CHAPTER FIVE

PERSPECTIVES OF THE WRITERS OF DIFFERENT ERA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Comparative Indian literature is the study of the literature of one nation but written in many languages while comparative western literature is the study of different national literatures. The term essentially refers to literature, which draws a comparison with the philosophy, the structure of the narrative or its theme. Comparison is a universal framework both with regard to perception and interpretation. The importance of comparative literature is specifically exemplified in the present era, where there is a constant effort amongst the writers to bridge the literary divide of the east and west.

Mathew Arnold was the first one to use the term ‘comparative literature’ in English. He places them together not for comparison but for contrast. In the first inaugural lecture as the Professor of Poetry at Oxford, he declared that literature can only be adequately comprehended relatively.\textsuperscript{i}

He approvingly states at Manchester, that its was essential to compare the work of other authors of a different era to the ones of one’s own era and country, in order to know where one’s contemporaries stand.\textsuperscript{ii}

One should not merely find out the identities or similarities, or the differences because they may prove to be futile and will not serve the true ends of comparative literature. The aim should be to find out the implications and the underlying identities of both similarities and differences so that even the differences can be given a proper place in a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the artist. It should be borne in mind that there can be no significant difference without any underlying identity. One should be truthful and self critical in analysis of the literature. Thus, the new insights in to literary studies will become fruitful by the comparatists.
This approach ought to lead us to more comprehensive and adequate understanding of the works and their authors. With the view of how the writers have dealt with the content and theme and how they have appealed universally is to be taken into account. Comparison becomes a significant and effective instrument for illuminating experiences as well as texts.

R.K.Narayan’s aim to discover and present one’s own truth about human life is reflected in his work. The heroes of the most of his novels are sensitive, creative, questioning, resilient, tough and committed. He presents his characters who are firmly rooted and have the capacity to confront any situation. He accepts evil as an integral part of his life. However he is aware of its negative implications, so he treats it ironically. He knows that the evil cannot be uprooted on its own and hence very artistically discusses the predicaments undergone by his protagonist during the journey of his life and what kind of repercussions one has to face if they defy tradition and values.

The authors may deal with the same theme but how it is conceptualized differently is significant.

R.K.NARAYAN AND ANTON CHEKOV

R.K.Narayan has been compared to Anton Chekov, a 19th century writer. His works and the Russian physician, dramatist and short story writer’s works are similar in narrative technique, interior monologues, characterization, simplicity, setting , the tone , humour , irony and satire in the story. Narayan’s style and technique of storytelling is unique. Nearly eighty two stories in eight volumes have been published so far. Although in his memoir he has mentioned that he loved tragic ending, he never could write in reality. In fact even a tragic description of his father’s death is besmeared with a mild laughter.

Anton Chekov was a literary genius who explored and probed into the inner selves of human life, laying bare the secret motives of his characters. In most of his writings, elements of tragedy as well as humour can be found. Chekov was influenced by Tolstoy. It is said that while Tolstoy identified himself with his characters. Chekov could understand every heartbeat of his characters. While in Medical School, he began to publish his comic short stories to
support himself and his mother. His first novel *Nenuzhaya Pobeda* (1882) and second novel *The Shooting Party* became popular. His first book of short stories in 1886 became a great success and soon he became a full time writer.

Both, the authors never failed to see a bit of sunlight and delicate beauty in a tragic situation. We shall discuss three of his stories which come very close to Narayan at some point although Narayan cannot be bracketed with Chekov owing to the differences in socio-political atmosphere and cultural heritage.

Narayan’s *The Astrologer’s Day* and Chekov’s *The Bet* are similar the same is with *The Work of Art* and *The Engine Trouble* and *Chameleon* to *The Martyr’s Corner*.

Chekov has used the narrative technique in the story. The story is narrated in a flash back style. The story *The Bet* opens on a dark autumn night with an old banker recalling a ridiculous bet that he had made with a young lawyer fifteen years back with the tragic change in the two men. This story is a psychological study of what happens in the mind of a sensitive man under unusual circumstances reflects Chekov’s interest in the inner lives of human beings. The whole story is an irony in which everything the banker and the lawyer had been so certain of fifteen years before turns out quite differently than they had expected. The story is about both the men in the story taking a challenge to prove their point of view at the cost of their freedom and happiness.

