CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION

In the modern period, comparative study of literature is a developing branch of research which is becoming popular and more accessible. Comparative literature is the branch of literary history that deals with literary relationships, similarities and differences among different writers or their works. It leads us to a more comprehensive and adequate understanding of the work and their authors. Comparative analysis helps to bring out the literary, social and cultural developments of different countries in general.

In this thesis, we have tried to find out identical aspects between the short stories of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov of Russian Literature and R.K.Narayan of English Literature who lived in different countries, in different periods and under different cultures.

To have a complete and effective study of the relationship between the works of two authors, it is necessary to analyse the socio-political conditions in which they lived and worked. Thus we have analysed in Chapter II the socio-political conditions of Russia during the period of Chekhov and that of India during the period of R.K.Narayan. Thus certain similarities are found in the socio-political conditions that took place in India.
and Russia during the period of R.K.Narayan and Anton Chekhov respectively.

Chekhov lived in a period of great turmoil in Russia. The abolition of serfdom and the Peasant Reform in 1861 were important steps which eventually turned the status of the existing feudal monarchy to that of bourgeois monarchy. With this change capitalism became dominant and clear cut. Though the Government issued a number of reforms, they were favourable to ascertain the dominant position of the nobility. The peasants were continued to be exploited and levied with heavy tax. This led to the difference in the peasant community itself. From among them emerged the rich peasants came to be called “kulaks”. They tried to become more and more rich and the result was the emergence of capitalism in Russia. But still some important features of serfdom survived. The suffering of the exploited peasants were seen with sympathy by the democratic intellectuals and the rulers of Russia saw the steady growth of the democratic forces in the years that followed. The most important feature of the emancipation struggle of the eighties and nineties was the involvement of workers and the emergence of social democracy in the country. In the beginning of twentieth century this struggle gave rise to Imperialism. The consolidation of imperialism in the mid nineties evoked fresh revolutionary movements in Russia. Anyway all these changes led to the development of the country.
The above developments in Russia have parallels in the history of India also. The Independence Movement showed its strong influence over the people and awakened them to participate in it. The Quit India Movement of 1942 and the communal riots and partition of India in 1947 brought drastic changes in the country. The nationalist movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi was in many ways unique. It embraced all aspects of life and had for its goal the emancipation of man, emancipation not only from foreign rule but from all kinds of fetters that restrict the development. It was not directed against the British alone, but against every form of injustice, exploitation and against beliefs, practices, traditions and customs which had stunted the growth of India. It led not only to political independence but to a veritable renaissance in India.

Though there occurred many changes in the social and political fields of their respective countries we cannot see the influence of politics in the stories of these writers. While majority of their contemporary writers tried to expose socio-political events in their works, these writers kept away from these kinds of themes. They never called for political agitation. On the other hand they dealt with social problems and depicted different aspects of life in their stories.

As pointed out in the third Chapter, Chekhov’s stories opened a new chapter in the history of Russian and World Literature. Chekhov started
writing when he was a medical student. In the early period he wrote for humorous magazines. In 1885 Chekhov became popular as a writer. The association with literature that began from his early days continued till his death in 1904. Chekhov introduced a fresh element in the art of his epoch. He was at ease in the short narrative form and handled it with dazzling perfection. The life which he depicted had no barriers of time and place. Social life has been expressed by Chekhov with striking depth and originality. He proved to be a great master of both pathos and humour.

Chekhov was able to give a complete picture of life in Russia and the life led by the representatives of all its social strata and groupings. He painted an amazingly varied gallery of characters from Philistines who had retired into their 'cockroach corners', to pure ecstatic and naive dreamers with faith in the triumph of noble ideals.

Chekhov's favourite characters are ordinary Russian men and women. It is not the life of just an individual that we see in a brief story, but his whole back ground. Chekhov's writings are a combination of the real and the unreal. He depicts the different faces of life in detail. Chekhov's characters ceased to be bearers of the writer's conceptions and the mouth pieces for programmed ideas. They live their own independent lives and behave in accordance with the logic of their own nature. The actions and the
conduct of Chekhov’s characters acquired amazing psychological verisimilitude.

