over deadly serpents, scorpions and wild animals, the power to view the past and future and various miraculous and magical powers of not much value in one's evolution".14

But Narayan soon realized that the attainment of such powers would not help in his evolution. He, being a writer
pure and simple, believed in the stillness of the restless mind so as to understand the real self of his being, and reflect it through his protagonists.

The latest short stories of Narayan published in 'The Times of India' from time to time reveal the deeper vision of the novelist who is now at the acme of his powers of wisdom. The story, 'Sorry, No Room' seems to be a sequel to 'A Tiger for Malgudi'. The superb treatment of the supernatural powers - control over the tiger in 'A Tiger of Malgudi' and living on air in 'Sorry, No Room' - indicate how Narayan has reached the altitude of spirituality. It is all on account of his dedication and discerning understanding of the power of the self that he has been raising the question 'who am I?' which has remained a persistent research of both the scientist and the philosopher in this era, in relation to their existence in this universe.

Therefore, it is clear that the art of fiction has been fully utilized by Narayan to present his point of view before the world of readers, concurrently providing aesthetic delight by means of simple translucent prose, everyday humour, and a grand message to control the restless mind for realizing the hidden power of the self or being in this human body.

The three phases of Narayan's writing career insinuate how he has developed himself as the finest writer of Indo-Anglian fiction. There is a grand personality behind his fiction, and this personality is deep-rooted in Indian culture.
through which the best points and principles of the Western culture are discerned for looking at the total reality of the individual in society.

**Popular Appeal of His Novels and Short Stories.**

Universality of appeal is the touchstone of greatness in literature. Literature, as a culture of ideas, aims at universality of appeal, and if it is parochial in tone, it ceases to be a great literature. All the novels which have become classics have universality of appeal, and thus, they are not the property of one province and the country in which they were written by the greater minds of mankind, but they claim to have invited a wider reading public outside.

Professor P.S. Sundaram points out in his critical book *R.K. Narayan*, that 'Readability is the supreme test for a novelist' and R.K. Narayan's novels and short stories 'are eminently readable'. Narayan uses simple words to convey the meaning clearly. Since his subject matter is concerned with the common men who try to become uncommon, returning at last to their former state, Narayan avoids high-sounding and bombastic words which have little concern with the requirement. Clarity of language and expression depends very much on the clarity of ideas of the man, and Narayan is unquestionably clear in his ideas. His chief aim is to delight his readers, and this delight is the result of stories which he narrates through the medium of a simple language. Like Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao he also writes about India, but unlike them he is not an
experimenter in the field of English language. He chooses the conventional idiom of the people and characteries purity and simplicity to his diction, in his novels as well short stories. As Narayan finds no difficulty in handling the English language, the language of his novels and short stories poses no problem to his readers. This quality indicates a direct outcome of the author's attitude towards English language. In his interview with William Walsh he says:

"Until you mentioned another tongue I never had any idea that I was writing in another tongue. My whole education has been in English from the primary school, and most of my reading has been in the English language... I am particularly fond of the language. I was never aware that I was using a different, a foreign language when I wrote in English because it came to me very easily. I can't explain how. English is a very adaptable language. And it is so transparent it can take on the tint of any country."^{16}

There is hardly any striving after effect in Narayan language. He uses small sentences to convey his meaning and seldom beats about the bush. His tight grip is on the subject - matter immediately and the object of his description is at once introduced at length. William Walsh's views are agreeable:

"The modesty, candour and the workmanlike air... so characteristic of Narayan the man, are also the marks of Narayan the writer. Expression follows character, manner,
temperament. In particular the cool clarity with which Narayan considers himself, ... so in the novels the limpid quality of the felling is the result of the calm and unsurprised scrutiny.\textsuperscript{17}

There is certainly Gandhian simplicity in Narayan's manner of expression. He is an accomplished writer with a deceptively effortless narrative style. But his simplicity is deceptive because there are sparks of wisdom below the surface, and when the reader enters the world of his fiction he would have no idea about such wisdom at the outset. It is the end, the resultant of his fiction, which is more meaningful and significant than the beginning and the middle.