The lawyer, the protagonist had taken a tough stand against capital punishment and felt that life imprisonment was better than death penalty in a party hosted by a banker. The following words reveal his opinion when he was given a choice. He felt that both are equally immoral and if given a chance to choose between death penalty and life sentence, he would go for the second. He remembered the saying that one should live anyhow than not live at all. Thus the character in Chekov’s story state wishes to face the changes in life.
Driven by the desire to acquire wealth and to prove it by action, the lawyer accepts the challenge and takes up voluntarily self-imprisonment for two million bet. He suffers from bouts of loneliness, depression and anger in his solitary confinement. He spends time playing piano, reading books, drinking, smoking even crying and sleeping till finally realization dawns on him i.e. the worthlessness of the materialistic world and the need for introspection.

The antagonist, a banker recalls the occasion of the bet he had made with the lawyer to pay him two million and becomes restless one day before the completion of fifteen years as his finances have dwindled. He has unnecessarily gone in for a bet to prove his point of view. He was then rich and influential and his pride will bring down his downfall. He realizes that he will be utterly ruined. He feared of becoming a bankrupt which makes him flout his principles and decides to kill the lawyer before the accomplishment of the captivity period. His loss of inhuman bet and unreasonable conditions on the lawyer makes him cry in despair:

_Cursed bet! muttered the old man clutching his head in despair. Why didn't the man die?_

Here, the banker too goes through an anxiety period and wants to retain his identity. He wants to save himself from disgrace.

He finds the note written by the lawyer renouncing the two millions which he had earlier thought to be a paradise. He rejects the fortune because he becomes aware of their irrelevance. The banker too undergoes a transformation. A philosophical tone pervades in the entire story. They both realize that true happiness is within man, one needs to realize their potential. Materialistic life is futile. Ego, pride should be curbed. At the end self realization of their mistake makes them a wiser human being. There was an element of surprise too in the story which we also find in R.K.Narayan’s story.

Narayan short stories also have an irony in them and his characters are deftly and deceptively created. The eccentricities of his characters are quite
fascinating and he is an artist who does not want to change and sets out to show as it is.

*Why take Life too seriously?" Mine is an unserious attitude to life."*

**An Astrologer’s Day** describes an accidental meeting of a runaway criminal astrologer with his old enemy Guru Nayak whom he had thrown into a well in a fit of drunkenness and taken for dead. He was unruly, good for nothing and was a drunkard in his youth. Guru Nayak fails to recognize the astrologer and goes to him merely to find out whether he will succeed in tracing his enemy and take revenge upon him or not. Here the astrologer has been living in guilt for so many years with the thought that he had murdered him. He had to leave his village to escape being punished for his crime. He took up astrology to make a living. He has got alienated from his family, society and gradually from himself. Narayan’s narrative reveals his desperation due to the guilt-ridden consciousness for leaving home without informing anybody.

Although the astrologer was never desirous of becoming an astrologer, when he began his life, Fate had something else in store for him as he had no knowledge of astrology. But he overcame all the predicaments, with long practice, shrewd guesswork and keen observation which made him the master of his trade. He had also developed a fairly good understanding of human troubles and other skills and business tactics such as occasional flattery which endeared him to his clients. The location where the astrologer transacted his business suited him perfectly.

The astrologer recognizes him and tries to avoid him but when his infallibility is challenged he describes every detail of the horrific episode in which he was the protagonist. Guru Nayak had taken up the challenge of finding his enemy and now the astrologer also took up the challenge when he was threatened if he did not answer his questions. He wins sympathy of the client and charges a handsome amount from him as fee. He very cleverly advises him to return back to his village and never leave home again as the criminal he is looking for died four months back and was crushed under the wheels of the lorry. The astrologer returns home with a feeling of great relief that he does not have the
blood of a man on his head as he had feared till now. His self-denial, lack of freedom, fear, frustration, anxiety and quest for identity comes to the fore. He narrates this to his wife and is greatly relieved that his buddy whom he had attempted to kill had not died. Thus the element of surprise is maintained till the very end and it is only at the end, he receives a fresh lease of life.

