Chapter-V

CONCLUSION

The present thesis entitled ‘The Fictional World of R.K. Narayan and Basavaraj Naikar: A Comparative Study’ has sought to provide a comprehensive statement on the short stories of R. K. Narayan and Dr. Basavaraj Naikar. Dr. Basavaraj Naikar is not a prolific writer like R. K. Narayan who has to his credit a collection of numerous short stories and over a dozen novels. Both Narayan and Naikar are well-known short story writers and exhibit marked contrast along with similarities. Behind all the works of art, there lies the artist’s irresistible urge of creating something. Obviously, he wants to put forth his best in his creative work. This creative urge of the artist takes the form of different views. These motives may vary from author to author and their creativity should be appreciated. It is quite in the fitness of things that we Indians should realize the importance and worth of R. K. Narayan and Basavaraj Naikar, the two great sons of mother India have so worthily enriched the field of Indian English short fiction by their meritorious works.

Like other major short story writers, both Dr. Basavaraj Naikar and R. K. Narayan come under the influence of our ancient classic lore as well as Western masters. They show a strong affinity to typically Indian tradition of storytelling. In this connection, R. K. Narayan says:

After all, for any short story writer (Indian) the prototype still invariably remains to be our own epics and the mythological stories.¹

In recent times Indian English short stories are largely written with Diaspora elements by Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande, Anurag Mathur and Manjula Padmanabhan, etc. But a few others like Basavaraj Naikar continue to write honestly and diligently on Indian themes in the tradition of the great Indian English short story writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Khushwant Singh and Manoj Das . . . . Through his restless creative passion and with his zeal of a reformist Basavaraj Naikar presents the characters in Indian situation and sensibility with their loss of values in life.

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R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao founded a tradition which was continued in its essence by the Indian short story writers.

The main elements of the tradition as handed down are restraint, reticence and moderation for the sake of which Narayan used irony as his chief tool to convey his sense of reality.²

If R. K. Narayan is the writer of about the small histories of the small people of Malgudi, fictional locale, Dr. Basavaraj Naikar as a true historical novelist is highly and exceptionally objective whenever he presents historical information in his short stories and novels. It is noteworthy that Basavaraj has been acclaimed as one of the significant historical novelists.

R. K. Narayan and Basavaraj Naikar have used the common source of perennial interest and variety i.e. the Indian life. For their themes, they need not search far, they never outstep their orbit of experience. The loyalty to the typical Indian experience with a desire to accommodate changes as per the needs of the hour, connects Narayan and Basavaraj Naikar each other. They seem to give a single vision of India under change.

Basavaraj Naikar’s view of the world might be different, it should be, just a sensuous pleasure in depicting the scenes, situations, and characters that can carry the situation well. In his introduction to Malgudi Days R. K. Narayan says-

The material available to a story writer in India is limitless. Within a broad climate of inherited culture there are endless variations: every individual differs from every other individual, not only economically, but in outlook, habits and day-to-day philosophy. It is stimulating to live in a society that is not standardized or mechanized, and is free from monotony. Under such conditions the writer has only to look out of the window to pick up a character (and thereby a story).³

The above quotation explains the manner as well as the matter used by the writers under our discussion. Further, it makes it clear that there is an implicit acceptance of variety and difference of approach-each according to his predilection, taste exposure and commitment. Narayan’s above observation implies that since the source is single i.e.
broad climate of inherited culture, there must be a unity in diversity of angle of looking on things.

R. K. Narayan’s view of the world might be different from Dr. Basavaraj Naikar; R. K. Narayan has no philosophical or socialistic concern. He is rooted in his limited world. As M. K. Naik writes, “Narayan is primarily preoccupied with man’s filling of the life-role entrusted to him by tradition and environment.4

Narayan’s vision of life is subtly ironic. His art is never of rarely guilty of betraying a fierce amelioratory purpose. He does not reveal a pronounced eagerness to preach a moral or plead for a cause. Very often Narayan is labeled as uncommitted writer. R. K. Narayan is greatly interested in life and people and a detached on looker cannot portray such living characters. A close study of Narayan’s stories reveals to us that he gives an authentic picture of the eccentricities and vices of the common man. He opts for “mild mockery and playful art …“The character of the satirist as projected by Horace is that of an urbane man of the world, concerned about folly, which he sees everywhere, but moved to laughter rather than rage.”5 Same is the case with R. K. Narayan. Though Narayan satirizes the follies and foibles of his characters, he does so only indirectly or impliedly, he never goes malicious. His irony is mild and gentle and devoid of bitterness. That is why William Walsh observes, Narayan’s irony is only an “irony of recognition” and not an “irony of correction.” 6