Narayan avoids both the victorian high-polished literary prose and verse rhythm and English public school slang in his novels and short stories. His Malgudians are pedestrians mostly; the novelist himself must have a jaunt on foot everyday of four to five miles. His style, therefore has a pedestrian quality. Dr. K.C.Bhatnagar agreeably points out that:

"Narayan's style is not like the vigorous, sensational, colourful style of Manohar Mulgankar who presents to us situations which are melodramatic, even macabre. Narayan's diction, his sentence - structure, his syntax - present no problem to a lay reader. He avoids all journalistic, telegraphic or 'poetic' mode of Narration. His entire effort is directed to imparting the speech-rhythms of the middle class people of Malgudi. In this effort he is eminently successful."\textsuperscript{18}
There is no doubt that Narayan's language seldom obtrudes; it neither detracts from nor adds to his qualiﬁcation as an artist. It is because of his reluctance to experiment with the nuances of language which causes some gaps and unsatisfactory moments. For instance in 'The English Teacher' the protagonist of the novel, Krishnan says that his father is "fastidious and precise in handling the English language, though with a very slight pomposity". (P.18), but there is hardly any revelation in the language of the novel. In 'The Guide' also the abusive language of Raju's schoolmaster is never demonstrated; a tame allusion is given to his description that the oldman was one "who habitually addressed his pupils as donkeys and traced their genealogy on either side with thoroughness". (P.24). Inspite of several scenes of anger in his novels and short stories, the strongest curse is 'you earthworm' ('The Financial Expert' P.15). Vasu in 'The Man - Eater of Malgudi presumably speaks with an American style picked up from 'crimebooks and films' (P.30), but the sole indications are but an occasional "wise guy" (P.17), "Yeah" (P.30), or 'eh' (P.30).

But these are small weaknesses. Narayan's love for English language has remained supreme, because he does not write in his mother-tongue, Tamil. At the outset of his writing career, he must have also pondered over a problem of the medium of expression which baffles Jagan in 'The Vendor of Sweets': "He wanted to know which language his son's Muses accepted, whether Tamil or English. If he wrote in Tamil he would be recognized at home; if in English, he would be known in other countries too"(P.48).
Professor P.S. Sundaram takes a tolerant view of Narayan's English which is like a best used tool in his hand. If one has learnt it by heart and has a good luck to master it at an impressionable age, one should use it.

As the writer is much more than the language, Narayan's zest for life and all its creatures, his modesty, his irony, his universal sense of humour, the complete absence of pomposity and pretence, acceptance of life despite its irrationalities and broadness of outlook with scriptural detachment are the qualities of his fiction which have brought about authenticity and all round popularity both at home and abroad. He is the most popular and widely known fiction writer of India. He has created immortal characters like Raju, Margayya, Vasu, Raman, Kailas, Marco, Rosie, Sushila, Daisy, Raman, tiger-Raja, the hermit-master who echo in the memory long after they have been read in the fictional stories of Malgudi. The wonderful creation of the hypothetical town of Malgudi is a magnificent contribution of Narayan to Indo- Anglian fiction. Inspite of his popular as well as universal appeal he is thoroughly Indian in the selection of his themes. He renders the Indian sensibility in a western art form. His art is a curious amalgamation of western method and eastern material. He presents a full circle, indeed in the noblest tradition of Hindu philosophy - "in my beginning is my end, in my end is my beginning".

Both reason and imagination find their pabulum in Narayan's fiction. It has been pointed out by literary critics that life is a comedy to those who think and tragedy to those
who feel, and, no doubt, Narayan's fiction does not arouse feelings but it certainly tickles the reader's imagination and induces him to look into himself with a reformative motive and develop a sense of belonging to the whole humanity. He has some qualities of Rabindranath Tagore in his character, and his personality is endowed with universality of vision.

That is why, Narayan has the admiration of eminent men of letters for writing realistic fiction. Graham Greene, E.M. Forster, Somerset Maugham, Elizabeth Bowen, Henry Miller, Compton Mackenzie, Anthony West, John Updike, V.S. Naipaul—all have high admiration for his fiction. No other Indi- Anglian novelist is more reputed than Narayan both in the creative and the critical literary circles of the world. It is all due to the presentation of illusion and reality lying side by side, reflecting the truth of life, the truth which Narayan's penetrative eye may perceive in the lives of the South Indian middle class people. Narayan aims at the individual man who typalizes the man in Indian society and explores his nature with details at length so as to arrive at the logical conclusion.

V.S. Naipaul criticizes Narayan for his aimlessness:

"The virtue of Narayan are Indian failings magically transmuted. I say this without disrespect . . . . He seems for ever headed for that 'aimlessness' of Indian fiction."

but he admires his

"... honestly, his sense of humour and above all . . . his attitude to total acceptance. . . . the India of Narayan's
novels is not the India the visitor sees. He tells an Indian truth. 19

As Walter Allen points out that there is hardly any doubt that different novelists have different theories about their art, the basic fact of resemblance cannot be denied that most important to everything else is

"... the obsession to create character and story which can only artificially be separated from an image of life." 20