The chief interest of the story lies in the irony involved in Guru Nayak’s meeting that man he has been tracing for several years and yet failing to recognize him. Little does he know that the astrologer is the same man he is looking for. He too goes through frustration, wounded self-esteem, has strong feelings of resentment, and must have not lived a meaningful life. The story provides a vivid portrayal of the ways and tactics of an Indian astrologer. It describes the way he begins his day, the manner in which he talks about a desired effect and the clothes he puts on to impress and overawe his clients.

The astrologer who had spent years hiding from Guru Nayak, identifies him when he lights a cheroot and his face is illuminated for a brief moment only to discover that he is not guilty. He was freed from guilt when he comes to know that the man he thought he had killed years ago was alive. He convinced his enemy that the man who attempted his murder had died. The astrologer sent him back home without revealing his identity, thus putting an end to the possibility of retribution.

The story has interesting dialogues which heightens the narration.

‘The astrologer said, “You were left for dead. Am I right?”

“Ah, tell me more.”

“A knife passed through you once?” said the astrologer.

“Good fellow!” He bared his chest to show the scar.”What else?”

(MDp.6)

Thus both men have learned the lessons of their life. They became wiser human beings.
In both the stories, there is an element of surprise and the realization dawned upon protagonist and antagonist that they are solely responsible for their meaningless life and must value human relationships.

Chekov’s “The work Of Art’ is the story of the image of a nude lady carved out of an antique Bronze Candelabrum. Shasha goes to a doctor named Koshelkov and expresses his and his mother’s gratitude to him for saving his life. His mother sends him a rare piece of art. His mother is eager to find a pair for it. The doctor uncovers a nude antique Bronze. The doctor is in a dilemma. He says

“Yes indeed a nice work of art. But I am a married man. Little children and ladies come here frequently.”

On his great insistence, he accepts it but hands it over to the lawyer who is overwhelmed by its beauty. But he does not want to keep it in his house because his mother visits the place frequently. The doctor leaves the gift with the lawyer who presents it to a comedian who sells it to an old lady. She is none other than Shasha’s mother. Sasha sees the doctor again---

I have just succeeded in getting a mate to your Candelabrum! Mother is so happy!”

The doctor sees the Bronze and is speechless. But his power of speech is gone.

In humour and style, the story *The Engine Trouble* compares well with ‘The Work Of Art’ with some differences. The doctor gets the work of art in lieu of his services done and the talkative man gets a road engine for his lottery ticket. Both appreciate their gifts. But both are reluctant to retain them. The talkative man wants to sell it to the Municipality but the Chairman refuses it. The engine becomes a luxury. After a great effort he gets help from a driver who had been dismissed from his job. He agrees to take it outside the Gymkhana ground and in the process smashes a compound wall and remands the engine owner to jail custody. The talkative man gets rid of the engine when after an earth quake, it falls in to the well and chokes the filthy
well like a cork to a bottle mouth. In case of Chekov’s story the doctor gifts the Bronze to a lawyer and he in turn to a comedian and the comedian sells it to the mother Sasha. As irony of fate has it, the nude work of an art again reaches the doctor. The readers have a great time reading these humorous stories.

Graham Greene, the mentor of Narayan sees a Russian quality in him. He often recalls Chekov’s light, vivid style, the unrealized beauty of human relationships...... He has mentioned this in the preface to his novel *The Bachelor of Arts*.

Like Chekov, Narayan is also a dispassionate observer. It is the portrayal of common man, common life and their manners that Narayan gets close to the art of Chekov. He has something of Chekov’s realism but most of Chekov’s stories have a sad note in the end and Narayan’s end his story on an optimistic note.

In the introduction of *Malgudi Days* the author has tried to reveal his purpose behind the creation of short stories. He concedes to the fact that he enjoys writing short stories, which can be easily created with just a central idea, unlike a novel which requires minute details. 