Chekhov uses humour and wit to depict his characters. He never laughed at people who were suffering, but mercilessly ridiculed liars, philistines and fools. Nature descriptions stand out to be one of the chief attractions of many of his stories. In the stories of Chekhov the reader was not to expect a ready made solution. He had to make his own conclusion and generalizations. This is a striking similarity we could notice between the two writers, Chekhov and R.K. Narayan.

While comparing the short stories of Anton Chekhov and R.K. Narayan we find numerous striking similarities between them. Both of them started writing to earn money and help the family. Both of them wrote for newspapers and literary magazines. In many stories Narayan and Chekhov depict incidents with a humorous touch. This humour evokes pathos and we have to enjoy it through tear soaked eyes. In the stories of both Narayan and Chekhov moral anger or idealistic protest against errors, deviations and aberrations of human conduct are absent.

Like Chekhov, Narayan takes situations and characters from common life and turns them into pictures and vignettes which linger long in memory. Their comic vision gives them the necessary detachment and compassion to make the portrayal not only truthful but also aesthetically satisfying.
In their stories both Narayan and Chekhov have not given importance for a direct conflict between the haves and have-nots. Almost all the stories of both Narayan and Chekhov have enough strength to touch the human mind and evoke its tender feelings. The depiction of these emotions is possible only because of the humanism that we find in their stories.

Both Narayan and Chekhov have not followed any criteria in the selection of their themes. Their stories for and about children astonish the readers with the originality of incidents in them. The observer in both the writers open before us the beautiful charming world of children. Chekhov’s ‘Vanka’ and Narayan’s “Hungry Child”, “Unbreakable doll” etc take us to the world of children.

Another peculiar and important feature of the stories of Narayan and Chekhov is their brevity. With the few words selected, these short narratives conveyed the ideas of the writers and aimed at the maximum result from the minimum number of words and sentences. This speciality gives the stories of Narayan and Chekhov an unusual colour and beauty of their own.

In the stories of both the writers humour is mingled with pathos. Both Narayan and Chekhov gave importance to characters than incidents. In their stories the characters do not have a colourful life. Through their
characters they are revealing the social problems of the period. The characters reflected their thoughts and feelings.

In his stories Narayan has not given importance to love or sex. Romantic touch is almost absent in his stories. But in Chekhov this feeling is found and is deeper than in Narayan. He has dealt with the theme in a few stories like. ‘Lady with a Dog’ ‘My Life’, ‘About Love’ etc.

The women characters of Chekhov and Narayan reflected the enlightened views of these writers. Though there are some submissive characters in Chekhov he presented a positive heroine in the story Nevesta (The Bride). But in Narayan his women characters are passive and unimpressive. Narayan never cares to mention them by their names. He does not give them any important role. They do not have independent existence.

Unlike Chekhov, Narayan uses a narrator ‘Talkative Man’ in many of his short stories. The most interesting thing about the Talkative man as narrator is that he is not the same person in all the stories though he has the same name. He is a protean figure who puts on different masks in different stories.

Another difference is that Chekhov had written his stories in his native language but R.K.Narayan had written not in his native language Tamil, but in English.
Another dissimilarity between Chekhov and Narayan is in the depiction of nature in their stories. In Chekhov a link exists between man and nature. Nature is not a mere background. It always merges with human life and feelings. But in Narayan this is not seen.

Another special feature seen in Narayan not in Chekhov is that all novels and some stories are enacted entirely against a background Malgudi a fictional world. In the stories of Chekhov there is no such fictional world. Though Chekhov and Narayan lived at different periods, in different countries, had different experiences and lived under entirely different social conditions, it is astonishing to reach the final conclusion that they thought and wrote about life and the incidents in a similar way. This aspect brings Narayan and Chekhov closer and closer.