And Narayan's novels agreeably concentrate on these elements. He is a comedian, but a serious comedian, who knows fully well that in this period of changing values the individual mind should maintain balance, to accommodate himself in the existing conditions. He presents the study of the individual mind which is at a loss to avoid wayside temptations. When these temptations turn into obsessions they not only deprive the person of enjoying a peaceful life, but also bring about his downfall. He projects the image of Indian life which he knows very well. What happens to his characters may happen to almost all individuals who start the journey of life without planning. Being a contemplative writer, Narayan serves the world in detachment from it. If he depicts Indian failings sincerely, it cannot be called his aimlessness. His aim is more or less reformatory, far from being revolutionary. He seems to insinuate that the fault does not lie in the world and the society but in the individual mind which is obsessed with any type of idea - money or ambition or love or any inanimate object. When the
individual mind is illusioned by the nation that the person is
going to become extraordinary, and the reverse happens at last,
he is enlightened spiritually. This happens to almost every
protagonist of Narayan novels.

It is Narayan's popular appeal which has brought him
in the line of front-rank novelists of the world. He, on account
of his universal vision, large humanity, detached view and
everyday humour and psychological insight, is able to win the
attention of the large - reading public of the world. His two
novels - 'Mr. Sampath' and 'The Guide' which were converted
into successful films have justified how dramatically interest-
ing writer he is, with a view to giving a cinematographic
picture of life.

As a Story - Teller

Story - telling aspect is the primary characteristic
of Narayan's art of novel. He is a story-teller first and
foremost. There is no denying the fact that the basis of the
novel is a story which is a 'narrative of events artistically
arranged in a time sequence'. Narayan's novels are slender
and straightforward, tragi-comic in tone, telling the stories
of middle class people of South India who are troubled by the
problems of marriage money and tangles of human ties. Narayan
tells stories with simple and straightforward clean English
using traditional idiom of the people. As style is the man,
Narayan is very simple and unaffected, so is his language.

Readability
"... is for Narayan the supreme test for a novelist. His own novels are eminently readable".

Narayan is a traditional story teller as he points out in his following comments he made in 1953:

"All imaginative writing in India had its origin in 'The Ramayana and the Mahabharat' ... An author would pick up an incident or a character out of one or the other and create a new work with it."

In his 'God, Demons and Others' Narayan gives a relevantly convincing description of a village story-teller who has really no doubt about the originality and authenticity of the Vedas. They contain within them all that is needed for man's salvation at every level. Every story that the narrator tells has in it a philosophical and moral significance and an understanding to distinguish between good and evil. Narayan's stories are also philosophical and have moral significance. Being a moral analyst and the penetrative observer of human nature, Narayan has a firm belief that 'everything is bound to come out right at last'. The result may be delayed for a long time and the simple humanity may suffer, but there is no doubt about the ultimate triumph of good over evil. It may be for sometime that the

"... strong man of evil continues to be reckless until he is destroyed by the tempo of his own misdeeds. Evil has in it, buried subtly, the infallible seed of its own destruction". 22

The difference between the ancient story-teller and
Narayan is that the latter avoids in his stories the 'didactic interludes' which are so common and hackneyed in classical stories, Narayan's are written 'Out of the impact of life and persons around him. But he applies the classical tradition in his serious and comic focuses. Two examples from his novels and short stories can serve as illustration: 'The Man - Eater of Malgudi' and 'Half-a-Rupee Worth' from Lawley Road.

In 'The Man - Eater of Malgudi' Vasu, the taxidermist, is worked out in terms of classical model. He is a terror to the whole community of Malgudi. Narayan points out in his 'Gods, Demons and Others' that the demons 'undertake intense penance, acquire strange and unlimited powers and harass mankind and godkind alike until a redeemer appears and puts them out.' (p. 8).

Vasu is a giant of man and his intense penance consists of a row of self-control as not to use his enormous physical strength indiscriminately. He is a modern version in the true demoniac tradition in the sense that he exercises the demoniac power of death over life. His death brings about a regeneration of Malgudian mankind. 'Half-a-Rupee Worth' also has a clearly contrived 'moral significance' because Subhash with an all-consuming greed is himself consumed by it. He is a wealthy rice merchant whose greedy nature persuades him to hoard grain in order to amass colossal profits during the period of shortage and inflated prices. He declares that rice is not virtually procurable. The starving poor are forced to pay exorbitant prices. His death is ironically important as he dies when a pile of rice bags fell upon him and crushed him
beyond recognition while he is engaged in fetching from his secret supply half-a-rupee worth of rice for a desperate customer. The story presents a moral in accordance with the well-quoted saying of the classical tradition that 'evil has in it, buried subtly, the infallible seed of its own destruction'.