Whereas Basavaraj Naikar seems to be a social critic and points out the weaknesses and short comings of the people directly with a whip of conscience on the back of society. Naikar exhibits follies and foibles of his characters and his main concern is to project ethical values on his fictional world. Every writer of high order establishes his cadre by presenting the social and ethical values in his writings. With the exercise of his sixth sense he presents value system consciously or unconsciously, in order to correct the follies and foibles of the society in which he lives. In the continental, state and provincial ramifications, a writer presents his point of view with a touch of regionalism or nationalism, or universalism. In Indian English Literature a few story writers in recent times have by and large presented different social issues with ethical values. Like Narayan Dr. Basavaraj Naikar, a contemporary writer presents Southern Indian culture in
its various facets. His attempt is to give a new moral pattern out of obscenity, treachery, rape and sexual immorality, assumed fidelity, political corruption, greed for gold, and breach of faith between different kinds of relations. He tries to touch almost every corner of the society with an extra zeal but seldom achieves success in prescribing a right medicine. No doubt, his evil characters go never unpunished but after sufficient damage done to the society.

Here indeed, we find the first clearly defined difference between R. K. Narayan and Basavaraj Naikar. Narayan is not primarily a satirist; the comic irony through which he sees his characters suggests no strong desire to change them. Narayan never condemns men because they are not better than they are; he merely shows how the evil they manifest may in true comic manner be diverted.

Basavaraj Naikar, on the contrary, seems to be a satirist in the full Swiftian sense. He has never found a society or a situation that satisfied him: he would like them all to be different from what they are. Naikar is pained to see moral corruption prevalent in the society. “As a bilingual creative writer and critic he expresses his commitment by projecting his insight into the nature and character of man in the contemporary society. He rejoices at the celebration of Indian sensibility in life but looks at life with a jaundiced eye when its richness is affected by the loss of high moral values.”

Like R. K. Narayan, Dr. Basavaraj does not shun politics. Narayan confines himself to the social realities of life in a nation of rooted tradition looking forward to meet the requirements of life in transition. While Basavaraj Naikar, representative of the present age condemns the present political scenario as it is highly corrupt.

Both Narayan and Naikar are well-wishers of the mankind. An all pervading humanity flows through all their writings. They never lose the human touch which makes for their instantaneous appeal. The women in Narayan and Naikar are traditional. Those who accept the tradition live a peaceful, balanced life and those who go against or react suffer a lot. R. K. Narayan’s complete dependence on a purely artistic approach to literature sets him apart from Dr. Basavaraj Naikar and other Indian writers in English.
Naikar has dealt quite forcibly with the theme of the concomitant, theme of human degradation in some of his stories.

R. K. Narayan, however, presents social evils without any emotional involvement and with no overt aim to reform or change existing condition.

It seems that both Narayan and Naikar do not write for only westerners, that is why their Indianness is not self-conscious like other Indian writers. In the field of Indian English literature very often the problem of the treatment of authentic Indian reality, the problem of representing the physical and human landscape i.e. India is often discussed. In case of fiction the problem is singularly important because fiction emerges out of and deals with specific reality which is different for each socio-cultural group, whether co-extensive with the political boundaries or not. While comparing the works of a west-based Indian writer with those of an India based writer, we come to know that West-based Indian writer faces problems of adjustment with a new culture, and suffers a feeling of restlessness. It is so because the conflict between his inherited Indian values and acquired Western ways and values. This becomes the West-based writer’s immediate milieu and this is something that he learns from personal experience. The point is that such writers represent Indian reality that is constructed by media. On the other hand, India-based writer presents an authentic picture of India because he is closely associated with the culture and has intimate knowledge of the socio-geographical community of his motherland. As his sole intension is not to please the foreign media, India-based really writes for ‘us’ and not for ‘them’. He writes about us for us and his works may not be marketable in the west. In this context, the stories written by R. K. Narayan and Basavaraj Naikar show the essentially Indian sensibility “In times when every Indian English writer is prepared to go whole hog, simply to please the foreign media, Naikar abstains from indulging in such mean gimmicks.”