It is rightly said by P.S.Sundaram:

> What makes Narayan the writer he is and makes it worthwhile to write about him is the zest he so obviously has in life and all its creatures, his modernity, his irony, his sense of humour, the complete absence of pomposity and pretence. Whatever else he may or may not he is absolutely authentic.

Narayan’s deep humanism is worth mentioning. He very beautifully portrays the people and their idiosyncracies. He focuses on human relationships. His stories are so remarkable as he has employed ceaselessly the technique of irony which makes his characters very interesting and consequently imparts sufficient pleasure, knowledge of how to live life.
R.K. NARAYAN AND ARUN JOSHI

I would like to compare R.K. Narayan and Arun Joshi, a 21st century writer who have both dealt with the ‘Quest for Self’ but analysed it in a different way.

One should exalt the self by the Self. One should not deprecate the Self, for the Self alone is the friend of the self, and the Self alone is also the enemy of the self. The Self is the friend of him whose self has been conquered by the self. Where the self remains unrestrained. The self would behave as its enemy, as an external foe.

The above lines are quoted in the Bhagvad Gita and have very much influenced R.K. Narayan and Arun Joshi, during their formative years. The discovery of self is however a conscious process of knowing, thinking, feeling and willing and the subconscious and unconscious motives and impulses. As the old adage goes, To Thine Own Self, Be True. The problem of ‘self’ is still the problem of the existence in the world. One should realize that making sense of oneself and one’s existence is quite an ordeal and if successful it’s a rare feat. Man’s realization of self is a comprehensive phenomenon involving psycho-philosophical aspect of human personality. Here, both the protagonist in the novel are in quest for identity.

When the foundations of human life and of the established system of values have been shaken, man experiences more acutely the insecurity of life, one or the other elements tend to assert itself disproportionately and thus man goes through the existential crisis.

R.K. Narayan and Arun Joshi can be compared through their novels The Guide and The Strange Case of Billy Biswas. The protagonists in the journey of their life face various existential problems, overcomes it through self-realization and thus discovers their ‘self’.

Both the writers are of the post-colonial era of the Indian Literary arena, who have lucidly articulated the feelings of Indians who are trapped between the
cultural differences between India and the west, and at the same time are trying to adopt western practices in their daily lives.

Narayan reigns supreme with his portrayal of humanistic perspectives. All the human aspects, human problems, human triumph and human weaknesses are present in Malgudi. He has presented Malgudians with a strong sense of values and are not culturally rootless, Raju the protagonist in his novel, *The Guide* plays one role after another and shows the lack of a fixed or authentic identity. He becomes an image what Velan wants him to be. It's a tale of a railway guide who becomes a spiritual guide and ultimately aspires to existential maturity. The novel is the study of Raju's search for selfhood and identity. In the opening scene Raju's inner turmoil, changes in identity is reflected upon and his isolation is broken by Velan's intrusion. Velan solves the problem of Raju's loneliness. Both are impressed by each other. Raju considered the intrusion to be a relief from his solitary life, whereas the man stood gazing reverentially on his face and he felt amused and embarrassed.

Velan is deeply impressed by Raju's saintly appearance. He conceives Raju as a great soul who can do something for the welfare of the people. However, Raju is modest and he clarifies that he was ordinary and not as great as he was conceived to be. xii

Raju's faithful narration of the story of his life to Velan also does not help him. His soul is always in a flux and in the making. Raju is forced to play the role of a saint to the people. He composed his features and pose to receive them.

While facing this predicament Raju was reminded of his happy days, when he learned and earned while he taught. xiii

He also recalls the days of absorption of his soul in Rosie, who he considered to be the only reality in his life and consciousness. xiv

He also felt that he was the sole person to have transformed Rosie to Nalini. Raju’s proud and vain self was puffed up. He thought of how he had made
her. He felt that unless he sat there Nalini would be unable to perform. She needed his inspiring presence. He swelled with pride when he heard her saying that she will not be able to pay his debt even if she has seven rebirths.

But nemesis overtakes him and he is arrested for forgery. Rosie retains her dignity and humanity and does try to help him out of this situation but at the end she realizes her lapse and felt that she has committed an enormous sin.

