Chapter VII

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Style is the embodiment of a writer's vision. It is, as David Lodge aptly asserts, "... not a decorative embellishment upon subject-matter, but the very medium in which the subject is turned into art..."1 Narayan's style embodies the Malgudi life not only in terms of a distinct regional flavour, but also in terms of revolts and reconciliations. Narayan's style becomes an integral part of his comic vision.

Narayan adopts the simple style of a storyteller. The narration of very ordinary events in the lives of his characters is done in an unaffected prose, a 'plain prose which 'should be not too far from talk, and not too near', that F.L. Lucas considers essential for a style of 'simplicity', 2 The narrative holds up a mirror to the simple, occasionally ambitious, and the relaxed way of living of the Malgudians. The form and the content exist in a symbolic relationship with each other providing us with a vivid impression of life in a very
plain matter-of-fact manner without ever lapsing into exaggeration or exhibiting any emotionalism. Events flow naturally, one out of author, in the same way as they would actually happen in life. The story just tells itself. Events happen and characters live in innumerable equations of human relationship. During the course of the narration. One hardly perceives the presence of the author. To borrow phrases from Wayne C. Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. It can be said that Narayan ‘shows’, but does not ‘tell’. Narayan could have well said what the young novelist, whom Mr. Booth quotes, says

> I shall not tell you anything. I shall allow
> you to eavesdrop on my people, and sometimes
> they will tell the truth and sometimes they will
> life, and you must determines for yourself when
> they are doing which.4

Whether it is story of children as in *Swami and Friends* or a story of an old man as in *The Vendor of Sweets*, the reader is straight carried into the heart of the scene without any aid of the author or the narrator. He wins the citizenship of this world and emotionally gets involved in the events and in characters. Any authorial interjection or any comment of the narrator would have conditioned the reader’s response creating a
barrier between the reader and the fictional reality. Neither Narayan, nor his language which is a 'plain mirror', creates this barrier. In Mr. Sampath we accepts Srinivas, the narrator, because of his close proximity to us. The narrative technique wants us to see things as Srinivas sees it. One may say that the reader identifies himself with Srinivas as much a Narayan does it with the latter, that "The author is present in every speech given by any character who has had concerned upon him, in whatever manner, the badge of reliability." Through Srinivas, the human comedy is brought home to the reader. This is made possible by the occasional comments and the philosophical reflections of Srinivas. This technique has sometimes the danger of sacrificing the dramatic tension. The Maneater of Malgudi where Nataraj could well have been the narrator because of his proximity to the common reader no other novel could have justifiably employed any of its characters as narrator. The case of Jagon narrating the story of his own life or Raju describing his last days would have reduced the comic tension to a great extent. In both the cases it would have slipped into the sentimental or the melodramatic. But when there is no such medium as the narrator or the voice of the author to carry the reader, the scene is an open one where the reader can have a sweeping vision of all the things happening both inside and outside the characters without ever being based or prejudiced or in any way conditioned by any particular
point of view. He says events in all their aspects and with an unclouded vision perceives the inherent comedy. In *The Guide* Narayan makes an innovational in his narrative technique. Through the autobiographical narration of Raju's life from his innocent childhood to the crucial turning point, we are persuaded to see the joys of his early days, the adventure of his adolescence through his eyes so that his willing martyrdom can be understood in the perspective of the spiritual journey of his life.

The 'authorial silence' in Narayan's fiction is not absolute void, for "though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear", 6 The objective narrator always remains in the judgment and enjoyment. In this context, Narayan's neutrality is based on a strong sense of the traditions. On the accepted decorum and decency of life in a middle class family as well as in a small town. Through the very treatment of plot an particularly through his dedicate Booth's words may well be applied to Narayan:

Everything he shows will serve to tell the line between showing and telling is always to degree an arbitrary one. ?
Narayan's style is so uniformly simple that the most indecorous as well as the most serious events are described in the same vein. The language is neither unduly burdened nor are symbol and images employed to add to the poignancy of any particular situations. Whether it is the carefree days of Raju's childhood or his final tryst with destiny, the tone is astonishingly the same, underscoring life's deeper iron that all events of life, however, small or big and whatever emotions we attach to them, are subject to the strange, tantalizing nature of human fate. Yet the comic vision ensures the ultimate triumph of life even in spite of the apparent disaster. The complete 'authorial silence' helps the events to tell gather themselves and whatever meaning or truth the reader gathers is from the treatment of plot as irony. The Malgudi milieu with its inherent contradictions in the frenzied involvement and encounter with the external realities warrant a style that will be at once simple and ionic. To capture the throb of life not only in the social context of Malgudi, but also in the deeper recesses of the individual, Narayan uses simple diction and a lucid style be means of which one can at once see surface and the depths beneath. As, P.S. Sundaram pute its.
A great deal of his effect depends on the unhurried paced, the even tone, the words which seem to be 'just their declared selves' and yet contain a world of irony.