Inspite of his detachment and objectivity in the treatment of his subject-matter, Narayan indirectly pleads for cultural integrity. He is deep-rooted in Hindu religion and family as he points out in his interview with Ved Mehta:

"To be a good writer anywhere you must have roots — both in religion and family. I have these things". 23

With all these beliefs and commonsense Narayan tells the stories of the South Indian people with whose psychology he is well-acquainted. He writes with complete objectivity, quaintly blending humour and irony and sympathetically laying his finger on the idiosyncrasies and angularities of his characters. His little town Malgudi forms the locale of all his thirteen novels and eighty-four short stories which present members of the south Indian middle-class engaged in an unavoidable struggle "to extricate themselves from the autocratic of the past". 24

Since the action of Narayan's novel is centred in the mythical town of Malgudi, much attention is bestowed on topographical details. If all his novels are read in their chronological order, the sagacious reader is not only well-acquainted with the landmarks of Malgudi but also is well-informed about the improvement which has taken place over this town in course of time.
Narayan uses the most simple form of prose fiction and his story records a succession of events. Plot and character are inseparably knit together. The qualities which are attributed to these characters become instrumental in determining the action and the action in turn progressively transforms the characters so that the story could be carried forward to the end. Being a good story-teller and believing in a systematic handling of the story he divides it in a beginning, a middle and an end. The end of his novel brings about a solution of the problem which has set the event moving. The end sounds a completeness in itself so much so that there is hardly any possibility for the movement and progress of the action beyond it. The end very often brings about a balance of forces and counterforces, or death or both. For instance, Raju in 'The Guide' dies at last, Vasu in 'The Man Eater of Malgudi' is also killed by his own fist; the death of the former results into the happiness of the villagers of Mangal who have been awaiting the rains helplessly and the demise of the latter brings about the restoration of normalcy and peace in Malgudi. It is, therefore, clear that Narayan's novels admirably possess all good qualities which are attributed to a good novel by Somerset Maugham:

"... a novel is to be read with enjoyment. If it does not give that, it is worthless ... It should have a widely interesting theme ... the story should be coherent and persuasive; it should have a beginning, a middle and an end, and the end should be the natural consequence of the beginning. The episodes should have the probability and should not only develop
the theme, but grow out of the story. The creatures of the
novelist's invention should be observed with individuality, and
their actions proceed from their characters". 25

The technique of Narayan's narrative is simple and
straightforward. He has published thirteen novels during the
period of forty-eight years (his first novel, 'Swami & Friends'
was published in 1935 and the latest 'A Tiger For Malgudi'
in 1983. In all these thirteen novels he uses both subjective and
objective modes of narrative. His first three novels -
'Swami & Friends' (1935), 'The Bachelor of Arts' (1937) and
'The Dark Room' - are traditional and conventional in regard to
the objective mode of narrative. Narayan is the omniscient author
writing in the third person in 'Swami & Friends', 'The Bachelor
of Arts', 'Mr. Sampath', 'The Financial Expert', 'Waiting for
the Mahatama', 'The Man Eater of Malgudi' and 'The Vendor of
Sweets', and 'The Dark Room'. In 'The English Teacher' he uses
the first person and empathises with the protagonist Krishnan.
In this way, the hero becomes the narrator himself. This
subjective technique is in accordance with the demand of the
purpose and effect of narration. The story deals with a
difficult theme of psychical contact with the spirit; Krishnan
establishes this contact with the spirit of his deceased wife and
it brings about a psychological change in the protagonist
and enables him to solve other worldly problems. In 'The Guide'
also Narayan deviates from the traditional mode of narration;
part of the story is told by him and the remaining part in the
first person by the hero himself. Narayan certainly improved the
technique of narration in 'The Guide' because it was necessiated
by the nature of the story. The novel begins with the release of the hero, Raju, from the central jail in Malqudi. The author tells the life of Raju after his release from Jail while the hero narrates his life, before he was imprisoned, in a series of flashbacks and eventually in a form of confession to Valen who has mistakenly regarded him as a saint. This double narrative technique helps in making the figure of the hero more sharp and effective and real than the rest of the important characters in the novel. The development in Raju's character is brought about by certain events which in turn change his personality and hasten him to forget his outer self. He accepts the role of a saint willy nilly and goes on fasting in order to propitiate rain for the drought-affected area of Malqudi town. His enlightenment is in response to the expectations of a crowd of villagers who are not only his admirers but also worshippers in the real sense of the term. Therefore, it is obvious from this example that character and action develop concurrently and influence each other in the process.