Raju was of the belief that he would be rewarded for his profound knowledge of the exact number of stars in the sky. However, Raju was lost into a different cluster of stars, every time he stared deeper to assimilate them in his mind. He was treated as a Swami who was selfless and was helpful to others.

This propels Raju to contemplate the limitless expanse of life. He realizes man is constantly struggling with his individuality and is aware that he is not a saint but the attitude of reverence of the villagers towards him compels him to sacrifice his food to save humanity. His life had lost its personal limitation and he seemed to belong to the world now. He could hardly afford a private life now. For the first time in his life he was doing something, which is not meant for his own self. He makes an earnest effort to do a deed that he was not personally interested in. Thus, the self-absorbed man had moved through self-denial to self-realization.

The novel may be interpreted from the existential perspective since the other characters like Rosie, Marco are also in search of identity which they have gained in their own ways. The husband-wife alienation is the result of lack of communication. All three major characters undergo significant transformation and may be defined as a search for their ‘self ’ and ultimately discover their self.

Arun Joshi, also a Sahitya Academy winner, describes problems arising out of alienation in his novels. Living in a deep-rooted society, his characters find themselves alienated and rootless and differs from Narayan’s point of view.
But both have thrown light on how to overcome existential dilemmas by self-realization. The quest for self has been conceptualized differently by the authors.

Arun Joshi was a man of vision. He throws light on his protagonist who gets alienated not from one’s motherland but from oneself. He has beautifully presented how a materialistic life results in restlessness in man. Though he is influenced by western existentialist writers, Arun Joshi’s writings reflect the Indian ideologies and does not harp on the futility and negation of life. He is also influenced by the Bhagvad Gita, Vedanta and the teachings of Mahatma Gandhiji.

His protagonist Billy compared to R.K.Narayan’s protagonist Raju face double cultures impinging upon one self. The similarity in them is that both the protagonists progress from alienation to existential affirmation. Both simply want to convey that westernization and modernity have disordered human relationships.

The mind comprises ‘self’ and ‘The Self.’ The goal is not to allow ‘The Self’ to overpower ‘self. If one lets go the attachments of the self, inner peace can be realized. The novel opens with the narrator’s present and then moves on to the past narrating his encounter with Billy Biswas the protagonist and his quest for understanding himself. His quest propels him to face one crisis after another. Bimal Biswas, the protagonist of the novel, known as Billy, a Ph.D. and a professor of a famous university, a passionate scholar of Anthropology, the son of a judge of the Supreme Court of India and a married man with a son, is yet a despondent and does not find his true identity in any of these roles. The narrator Romesh Sahai is taken aback when Billy states that it was his passion to travel, read, visit places and meet new people, which had drawn him to anthropology. xv

This article discusses the different facets of Billy’s personality, how he gets alienated from the so called developed society and becomes a recluse ultimately to find his roots in the tribal society. The effort to uproot him from
there by his own people costs him his life. In the first part of the novel he puts in efforts to be a part of the civilized society and pins his hopes on certain individuals. But he fails in his efforts. He feels rootless in the modern society and he flees and makes an attempt to find himself. He writes to his Swedish friend Tuula Lindgren, a trainee of psychiatric social work about he losing his grip on life and asks them about himself, his parents, his wife and child.

His search is unending and he often feels that he belongs to the primitive tribal area. The drumbeats of the tribals find an echo in the drumbeats of Billy’s own self- they arouse a sudden interest in his own identity.

The life with a tribal girl Bilasia whom he sees in the wilds of Maikala hills and is drawn to her has brought a new transformation. He did not want to go back to the city life nor he wanted anyone to know that he is there. He realizes that happiness had an intricate nexus with lack of ambition.

The cultured, educated artificial self dissolves and new primitive self comes into existence. Billy is reborn. He acquires the power of the magician, is chosen as the priest of the tribesmen, decides to serve the people there and cures tribesmen of many diseases through the herbs. But Billy’s quest has not ended yet. Billy’s spiritual pursuits in the primitive forests continue as he aspires spiritual maturity. But it is short-lived.

Although he does not feel rootless in the world of tribals, the external forces try to uproot him, he prefers dying than to succumb to their wishes. Thus, both the heroes in the novels undertake a voyage in to their inner-self leading to epiphany, enlightenment and an existential way to self-discovery.