Narayan's language belongs to the everyday world of ordinary people. It is the language in which the average Malgudians dream, love and indulge in their small wars, laugh and lament. His style gives the distinct impression of a small south Indian community confined to a particular temporal and spatial setting, their manners and musings, conversations and thoughts, and instinctive reactions to things. In his style, Narayan display his own unique signature' and is remarkable different form other Indo-Anglian writers, a fact brilliantly observed by Meenakshi Mukherjee in her book The Twice Born Fiction. Through the skilful use of language, Narayan successfully captures the rhythm of life that is peculiar to Malgudi and its people. Narayan's contemporary novelist convey the specific feel of the life they depict through various experiments and innovations. Mulk Raj Anand, for example, largely depends upon literal translation of native phrases, proverbs and slangs, direct presentation of Hindu words like 'angers log', 'thappar' etc. to achieve an effect of realism, generally pertaining to proletarian life. Raja Rao experiments with sentence structure in order to create the particular rhythm, which in Kantnapura relates to the way of living of
people in a traditional Kannada village: in *Serpent and the Rope*, he achieves an incantatory effect. One is inclined to agree with S. Nagarajan that.

Raja Rao’s aim is to create a style which will reflect

The rhythm and sensibilities of the Indian psyche, and

since it is in Sanskrit that the Indian mind has found

its most consummate linguistic expression, he has tried

to adapt his English style to the movement of a Sanskrit sentence.10

Raja Rao’s description is usually rich with images and

metaphors, allusions and quotations not only from Sanskrit classics, but also from French literature. In contrast to Anand and Raja Rao, whose styles are conspicuous by their easily discernible artifice. Narayan uses a style which is remarkable simple, conspicuous by its ‘unobtrusive’11 quality. The irony in his works is subtly fused into this simplicity to form total vision of life. This becomes possible because “his irony is nothing but an honest recording of facts, without any colouring of conventional sentiment.”12
The deep sense of humour which pervades all his novels springs from the recognition that our misfortunes are the consequences of our silly ideas and ambitions and can be accepted not with despair, but as a positive influence on our characters. The discomfiture of the individual is mainly of his own doing resulting from his absurd aspirations in a limited world. Thus ‘humour may be defined as the sense within us which sets up a kindly contemplation of the incongruities with an unfriendly universe and the corresponding comedy depicted, but also are presented the numerous peculiarities of other men and women, their oddities and angularities in doing the various transactions of life. The Malgudi reality is based on stable social’ values so as to contain these irregularities, these occasional eruptions of passions and emotions. Malgudi’s presence is made vivid not only by mere geographical details, the reader also become emotionally aware of its enduring presence. The thousands small comedies of man’s dreams an aspirations, of his revolts and retreats glow in their typical humanness, against the background of the intimate and eternal presence of Malgudi. That in this docile yet vivacious setting of Malgudi, human suffering often has a humorous side, is illustrated by Narayan’s delectable irony. It is because the religion of the comic asks to take pains and sufferings in one’s stride and laugh at one’s own self as Raju and to a lesser extent Jagon do. By refusing to suffer in pain they deny the supremacy of pain
and assert their indomitable ego. Narayan’s comic vision not only deals with the joyous sides of life, but also with its serious and painful aspects. The odds of life are transmuted into meaningful experiences. In spice of the occasional sorrows and suffering in the novels, Narayan’s world does not present any picturesque of gloom and despair as the comic visio, diffuses the assured warmth of life. Most of our problems are the result of our wrong understanding of this world and ourselves. Since disaster is not the Sarayu river, the Taluk office gang, the stations of the grandmother and a lot of other things convey the sense of the inevitable and the eternal reality of Malgudi, the individual’s absurd design and his corresponding sufferings and embarrassments appear funny deserving to be viewed with a sympathetic smile, what Ian Watt comments while discussing Fielding’s *Tom Jones* holds equality good in the case of Narayan’s treatment of plot:

Fielding must temper our alarm for Sophia’s fate, assuring us that we are witnessing, not real anguish, but that conventional kind of comic perplexity which serves to heighten our eventual pleasures at the happy ending, without in the meantime involving of tears on our part.
In a work of comic relation the fictional world must closely correspond to our impression of the real world. Minute details with regard to the way people eat, dress, worship, desires and do a lot of other things are described so as to create the successful fictional illusion. As David Lodge comments:

Fictional characters are, therefore, provided with a context of particularity much like that with which we define ourselves and others in the real world; they have names, parents, possessions, occupation etc, ordered in such a way as not to violate our sense of probability derived from the empirical world.15

Since Narayan’s main concern is not with any social documentations, but with the depiction of the comic sides of life, he has to provides an authentic locals in which he has to treat men and women in their various manners and modes. Rightly, therefore, he sharply chisels out his characters in terms of their particular individualities. These characters seldom fall into the category of ‘types’ and are distinctly marked out from one another by their individual ideas and idiosyncrasies. The characters as well as the place Malgudi with its distinct features like the river, the hills, etc, . convey unmistakably the
impression of a living existence. The Malgudi experience is brought home to the reader through, what Ian Watt calls 'the individualization of its character', and the detailed presentation of their environment'. These contributes to the 'feel' the atmosphere' of the novels, which as Brooks and Warren say, is also' an element of the meaning.

In Narayan's fiction there is no prolonged description of natural Scenery. The topography has been rendered clear and vivid to the extent that it serves a meaningful role in the human dramas. The Sarayu river is as much associated with the childhood play of Swami and his friends as with Raju, Jagon, Raman and so many others. Narayan is more concerned with the details of human actions, and the small geographical description provide necessary authenticity to these actions. The river the hills, the status and the streets together with the Malgudians and their thousands small events and aspirations provide a vivid rendering of life, a community existence bound not only to one another, but also to the mute Mempihills and the Sarayu river in an age- old emotional attachment. Sarayu particularly brings an intense nostalgic fervour to the novels, not because it is associated with the daily living of the Malgudians, but because it is an enduring company of the innocent days of old age. The Sarayu is not only a fact of the immediate present, but as Srinivas muses in Mr. Sampath mingles with
the hoary traditions as its history stretches from the remote past to the present. Into this flux of time, the abiding spirit of the Sarayu brings in that complaining sense of the Eternal before which the serious transaction of the temporal world of Malgudi appear quite quixotic.

The characters journey through time. The journey is very often focused in a biographical perspective, that unfolds their movement from ignorance to knowledge in the comic framework of the narrative. 'Life by time' and 'Life by Values', to quote from E.M. Forster’s Aspects of the Novel, are interviewed together.

In order to creates a successful fictional illusion the locals is to be properly identified. Narayan provides all the details of a traditional society in transition— all the age old superstitions, gods and grandmothers, the cricket club, the film actress and the family planning. Simultaneously, the values that sustain the Malgudi society are understood implicitly as the plot advances. By the techniques of 'formal realism' Narayan provides authenticity as well as credibility to his creations. This helps in directing all the narratives efforts of Narayan towards, what Malcolm Bradbury calls; the percussive ends' of the novel:
the novelist undertakes so to shape and use the fictional
transaction as to elicit from himself and the reader, the
highest sense of meaning, relevance, significance, of
variation and richness but also of concord and elegance. . . 19

In Narayan's human comedy, a sort of liberated awareness of life
is inherent. This awareness is realized not through a moralized stance,
but through aesthetically satisfying from and style that enable us to
derive a meaning of life and things, for as Brooks and Warren suggest a
sense of meaningfulness."20

That there is a certain moral concern in Narayan's novels is
generally accepted. A causal reading of his movies will acquaint us
with, what F.R. Leavis calls, 'a vital capacity for experience, a kind of
reverent openness before life, and a marked moral intensity".21 But the
moral concern is not divorced from the form of the novel. Ordinary
human transactions are transmuted into the beauty of living a ense are
described tolucidly, with authentic circumstantial details, with ironic
turn of events and undertones, and with a unique sense of good humour
permeating even the odds of life. We can safety apply here David
Lodge's analysis of Emma, as he wishes to amend Leavis' comment on
the novel.
When we examine the moral preoccupations that characterize Jane Austen’s peculiar interest in life a manifested in *Emma*. We find that they can be appreciated only in terms of the formal perfection of the novel.22