In 'The Man Eater of Malqudi' the technique of the first person narrative is successfully used. Narayan empathizes with Natraj, the printer, through whom he conveys the essentially Indian conception of life - "dharma protects those who protect dharma and dharma destroys those who try to destroy dharma". Vasu, the taxidermist and a terror to Malqudians, is absolutely against this dharma. He tries to destroy it and is himself destroyed in the process. Therefore, the technique of first person narrative is used in accordance with the
requirement of the nature of the story. The same technique has also been applied in the latest novels of Narayan - Second opinion (1982), and 'A Tiger For Malgudi' (1983). The characters of Sambu and Raja are developed by a series of events, which in turn change their personalities. Raja, the hero of 'A Tiger For Malgudi' is not a human being, but a tiger who passes through a series of events, as do the other protagonists of Narayan's novels, and eventually explores the pathway to enlightenment. 'A Tiger For Malgudi' is a haunting tale, uniquely combining the elusive timeless quality of Hindu legend with the universal comic vision of the author.

Inspite of Narayan's affinity to a typically Indian tradition of story-telling, he gives an indirect message to his reader. He is perchance a 'moral-analyst', but seldom imposes his views on his reader. Through his stories he analyses the individual feelings, emotions and actions and tries to explore the latent human conflicts. He seldom aims at preaching and pontificating. Narayan is, undoubtedly, the traditional Indian story - teller, but he adopted his form and style from the west.

Narayan relies on his very minute observations and subtle ironic and harmonious way of story - telling. It sounds to be the keynote of his interest. There is 'scarcely audible laughter shot through all the incidents in his novels. Professor P.P. Mehta's views are agreeable;
"His characters sometimes do great and heroic things, but it is more by accident than by design. — The intellectual interest is the main spring of his inspiration and that is the angle from which he approaches all the aspects of his subject-matter. The result is that he analyses actions and diagnoses motives. All these lead to subtle under-current of humorous remarks. — The intellectual type of humour hovers over every page of Narayan". 26

His Plot — Construction

The plots of Narayan's novels follow a set formula; Order — Disorder — order again. In his novels it is evident that life seldom takes a straight course. Whatsoever may be the human wishes, the final result of all efforts is unpredictable, and therefore, it is better to put up a good and jolly face against all this predicament than feel aggrieved about it. That is why, Narayan keeps a balance between the tragic and comic incidents which happen by turn in the lives of his protagonist. He starts with the idea of character but plot and character are so well-knit that there is a unity of design. He divides his story in three parts: the part one consists of beginning which may be called order, the second designs the process of action in which there is disorder, and the third part comprises the restoration of normalcy and order.

Since Narayan's approach to his subject-matter is that of a detached artist, his plots reflect this objectivity. In regard to the average English novel or Hindi novel it is
commonly noted that it consists of a number of characters and incidents which are woven round a young, handsome hero and heroine, eventually ending with the happy chimes of marriage bells. But Narayan, far from being a geltestist, seldom plans the subject too elaborately. He himself points out:

"I can write best when I don't plan the subject too elaborately --- All I can settle for myself is my protagonist's general type of personality - my focus is all on character. If his personality comes alive, the rest is easy for me." 27

It means that Narayan's basic concern is with the character and the plot comes secondarily. However, Narayan gives interesting and startling stories which are very often episodic and with his usual habit of scene-painting. Both his characterization and plot-construction are blended with realism and fantasy. As it is evident from the slender sizes of his novels hardly covering round two-hundred odd pages, Narayana avoids complicated contrivances and ingenuity. The interest and motives of his protagonists are so simple that there is seldom any need of complex plots and conscious or deliberate skilful contrivances. The blend of comic with serious, real with fantastic is so perfect and well-designed that the plot is enriched with order and harmony.

'The Guide' is a representative novel of Narayan. From this novel it is evident that the framework of a Narayan novel is seldom mechanical or external. There is no place for thrills and sensations, long lost heirs and accidental discoveries. The action flows smoothly out of the protagonist and
in turn it influences and moulds the character. A Narayan
hero is just ordinary and his novels treat of the subtle
realities of the common man - whether he is a student, a teacher,
a printer, a financial expert, a champion of emancipation, a
guide, a shopkeeper or a painter of signs - and they are
more diverting than disturbing. Inspite of differences of
plot and protagonist, Narayan's novels are all of a piece in
the way that they all centre on transcendence and renewal of
life, resting eventually on a Wordsworthian "tranquil restoration".
The events in his novels which indicate the texture of common
experience define the prevailing circumstances with regard to
the development of characters and concurrently suggest a kind
of dialectical progress towards spiritual maturity. The demands
of life are seldom denied there. Almost all heroes of Narayan's
novels are placed in a characteristic struggles and they are
continually involved in crises on account of their naivete of
being common human beings. All these heroes are a comic blend
of virtue and weakness, as a large number of human beings are,
and their continual involvement in crises imply a series of
experience which hardly varies in its essentials from novel
to novel. There is no doubt that the conditions as well as
convolutions of the struggles do differ from novel to novel
because much depends upon the particular protagonist's
predilections and propensities in relation to profession and
purpose, the individual struggles highlight a common predicam-
ment or pattern which can only be discerned beneath diversity.