Different Indian novelists in English would have explored the various aspects of self and quest for identity in their own way. R.K.Narayan and Arun Joshi through their novels The Guide and The Strange Case of Billy Biswas have moved steadily towards the discovery of Self, transcending geographies. It would be appropriate to conclude with the assertion that both the protagonists
in the fictional world exhibit within their collective minds and soul a deep and excessive awareness of ‘Self’.

Thus, though both the authors have conceptualized the quest for Self differently, they have come to a conclusion that a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of life means genuine attempts and struggles of the individuals to establish interpersonal relationships with other individuals and through them with their community and ultimately with humanity at large. In the age of scientific development and massive prosperity, the relationship between one man and another has become extremely important for retaining peace and harmony in the society.

R.K. NARAYAN, HENRIK IBSEN AND MULKRAJ ANAND

A comparative study of the writers: R.K. Narayan, Henrik Ibsen and Mulk Raj Anand. These writers have dealt with the man-woman relationship in their own way. All three face existential issues and the reason is the same. They all suffer from marital disharmony. Narayan has portrayed variety of Indian characters. When it comes to women, he has portrayed them distinctly. Each one of them are affected by the conflict between tradition and modernity. Tradition bound woman is conditioned by conventions and accepts the responsibility of being the custodian of family honour and prestige. The modern woman, with a modern outlook does not see any sense in being acquiescent. The need for self-expression is now felt and she begins to question conventions and defy them but in the process might get alienated, suffer mentally and go through the experience of severing family ties and the ordeal of facing the society.

He depicts the middle-class life and its women we can identify with. No two women characters are alike in his novels. Yet one finds a common strand that links them in their culture. The man-woman relationship has been the dominant theme of many works from time immemorial and has been adding richness to literature.
A comparison is made between Narayan and a 19th century writer and his contemporary writer. There have been critic and writers who have compared Narayan’s Savitri in *The Dark Room* (1938) to Ibsen’s Nora in *A Doll’s House* (1879) and Mulk Raj Anand’s character Gauri, in *The Old Woman and the Cow* (1960). All three novels deal with the theme of woman’s realization of her debased position in domestic life and her revolt against it. These novels demonstrate that even after a gap of more than fifty years, there is no radical change in the condition of Indian women. Even now women are forced to live a life of slavery, suffering, and subjugation. All three walk out of their house leaving their family and the comparison at the end is different under different circumstances presented in the novel.

*The Dark Room* portrays the marital disharmony in the family of Ramani, the Office Secretary of Engladia Insurance Company. After fifteen years of marriage and three children, Ramani and his wife Savitri have an incompatible family life. With an artistic conscientiousness, Narayan plants incidents and thoughts that show the discordant note in the domestic orchestra. When her friend Janamma quotes several instances about women adjusting themselves to the life with their husbands and the duties of the wives, she feels foolish about her behaviour and resentment towards her husband. But she cannot digest when he takes Shantabai as his mistress. Neglected and pushed to the oblivion, she protests against this unreasonable attitude but it goes unheeded. She is cocooned in the dark room and feels that she owns nothing. She is faced with an existential crisis and is unable to decide what to do with her life. She decides to commit suicide. She leaves the house, calling him dirty and impure and moves away from him, asserting her elementary rights as a woman and refusing to live under the obligations of a man.

Narayan has also written the novel in a traditional society where mythology is replete with glorious tales of self sacrificing women and who are more or less devoid of education and economic independence.
Mulk Raj Anand, like Narayan too has chosen a woman as the central character in the novel *The Old Woman and the Cow*. Significantly Anand uses myth as a part of his technique for the first time in his novel.

Narayan is rightly quoted by Mulk Raj Anand as a powerful fiction and story writer who ushered in the field of literature a novel technique and style. Both are contemporaries. But of them stand poles apart as far as the pattern, structure and object of their writings are concerned. Narayan believes in Art for Art sake whereas Anand believes in Art for society’s sake. It is the story of Gauri —— that meek and suffering village housewife, who offers a close parallel to Sita, the heroine of the epic *Ramayana*. She is an embodiment of all virtues and stands as an ideal to be pursued by every woman.