Narayan’s sensibility operates on various levels of human experiences and he does it in a style that can be called ‘natural’. He draws from the vast spectrum of life— from the ordinary details of daily drudgeries to high ambitions and passions, and all these are shaped and moulded by the comic sensibility of Narayan to find their due places in the Malgudi comedy. All these contributes to the unified impression of the comic. It is made possible by Narayan’s extraordinary sensibility, which is like, as Henry James points out whiles discussing the artist and the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-brone particle in its issue”.23 He subtly suggests the peculiarities involved. The trivialities, whether they have a direct bearing on the plot or not, build up the comic atmosphere of the novel. Narayan in treating these trivialities in very simple and affectionate manner, transmutes them into significant aspects of life. His is no any grand them of king and emperors, of marvels and murders, his is a theme of the ordinary man trying to live of life more
meaningfully. Narayan's art takes cognizance of the fact that "Some of the most interesting experiments of which it's capable are hidden in the bosom of common things". Narayan chooses a style which is an perfect harmony with such a them, a style that is simple yet dignified and graceful.

Narayan's narrative records the details not only of the physical states of being, but also of the psychic status of the characters. His language and the manner in which the narrative is laid out govern the tone of the novel. In this simple style, the style of a story-teller the reader instead of remaining away from the events becomes involved in it and is completely won over by the fictional reality, and becomes a citizen of the fictive town. Such privilege is denied to the reader of the comedies of Aristophanes or of Shakespeare. But Narayan makes it possible for he treats the actions and aspirations of the common language of the middle class and of the mediocre town. Malgudi is any small South-Indian town, experiencing increasing pressures of the modern civilization in its traditional set-up. Much of the sweet old way of living is still in fact. The liarity and there is a nostalgic fervour which springs from its unpretentious simplicity. With an unfailing faith in human life, Narayan records the oddities and the beauty of the comment man's existence.
A sense of good humour informs Narayan’s narration. In a study of ‘Good humour and Gaiety’ F.L. Lucas remarks, “Johnson has summed up in two words that charm of Falstaff which covers (on the stage at least) all his sine-- --- “perpetual gaiety”, 25 There is in Raju’s character this ‘perpetual gaiety’ which springs from the comic defiance of all his misfortunes and which endears him to the readers. That is why the moral censure for Raju’s sin and mistakes is not so immediate and severe. This warmth of life can be perceived in all his characters in varying degrees.

Narayan views life’s lapses not with any missionary benevolence and zeal, but with the understanding and wisdom of an artist who admits life’s various compulsions and whose vision of life is essential comic. Hence in his novels, the treatment of any episode or of any character hardly casually dismissed. The narrative treatment always keeps to the straight middle path, neither becoming chivalric nor churlish. Instead of the ‘dreary and portentous solemnity.’26 which F.L. Lucas finds much ‘oppressive’ there is in Narayan’s novels a sobriety of style that correspondence to the flow of life that is recorded. Narayan never sounds pompous or pedantic. His language has the charm and magic of ordinary speech that persuades us to the fictional reality because of our intimate kinship with the language.
Good humour is a way of living where life's occasional sorrows and sufferings are not only accepted but also are transmuted into meaningful experience. A sportive spirit dominates over the defeats and disillusionments of life. This sense of good humour pervades all the descriptions of Malgudilife where man's sins and mistake even though disapproved of, are also loved, for these sins and mistakes are intensely human. The characters of Sampath, Raju, Jagon, Margayya and of all others are affectionately drawn. Humour in Narayan's novels serves as aesthetic purpose in terms of shaping the reader's response to various situations--capturing nostalgically a lot childhood in Swami and Friends an adolescence in The Bachelor of Arts, disapproving the pseudo values of the modern civilization in The Financial Expert and The Vendor of Sweets, realizing the various compulsions of life with Raju in The Guide, and partaking of the timidity and innocence of ordinary humanity and negation an aggressive individualism in The Maneater of Malgudi.

In order to bring a sense of immediacy as well as of intimacy to a recognized Indian them and setting, Narayan not only harps on the traditions, its beliefs and superstitions from time to time in the course of his narration, he also draws broad mythic parallels to his plots. While
analyzing Indo-Anglian fiction from the standpoint of myth as technique, Meenakashi Mukherjee comments,

If a world-view is required to make literature meaningful in terms of shared human experience, then the Indian epics offer a widely accepted basis of such a common background which permeates the collective unconscious of the whole nation.27

The Guide and The Maneater of Malgudi are very close to the Valmiki and the Bhasmasura myths respectively and thus bring an easy credibility to the actions and their consequence in the context of an Indian ethos. Dr. Mukherjee in an extensive discussion of The Maneater of Malgudi notes that" the battle between the gods and demons, the sura and the ashura",28 Narayan, in addition to finding well defined mythic parallels to plots, often weaves the narrative with allusions from ancient scriptures.