That Narayan uses archetypal pattern in the structure of
plot and character, can be discerned from the major novels -
'The Bachelor of Arts', 'The Dark Room', 'The English Teacher', 'Mr. Sampath', 'The Financial Expert', 'The Guide', 'The Man-Eater of Malqudi', 'Second opinion' and 'A Tiger For Malqudi'. Examples of this archetypal pattern, according to Arthur Koestler are:

"...the death and resurrection motive; the extension of sexual duality into the metaphysical polarities of masculine logic and feminine intuition, mother earth and heavenly father etc., the strife between generations and its counter-point...the urge to penetrate to the ultimate mystery...and the resigned admission that reality is beyond the mind's grasp, hidden by veil of Maya...These perennial patterns of victory and defeat recur in ever-changing variations throughout the ages, because they derive from the very essence of the human condition - its paradoxes and predicaments. They play an all important part in literature, from Greek tragedy down to the present, permeating both the whole and the part: the plot and the images employed in it."

The strife of generation and then convincing reconciliation between the old and the new form the important part of the plot of 'The Bachelor of Arts'. Chandran revolts against the orthodox social customs of horoscopic agreement in marriage and his frustration induces him to the extent of abandoning his home and becoming a sanyasi. This strife of generation becomes the cardinal point in 'The Vendor of Sweets'. The death and resurrection motif is adroitly explored in 'The Guide'. In the recent novel, 'Second Opinion' the strife of generation again appears and is treated more interestingly
than in 'The Bachelor of Arts' and 'The Vendor of Sweets'.
The ultimate reality occupies the most important place and
attention in 'A Tiger For Malgudi'.

The ends of Narayan's novels, to a great extent, are
shrouded in ambiguity. In 'Swami & Friends' the ambiguity
remains to hold much critical attention at the moment when
the train departs carrying Rajam and Swami is left with Mani
to discuss whether Rajam has resumed the similar friendship
with him or not. In 'The Dark Room' Savitri comes back home
sacrificing her ego on the altar of parental love, but nothing
is said about Ramanji's relation with his beloved Shantabai
whether he has cut himself aloof or still enjoys company with
her illegitimately. In 'The Guide' also the end of the novel
invites considerable critical attention and different inter-
pretations have been offered by different critics. For
instance, Uma Parameswaran expresses her view that Raju does
not die in the river but is saved by a Glucose-Saline injection,
living on and enjoying his reputation as a Mahatama. Whether
the same happens to Raju or not depends on psychological inter-
pretations and needless argumentation. But the fact cannot be
denied that the end of 'The Guide' is a fine instance of the
effective use of ambiguity. If Raju has died in the real sense,
then his self-realization which happens at the last moment cannot
be said to have served the humanity further. But as there
should be a correlation between what the author expresses
and the reader understands, Raju dies actually and it would not
only be out of the point to develop the idea of his being alive
further but also be futile to turn away from the writer's point
of view. Narayan has himself clarified about his hero's
death in his memoir, 'My Days', which he discussed with his
champion Graham Greene:

"While I was hesitating whether to leave my hero alive
or dead at the end of the story, Graham Greene was definite
that he should die. So I have on my hands the life of a man
condemned to death before he was born and grown, and I have
to plan my narrative to lead to it. This becomes a major
obsession with me." 29

Unity of time and unity of place are the key-note of
Narayan's plots. He keeps them intact more for aesthetic
reasons. He seldom goes beyond his recurrent locale, nor do
so his characters, with a few exceptions; as Chandran goes to
Madras and returns sadder, Balu in 'The Financial Expert' gets
more corrupted and Mali in "The Vendor of Sweets" loses his
Indianness completely because of his sinful living with Grace,
the half-American and half-Korean girl and defiance to every-
thing Indian.

So far as Narayan's plots are concerned, his art lies
in artlessness. His is an art that conceals art. His plots have
a delightful mixture of realism, fantasy, poetry, perception and
gaiety. As a novelist of purity and simplicity he stands alone
among Indians writing in English, there seems none else to
have the like distinction.
Impact of Social, Political & Religious Conditions:

Narayan differs from his closest contemporaries - M.R. Anand and Raja Rao whose art of the novel is based on political and religious consciousness. He seldom uses the medium of the novel for any purpose other than giving aesthetic pleasure to his readers. He writes his novels with no ulterior motive of presenting any problem. However, it does not mean that he is aimless. His aim is to please and not to instruct. As every writer is influenced by his conditions, Narayan could not escape the impact of social and religious conditions which became instrumental in the evolution of his personality as a writer. He shows his reluctance towards politics because a pure and simple person of his calibre would have hardly preferred to political buffoonery. He was inspired by Gandhiji's simplicity, truth and fearlessness, untouchability and quick-sightedsness and they permeated into his personality. Since he is an artist first and anything thereafter, his novels are unadulterated pieces of art. Whatever other problems incur in his fiction they are more by implication than by advocacy.