R. K. Narayan’s stories are also firmly rooted in the Indian milieu. While comparing Narayan with Raja Rao, Avadesh K. Srivastava and Sumita Sinhna rightly observes-
In Narayan’s stories the evidence of ‘Indianness’ is not as obtrusive as in Raja Rao’s fiction, but it has its own distinctive character. **Narayan is not writing for Westerners**;…Because he has a native reading public in view, there is no deliberate pursuit of indigenous elements which he might fuse into his literary style.\(^9\)

Every creative artist is, at heart, a visionary and every creative vision has its roots in culture, tradition and values of life. They constitute his frame of reference to which he has to keep returning continually for sustenance and inspiration. Without it he cannot make a creative and abiding contribution. Both R. K. Narayan and Basavaraj Naikar draw their strength from an exhaustible source-Indianness. Their views of life and their world of values are basically Indian.

Narayan’s traditional world of Malgudi does not sanction romantic love but adheres to the convention of arranged marriage, man and woman living together as husband and wife, without getting married are regarded as sinners. This traditional society has its own sexual ethics according to which sex aberration or perversion with any motive is bound to end in frustration and misery. Any revolt against the set system or tradition brings despair and frustration, which amounts to their ultimate defeat. Same is the case with Dr. Basavaraj Naikar. However, Naikar differs from R. K. Narayan in dealing with sex. In his fictional world R. K. Narayan does not encourage unhealthy sexual curiosity. We should note here that Narayan does not discuss sex openly. On the other hand, in Naikar, sexuality obviously has a prominent place in some of his stories. Amorous gestures and postures, pornographic pictures are the superficial ingredients of the short stories of Naikar. Dr. Basavaraj Naikar explores human love in all its varieties—from the calmly conjugal to the passionately adulterous. In order to highlight lustfulness, Naikar describes copulation outside marriage vividly. However, graphic descriptions of copulation does not find place in R. K. Narayan’s fictional world. At the same time, we should note that Naikar’s main concern is to search for a way out from the corrupt and immoral world and succeeds to a great extent. Certainly, Naikar has not glorified licentiousness in his fictional world. With regard to sex Narayan is suggestive and does not record every bodily function, on the contrary, Naikar discusses sex openly.
Both Narayan and Naikar are sympathetic towards thieves, beggars. The writers do not attack the ways of the thieves. However, Narayan refers to their deft dealings and moves on with a gentle smile. In Narayan thieves are punished by the law whereas Naikar’s thieves are not caught by the police and put behind the bar.

Both writers deal with superstitious belief of South Indian people in particular and Indian people in general. Marriages in their fictional world are arranged with the consultations of astrologers. It is observed that both writers are well aware of the fact that the superstitions have the strong hold on the minds of Indian people. In their stories we come across god fearing people who have strong faith in rituals. Narayan points out how people give great importance to rituals and such other outward forms of religion and fail to respond to its real call. Both writers make fun of the credulous masses and suggest that as long as people remain credulous, the sadhus will continue to cheat people. In case of ghost stories, Narayan differs from Basavaraj Naikar as he has humanized ghosts so they listen to reason, argue and cause no harm.

The approach of Narayan and Naikar to education seems to be identical as both writers emphasize that education should be free and joyous. The present education set up does not allow the learner to bloom. Particularly, R. K. Narayan successfully portrays the effect of the farcical examination system on the youth through his stories. As any kind of corruption in the academic field is like a canker that eats away the very root of culture, both writers suggest that at any cost, the present education system needs to be changed positively.

The characters of Narayan and Naikar are true to life and deeply rooted in their tradition and culture. Narayan’s approach to his character is greatly based on his personal experience. What amuses Narayan most are the oddities, angularities, and eccentricities in his people. He seeks to delineate through his novels and short stories the way of life the group of people with whose psychology and background he is most familiar. As his focus is on character and his intimate relationship with the characters, his involvement in the milieu he creates, his mentor friend Graham Greene has admired Narayan in these words-
“His characters must live, or else the book has no claim whatever on our interest.”

Basavaraj Naikar has also created memorable characters like that of Narayan. Naikar’s historical characters are unforgettable.

Narayan’s greatest achievement is the creation of his fictional town Malgudi. Malgudi makes wonders. No Indian English writer has portrayed such a wonderful, varied, colorful picture of his setting as Narayan has done. The Malgudi of his novels and short stories is India in microcosm. It’s the symbol of Indian reality. What happens in Malgudi is in fact what happens to the Indians in general. Narayan gives to Malgudi a local habitation and a name and makes the references concrete and realistic. It is said that “the drama *Hamlet* of Shakespeare cannot be conceived without Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark. Likewise, the reader cannot conceive of the locale of Narayan’s major stories without a reference to Malgudi. Thus it is a symbol of Narayan’s fictional world, which presents a social order fragmented by political evils, economic disparity, the conflict of values and the superstitions.”