After her marriage to Panchi, a peasant boy from Chota Piplan village, Gauri adjusts patiently to a life of hardships and all the woes thrust by her in-laws and her husband. Though she is devoted to her husband, he looks down upon her and ill-treats her. She is sold to a lecherous merchant by her own mother but she escapes from him and becomes a nurse at Dr. Mahindra’s clinic before she is taken back by her husband. When the pregnant Gauri is questioned for her chastity and is asked to prove, the situation worsens. She pleads for innocence and purity but to no avail. Her husband strikes her resounding blows with his open palm. When she falls down in a heap, he kicks her calling her a bitch and the daughter of a whore. She declares that she wasn’t Sita who would be swallowed up by the earth and that she would hit back if she he struck her again.

When she is driven out by her in-laws house, she goes back to her mother where still a worse fate awaits her. Her mother mercilessly sells her off to an old lecherous Seth. The transaction is justified as a choice between her and her cow. Firmly rooted in the Indian culture, Gauri is convinced that her namesake Goddess Gauri will protect her. She also felt that though he has forsaken her, her faith in her husband remains unshaken. She sobs, feels a quiver in her womb but compels herself forward and rushes out towards the lane, without looking back.
Ibsen, Henrik Johan (1828-1906) a Norwegian poet and dramatist was a great influence in the 19th and 20th century. Ibsen’s father failed in business when he was eight and he experienced severe poverty during much of his youth and early manhood. At the age of nineteen he began writing poetry and completed his play *Catiline*, a blank verse tragedy when he was twenty-two. A year later, he secured an official position in a theatre company and wrote several plays for it. He immigrated to Italy at the age of thirty-six in 1864. He was not granted pension by the Norwegian government. This refusal had made Ibsen angry, bitter and frustrated. Hence, he left for Germany in 1891. He continued to stay in Germany for more than twenty years except for one short visit to Norway. He made his home again here and remained there till death. He was 78 when he died.

The more specifically domestic aspects of ‘home’ are taken up and scrutinized in *A Doll’s House*. Here ‘Home’ is seen as an institution that tends to inhibit the development of the authentic Self. She becomes a possession. Possessiveness is the keynote of such homes and crisis it seems serves only to amplify it. Forgiving his wife gives a man a sense of satisfaction and belief that he has proprietary rights over her. Ibsen has examined the inner spirit that comes in the way of self-realization. The play he wrote was a vehicle to propagate his belief. He believed that the society was comprised men and women. Each individual was required to realize his / her inner self. He saw it as a question of self-victory……. In *A Doll’s House*, Ibsen examines the issue of the woman’s place in such a world. More specifically he deals with woman’s place in a man’s world. It is Ibsen’s conviction that the stability in the relations between two sexes is necessary for an ideal marriage. The woman should be looked upon by her husband as her peer and partner entitled to share his anxieties as well as his successes. In other words, Ibsen wants to assert that women have the right to live and the right to personality. Helmer treats his wife is anything but a human being. She is his Killing skylark,………. and Nora being the obedient doll wife that she takes up the line of least resistance by acknowledging and accepting the flattery. It is evident that the setback of women have been because of their social upbringing. They were
made to feel like fragile decorative pieces that need to be protected and are to be entrusted with no kind of responsibility. In the play A doll’s House Nora blames father, then her husband Helmer, for turning her into a Doll, first doll child and then doll wife. She tells Helmer,

*Our house has never being anything but a playroom.*

She expected Helmer to protect her and forgive her for she had committed a blunder to save him. She did not get either. She lived with a stranger for eight years. Her sacramental value of marriage had been vitiated. In her frustration she retorts: *It’s became eight years of prostitution.*

She decides to seek a fuller life as a human being. When he realizes that he is losing the hold on her, he gathers all the strength and states:

*This is outrageous! You are betraying your most sacred duty.*

She awakens to the realities of her married life. She realizes that her first duty is to herself as an individual. She decides to start a new lease of life, educate herself and ‘learn to stand alone.’ She believes that being a reasonable person is more important than other things in life.