Like Rabindranath Tagore Narayan is a unique example of the East-West meet. He was born and brought up in a family which had high regard for education and religion. His father, being a headmaster in Government High School, was a middleclass man. The large family of Narayans believed in all Hindu customs, traditions and conventions prevailing in the South Indian society. Narayan's education which he mostly got in christian schools and colleges - Lutheran Mission School, Christian High School etc.
broadened his outlook and developed in him a sense of belonging to others. That is why, we hardly find in his writings communal, fanatical and sceptical descriptions whatever experiences he underwent in his schooldays have been universally depicted in his earlier novels - 'Swami & Friends', 'The Bachelor of Arts' and 'The English Teacher'. These earlier novels throw a considerable light on the prevailing conditions in Indian schools and colleges where teachers were so dominating as to spoil the students and students in turn were no better than grudged them severely. Narayan himself points out how education was given so much attention in his family:

"...education was the most compulsive force in a family like ours. My outlook on education never fitted in with the accepted code at home. I instinctively rejected both education and examinations with their unwarranted seriousness and esoteric suggestions. Since revolt was impractical, I went through it all without conviction, enthusiasm, or any sort of distinction. Going to school seemed a never-ending nuisance each day, to be borne because of my years."

It is not difficult to infer what would have been the position of such a boy at home and in the society. Narayan's growing reluctance towards education which had become a tool in the hands of the west-oriented and converted teachers diverted his attention towards the world at large. He became peculiar in tastes and temperament. His sensitive nature
helped him in reading human nature at length and mitigating
his frustration. He read the ordinary man and his predicament
in the society like his astrologer who appears in 'An
Astrologer's Day' and has a working analysis of mankind's
troubles which are rooted in 'marriage, money and tangles of
human ties'. His later novels from 'The English Teacher'
onward throw a considerable light on these problems such as
the breaking away of joint-family system, obstacles presented
by astrological considerations in the union of true lovers,
and above all the east-west encounters resulting into clashes
between the old and the new. New changes concern the society
and man cannot be left alone by their impact, as Narayan him-
self points out:

"Society presses upon us all the time. The progress
of the last half century may be described as the progress of
the Frog out of his Well. All means of communications, all
methods of speedy travel, all newspapers, broadcasts and every
kind of invention is calculated to keep up a barrage of attack
on the frog in the well. He will not to left alone".31

The gradual disappearance of the caste-system has
been delightfully portrayed 'Caste : Old and New'. The West
had started making deep inroads into the common man's life in
India and Narayan's penetrative eye could be able to grasp
this new tendency minutely. His Malgudi from 'Mr. Sampath'
onward reflects this new change not only in the Geographical
aspects of the town but also in the steady erosion of the
traditional ways of life and the rise of new values necessarily
accompanying the contemporary cultural upheaval in the country.
In 'The Guide' the traditional ways of life are outrightly
rejected both by Raju and Rosie. Marco also looks like a
foreigner at home having cast aside a lovely creature as
Rosie into the hands of a rouque and confining his whole atten-
tion on archeological research. In 'The Vendor of Sweets' both
Jagan and Mali, in their exaggerations and conflicts, appear
to be alienated beings. Mali's alienation being cultural
tends to intensify the rebelliousness already present in him
when he was a student at Albert Mission College. As Raju in
'The Guide' derides the traditional ways of life, Mali in 'The
Vendor of Sweets' moves a step forward to add in his personality
self-centredness, money-mindedness and a get-rich-quick
mentality. Not to speak of caste and creed, he lives in sin-
ful union with Grace, symbolizing cultural topsy-turvyism.
Mali's over-reaching project of producing a story-writing
machine is symbolical of absurd materialistic ambitions and the
impersonal mechanization of the western attitude getting quick
recognition in the Indian society. The western attitude seems
to have been bent upon capturing and controlling creative free-
dom of the writer and producing works of art to order instead
of allowing them to emerge freely and naturally. But it does
not mean that Narayan pleads for the indigenous values. On
the other hand, he evinces how they are being ignored by so-
called western-minded people of India. On the one hand, such
people are conscious of being Indian as they know that it is
easy to lead a life of contradictions here, and on the other
they plead for the over-all supremacy of the west setting aside the claims of discrimination.