Through his novels and short stories, Narayan has created an unforgettable region that is, Malgudi. Like Hardy’s Wessex, Narayan’s Malgudi is quite familiar to every reader of his novels and short stories. It seems that R. K. Narayan perceives no barrier between himself and his fictional town. Hence, he has made little attempt to systematically map out Malgudi. While Narayan never provided strict physical constraints for Malgudi, he allowed it to form shape with events in the various stories, becoming a reference point for the future. An interesting feature is the map of Malgudi prepared by Dr. James M. Fennelly, a scholar of Narayan’s works from Adelphi University. We also find a similar map in M. K. Naik’s famous book entitled *The Ironic Vision, A Study of the Fiction of R. K. Narayan*.

Most of Basavaraj Naikar’s stories take place in today’s Dharwad district of Karnataka state. His Dharwad stories will take certainly place on our shelves beside the stories of Narayan as there is the same quality in Naikar’s stories. However, Naikar’s Dharwad is far from Narayan’s Malgudi.
Like any other writers, both Narayan and Naikar have some limitations. Though most of the stories of Narayan and Naikar are well-knit and adhere to the principles laid down by the masters of the genre, some of their stories are “discursive”.\textsuperscript{12} It is noticed that some of the stories of Narayan and Naikar are tiresomely lengthy and test the patience of the readers. A few stories of Naikar “create a repulsion for unnecessary bloodshed and there is a too explicit portrayal of the sexual act, Khushwantian rather than Lawrentian.” \textsuperscript{13} True both writers have a few weaknesses but their successes certainly outnumber them. They have successfully captured a wide audience which is truly international.

The short stories of Narayan and Naikar are written in simple, direct prose that reads smoothly and lucidly. Both are great writers not because they succeed in depicting Indian life accurately without exploiting its linguistic patterns, but because they succeed in impressing upon us the fact that the human culture, human experience, reality itself, transcends the barriers of language. One of the important aspects of the short stories of R. K. Narayan and Basavaraj is that they have universal appeal. Both Narayan and Naikar may be branded as the regional artists as they come from Southern India. A regional fiction deals with the physical features, people, life, customs, habits, manners, traditions, language, etc. of a particular locality but regionalism does not mean the factual reporting or photographic reproduction. The regional artist emphasizes the unique features of a particular locality but his creative imagination enables him to rise from the particular and local to the general and universal. The selected region becomes a symbol of the world at large, a microcosm which reflects the world beyond. As R. K. Narayan confines himself to Malgudi, the imaginary name for his South Indian town, Dr. Basavaraj Naikar chooses Dharwad where he was born and brought up for the background of his stories.

Malgudi is a confined world dimensionally but, within its limited physical compass, it embraces the heart of humanity. The inhabitants of this essentially comic world are, often, recognizably and recurrently the same, but that is the unalterable truth about life itself. R. K. Narayan knows his world and loves it with all its eccentricities, absurdities, incongruities and oddities, and the readers gratefully fall for the contagion of his humanism. It is from Naikar’s tales of love, marriage, murder, torture, sacrifice and
the occasional encounter between the traditional and modern that a rich fragrance of values both Indian and universal emanates. The life of the microcosm becomes a reflection of the macrocosmic life. As in all great art, the local and the particular become the universal and the general.

R. K. Narayan’s stories are masterpieces of his comic art. He is acclaimed as one of the greatest novelists and short story writers and “most entertaining and distinguished writer” of international repute. In this connection we may quote an incident as recorded in Narayan’s book My Dateless Diary. “In America some people place Narayan with Hemingway and Faulkner as one of the three greatest modern writers of the world.”

In his fictional world Basavaraj Naikar, a genuine writer and outstanding academician presents suspicion, rivalry, hatred, jealousy, murder and vindictiveness as the aspects of frenzied life. He makes his stories micro-tragedies by universalizing the human plight in the Indian situation. Naikar’s stories are of eternal value and have a charmer’s effect to make the readers spellbound. Narayan is essentially a supreme short story teller and Graham Greene, his mentor friend holds him up as a model for other writers when he says:

If he can (an author) allows himself to take sides, moralize, propagandize, he can easily achieve an extra-ordinary interest, but if he follows Mr. Narayan’s methods, he stakes all on his creative power.

In conclusion we can say that Basavaraj Naikar also continues to write honestly and diligently on the line of R. K. Narayan. However, Naikar’s world is moral while Narayan’s fictional world is comic. Though R. K. Narayan is not a didactic novelist and short story writer, he has an extraordinary power of evoking a sense of propriety in life. Like Basavaraj Naikar, R. K. Narayan is not a critic of society; he is certainly a critic of conduct.
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