She does not want to continue with this farcical marriage. Through this play Ibsen, exposes the hypocrisy our society lives on. Yet in all sincerity Ibsen depends upon the woman for redemption, He feels:

*It is woman who shall solve the human problem, the saving grace is ultimately woman but her ability to use depends on the extent to which man will permit her to do so.*

Thus, the three women: Savitri, Gauri and Nora take to the road. They are at the crossroads. Each one frustrated, depressed, helpless, lonely, alienated from the family desperate for their own identity makes their own choices. They all face an existential crisis in the journey of their life. They search for this freedom and their creators lead them to different directions.
Ibsen’s approach is revolutionary and radical. Narayan is more realistic and practical and Anand is a humanist. Savitri’s decision to return back to her husband was only because of the nostalgic feeling for her children shakes her resolve to lead an independent life but she comes back as a changed woman. At the realization of her own inescapable weakness, she laments:

-One definite thing in life is Fear, Fear, from the cradle to the funeral pyre, and even beyond that, fear of torture in the other world. Afraid of a husband’s displeasures and of the discomforts that might be caused to him morning to night and all night too…. To be held down in a cauldron of boiling oil.

It apparently appears that the reason Savitri left her house and family does not seem to change her position or life but in reality that is not the case. Ibsen’s Nora in a similar situation when crushed to the core of her heart, felt that in such a context her marital obligations as a wife and mother ceased.

Shantakrishnaswamy observes:

-Nora’s strength of will, her gumption, is lacking at the final crucial point in Savitri, conditioned and broken so thoroughly as she is in the rigid Indian setting. The blow dealt by Savitri’s revolt did bring significant changes and also suggest the strength of a woman. Her new awareness would enable her to see her daughters at least do not fail into the same sand trap when they grow up.

Ramani does come to his senses. The following words in despair are uttered when he goes searching for Savitri:

-Why I have come here?

He starts coming home early too. He decides to reconcile.

-He pleaded with her, later: Just a pretty half an hour. You can go to bed at ten-thirty. Just a little talk. I came home early for your sake.

Narayan’s approach had to be true to the time and country he talks about.
Gauri of Anand’s novel does not retrace her steps to sulk and moan like Narayan’s Savitri. Gauri is transformed from a gentle cow to an individual with a will of her own. The pregnant village woman is determined to go and work in Dr. Mahindra’s hospital and have a child there.

Each one’s road leads to self-realization. Realization of facts and hopes dawn on them differently but each one takes up the responsibility to overcome all the anxieties and make their life a meaningful one. All the three women are an epitome of excellence, strength and virtue and will be role model for the generations to come!!!!

R.K. Narayan through his novels help people to deal with issues that affect them. As mentioned in his autobiographical book, My Days, that he was a voracious reader and twenty four hours was inadequate for all that one got in hand to read. He was also highly influenced by a British author Marie Corelli whose books he had read and reread till his mind had absorbed every bit of it. Hence, his approach towards such predicaments differ. He tells that such conditions in human life are inevitable. His existential therapy enables people to find their potential for self-actualization and awareness, which help them to make choices and create meaning in their lives. Hence, the analysis of the works of these novelists throws light on the diverse contemporary problems for e.g. social, cultural, economic, and psychological problems viz., social, cultural, economical, psychological problems which pose challenges to woman’s identity as well as integrity of her family. Narayan has been considered to be one of the few novelists who is capable to communicating ordinariness of human emotions in an extraordinary manner.

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ii Ibid, p.21


iv Ibid, p.45


xi A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Bhagvad Gita As It Is, chapter 6, verse 5,6 p.277, 278


xiii Ibid, p.63.

xiv Ibid, p.118.


xvi Ibid p.97.


xviii Narayan, R.K (1937): The Dark Room. Chennai: Indian Thought Publications, p.113

xix Anand, Mulk Raj (1960): The Old Woman and the Cow. New Delhi: Kutub Popular p.263

xxi Ibid, p. 83.

xxii Ibid, p. 84

xxiii Ibid, p. 85

xxiv Introduction to the plays, xvi