In Mr. Sampath Srinivas musses about the god Nataraj, in The Maneater of Malgudi an anxious, worried Nataraj prays to Lord Vishnu who had saved the elephant. This in what Dr. Mukherjee calls the 'digressional technique'29 my means of which the novelist serves to
illustrate a point, or make the realization more vivid. Equally significantly, the mystic reunion of Krishna with his dead wife, the renunciation of Jagor, the penance of Raju to save a village from drought are age-old beliefs and ideals that have percolated to the very bottom of our psyche. These Indian myths and the traditional rituals, beliefs and superstitions not only create an authentic Indian locates, but also contribute to the effective as a broad parallel to plot or as a 'digressional technique' has made Narayan's style of story-telling lucid and amply communicative.

As has already been suggested in Chapter I, Narayan's plots move in a pattern of order-disorder - order, and this pattern becomes a "part of his world-view". This "world-view" is typically Indian as it owns to our traditional concepts of creation. The forces of Evil which from time to time appear in the world distributing its peace and stability are ultimately undone by themselves or are destroyed by the incarnation. The stability returns with a renewed assertion of moral and spiritual values. This them is recurrent in Narayan's novels with an astonishing degree of accuracy. But while the battles is fought between the force of Evil and the force of Good on an ethical plane, on an existential plane the focus is on Man's comic predicament. With the exception of _The Guide_, Narayan's novels evoke a feeling of traversing
a circular path of life's various experiences, reaching at last, the
ordered world at the beginning. That is, why, most of his novels do not
have deceiving conclusion as there is in The Guide.

Narayan's comedy does not move to any height of fantasy as in
the comedies or Aristophanes, nor does it bank explicitly on satire as
Swift does In his novels. His forte is the commonplace- - - the
commonplace events and aspirations of people in a small South Indian
town. For this Narayan uses a language that can well bear and provide
ample testimony to the reality or ordinary lives. He treats not only
individual’s experiences, but also a collective, social experience. It is
not only the life story of a vast Malgudi experience. He others, it is the
saga experiences of an average human existence-------dreams,
anxieties, actions, frustrations and so on in a manner in which.

...... it is not the phrase that lingers in the memory as the
thing itself . . . . words are merely a plain glass through
which one sees the things.30

Narayan's style encompasses many diverse facets of life and
experience, which are all subject to one malgudi ethos that is constant
of eternal kin spite of the seeming changes. His canvass is limited in the
sense that he treats a small group of people in a small geographical
innumerable equations in which they exist with one another and with
the society

Narayan’s not only focuses on the universal through the
particular or tells a Story and conceys and allegorical meaning as an
The Maneater of Malgudi, but also takes the comic to the deepest human
level. His human comedy basses itself on the comic incongruity arising
from man’s peculiar reactions to his society. The eternal world thwarts
the desired way of living of the individual and in this conflict between
the individual and the world, an ambivalent attitude is generated, in
spite of his violation of the moral codes of the society, the individual; is
not wholly condemned. This incongruous relationship with the world, is
a fundamental fact of our existence. Narayan’s genial humour, which
permeates his narrative, embracing the immutable small triumph and
tragedies of life. Forma the anchor of his comic vision.

The novels of Narayan illustrate the fact that despite all the odds
and frustrations we encounter and experience, life has an indefectible
persistence and charm of its own. Within the bizarre events of Malgudi.
Narayan subtly focuses on beatific side of human life. As Narayan’s
comic vision embraces an intense humanism, his comic mode
constitutes of the grace of a language of the everybody world, of a style that simply but truthfully tells the story of the common humanity as they live in the small town of Malgudi. Thus his style while embodying his vision becomes an inalienable part of it.


4. Ibid., p. 1

5. Ibid., p. 18

6. Ibid., p. 20

7. Ibid..


12 Ibid.


15 David Lodge, Language of Fiction, p. 42.


18 Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel, p. 32. Watt, notes, "Formal realism, in fact, is the narrative embodiment of a premise that Defoe and Richardson accepted very literally, but which is implicit in the novel form is general: the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is, therefore, under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely
referential use of language than is common in other literary forms.' (p.32).


20. Brooks and Warren, Understands Fiction p.82.


22. David Lodge, Language of Fiction p.68.


24. bid., p.36


26. Ibid., p.144.


28. Ibid., p. 152.


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