Narayan, with his background of English education, his wide sympathies apparent from his comments on Christianity both in 'Swami & Friends' and 'My Days',33 and his comprehensive and clear-eyed vision could in no way ignore the seemingly divergent attitudes of the people who were confused heap of the East and the West. The lack of discrimination and poise has corroded the very soul of India. This tendency can be envisaged in the rising middle class of South India which Narayan portrays in his novels and short stories. The penetrative eye of the author could easily notice the impact of Western culture and attitude of people to judge everything on the basis of money. Therefore, it is clear that the West provided Narayan to look at everything with commonsense and the East gave him the touchstone of universal quality on which everything could be judged impartially and sympathetically.

As an advocate of joint-family system in society and controlled mind of the individual, this great novelist is reluctant to Indian treatment of politics. He displays his considerable sense of detachment in the portrayal of political figures in his novels and short stories. He speaks of politics reluctantly and impersonally sometimes in the outburst of his characters, as Gajapati's in 'The English Teacher':

"There are times when I wish there were no politics in the world and no one knew who was ruling and how ... the whole of the west is a muddle, owing to its political
consciousness, and what a pity that the East should also follow suit." 34

He speaks of democracy as a dull subject from the writer's point of view. It is not his escapistic attitude towards politics but he points out the weaknesses of democracy as it has begun to move on set lines:

"Election date, campaigning, canvassing, polling, results, a seat in assembly hall speechifying and division, for the next two three or four years till the time comes to renew the personalities in the hall, like renewing the plants in the pots on the veranda. This is a well worn line of movement and the subject has lost its novelty." 35

The election being a one-way business has unsatisfactory nature and arouses discontentment in the public life of the country. According to Narayan, the public must have an equal privilege to de-elect the already elected one if he or she does not prove to rise to the expectations of people. His suggestion seems to plead for the better privilege of the public, deeper political consciousness, and awareness to improve the Indian politics. In "Waiting For the Mahatama" also he satirises the chairman of the municipality who has little broad-mindedness and sympathy to treat the untouchable boy properly, even in the presence of Mahatama Gandhi. In his short story 'Lawley Road' his sarcastical tone is noticeable against the chairman of the municipality and the members of the council who, in their so-called patriotic fervour, decide
to nationalize the names of all the streets and parks, creating a lot of hardships to the public. There is a lot of confusion as 'letters went where they were not wanted -- The town became a wilderness with all its landmarks gone". 36

Narayan's reluctance towards politics is founded on the belief of the common man in Indian politics. The middle-class common man "--- is unable to bear all the improvements and benefits that his would-be champions attempt to heap on his head". 37

There may be reasons for this novelist's critical outlook towards politics in general and Indian politics in particular. The way in which Indian democracy is moving may hardly be liked by the honest man of Narayan's background.

So far as religion is concerned Narayan is deep-rooted in ancient Indian religion. It was during his childhood that religious consciousness was awakened by his great maternal grandmother in whose company he was brought up and educated as a child. She was an astrologer, versatile, helpful and a key-figure in the lives of many, as the novelist describes her:

"She was also a match-maker; she poured over horoscopes and gave advice and used her influence to get marriages settled". 38

That is why, the stars never lie to Narayan. His own marriage proved a disaster very early, and against which the astrologer had already foretold him that the disagreement in
horoscopes was indicative of some catastrophe. What was foretold happened in Narayan's life, and therefore, whether some people believe or not, he believes firmly in the authenticity and validity of horoscope.

According to Narayan, religion should not openly be avowed, because "... it's like one's underwear. You may make oblique reference to it or joke about it... you may joke about God, but that is as far as you should go in civilized societies -- God is supposed to bear the universe on his little finger, and when he changes it from the right to his left -- there is an earthquake." 39

He, as he himself points out, is unable to write a novel without Krishna, Ganesa, Hanuman, astrologers, temples, devadasis or temple prostitutes.

This religious consciousness of the novelist was converted into spiritual consciousness after the demise of his wife whom he could never forget for a while. Through spiritual practice he developed into himself magical powers as he refers to them in his memoir:

"I could catch telepathic messages or transmit my thoughts to others, and I could generally sense what was coming ahead or anticipate what someone would say -- -- I practised psychic contacts regularly for some years, almost every night. I found it possible to abstract from my physical body (a process taught by Paul Brunton) and experience a strange sense
of deliverance — I attained an understanding of life and death.

The recent novel 'A Tiger For Malgudi' displays this tendency of Narayan who is not only an enlightened one but also a remarkable torch-bearer to the spiritual aspirant. A true devotee of the Goddess Gayatri and a Sacred soul, Narayan is the symbol of a great fountain which showers love, purity and pure delight through his fiction. Being a traditional Hindu, confining his whole attention on the question of self-seeking, he is able to impart a glorious message to the whole humanity.
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