CHAPTER - VIII

CONCLUSION

Art, especially literature, has a context about it. It is this context which gives it sharpness, relevance, precision and significance. It is so closely allied to this context that literature becomes a graphic chronicle of this context also at one level. Literature in a Third World Country like India would be closest instance of this attribute of literature. Writers in these developing or undeveloped countnries consciously pattern their literature in such a manner that it comes to voice their aspirations, hopes and fears to make the readers aware of what they are and where they stand. In India novelists writing in English used the genre with such a design. R.K.Narayan beginning his writing career in the 1930’s projected consciousness of the people at large of common issues in his novels. From one perspective Narayan seems but a passive chronicler of the common wisdom prevalent in society in general relating to the ordinary facets of life, Narayan seems to be injecting no novelty in his work. He only brings to the surface what is so diffused that no one seems to see it, what is so common that no one seems to feel the need of talking about it. Narayan’s novels, thus, seem not stories of Raju the guide or Savitri the sulking wife
or Swami, the school boy or Chandran, the lover in a hurry but stories of the different dimensions of the Indian society. Like Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, all novels by Narayan seem to have the Indian society as the central protagonist. In this respect he is the quintessential Indian novelist.

In the preceding chapters we have examined in detail the success attained by Narayan in reflecting social consciousness of the varied aspects of life in his novels. His projection of the sociological status of children, their role in the family, the special place of the male child, the interaction between the different generations in the family and other related aspects has been graphic as well as highly credible. His depiction of the intermediate state of adolescence and the manner in which society expects greater control of this volatile stage of life has again been well brought out. Narayan presents the rationale of the seemingly conservative social rituals and taboos because it is only through them that impressionable minds have to be steered in a desirable direction.

Narayan's presentation of the social status of men vis-a-vis women is again superb. Without taking sides he brings to the fore the dominating and domineering role of the males. But he is equally sensitive to the stirrings of aspirations in the women-folk and the slow but certain manner in which they are making their presence felt. Narayan's portrayal of the emergence of
working women and how society in general feels threatened by the new phenomenon is more incisive than any account by a professional sociologist. Narayan, unlike the crop of anglicised novelists like M.R. Anand, Manohar Malgaonkar, Nayantara Sehgal and others, highlights the positive, integrative aspects of Hinduism in his novels, showing how the Hindus' pre-occupation with nirvana is the persuasion for the highest spiritual bliss. The Guide in this respect is a stout defence of the Hindu belief in spiritual salvation.

Narayan's singular success in articulating effortlessly the social consciousness of the people becomes all the more noteworthy when we find out that he has been successful in accomplishing all this without resorting to any inartistic strategy or device. Three dimensional characters rooted to their milieu, characters given psychological motivation for public actions, well-knit stories converging on a point, use of meaningful myths and symbols, choice of apt titles taking one to the heart of the matter, deployment of subtle irony as a counterbalancing force, creative exploitation of narrative strategies - all point unmistakably to the blemishless record of Narayan in fusing social consciousness with his fictional stuff. Barring Swami and Friends which is understandably reportage-like, Narayan's other novels have a perfect coalescing of social
consciousness and imaginary settings. More importantly, Narayan chronicles not merely social consciousness as it is but also its evolution and progress as it changes with the changing times. The change in tone and tenor from *The Dark Room* to *The Guide* as regards the perception of women is a ready instance of this. One cannot come across a more penetrating and artistic rendering of social consciousness in fiction.