CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The energy of mind is the essence of life. It is our attitude, which brings in thoughts and shows us the true outlook of life. Lots of patience is required to maintain a positive attitude. One must remember that we become whatever we think. So, we must give everything to prevent negative thoughts replacing positive thoughts. - ARISTOTLE

Narayan has sought to give voice to individuals living in a less urban setting. Malgudi is the metaphor of India. Through the individuals residing in his imaginary town, he has thrown light on the existential issues faced by his characters during the journey of the life. In doing so, he has proved wrong the widespread belief that the domestic realities in India are too inconsequential to be represented in the Indian literature. His emphasis on the different concerns cannot be viewed in isolation. According to him, in India, merely looking outside the window would also offer varied stories and characters to write about.

In this respect just like his contemporary writers Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, he too has provided voice to his Malgudians who inspite of the self imposed boundaries are essentially Indians. In most of his novels, the main protagonist displays a remarkable degree of self-alienation and quest for self-identity. These individuals who deal with angst, anxiety, loneliness stems from realization of one’s existential freedom. Hence one has to address the existential givens because silence on this subject would leave a faulty impression that Narayan’s art has remained relatively untouched by socio-economic tensions.

The analysis of the novels throws light on the mindset of the individuals with social, psychological and philosophical insight. His positive approach in
whatever situation is commendable. The preface to the book *Gods, Demons and Others* reflects his positivity. He states that one must be perpetually positive in life and in life’s happenings and that evil always has an element of self-destruction ingrained in it, which would eventually result in its own doom.ii

Narayan’s fictional world reveals the stresses and anxieties faced by the individuals in his Malgudi world. It reverberates with the sounds of their lives. The protagonists are ordinary men and women tested by the trials and tribulations of life. The crisis in the life forms the theme of their stories and novels. Some of these characters are strong willed and some are weak. He considers human beings as mortals prone to err and fall into the traps of their own making. Hence he is sympathetic towards his characters. His stories are not only of artistic creations but it unfolds with a human vision. When ordinary men and women nurture extraordinary ambition, desires and ideas they are bound to encounter problems. This is what happens to men and women in the fictional world of Narayan. In pursuit of their goals they face hurdles and this create crisis in their lives. The theme of their stories thus highlight the crisis in the individuals’ soul and its resolution.

The first three novels were autobiographical. They were his experiences. One of the strongest attributes of Narayan is that he recognizes the unique human qualities that individuals have: freedom, values, awareness, choice, creativity and the distinctiveness of each individual. His aim is to develop their own authenticity. Irony and humour are the off shoots of a healthy attitude to life. He projects a balanced view of life as they impartially narrate the stories of their good and bad characters. He is a humanist who not only relates the stories of his protagonists with detachment but also with understanding. He envisions that existential predicaments are essential for human growth and believes that they could enable man to adopt a constructive approach in life.

In this context C.D.Narasimhaiah says:

_Indeed the world –makers and world forsakers never ceased to amuse him such was his detachment from everything that was going around_
him that it only helped to sharpen his wit and quicken his compassion for everyone everything but mainly for what fell within his province. Anand admires R.K.Narayan. He says that Narayan is an adept craftsman who interprets the moods of his characters and imparts a definite pattern to the book without obvious imposition and intervention. He offers value judgements quite often but these comments instead of appearing inessential and deliberate in the design of the book interpret the will of the characters. This is the reason why he is able to achieve ‘organic composition’ as on the canvas where comparison and contrast bring out the internal crisis of the human personality.

The women of Narayan are all unique. He presents them as they are. Some like Savitri, Susila, Malathi, Ambika are traditional. Others like Shantabai, Rosie, Grace, Daisy are modern. They disregard marital bonds and have affairs without sanctifying them. They dismiss customs as unnecessary and worthless whereas traditional people view it as the gravest possible sin a woman can commit. Another peculiarity is that none of these women are from Malgudi. By portraying these characters, he actually presents the women of India standing at the cross-roads in the modern age. The impact of the western ideals and ideas have changed the society to a great extent. He portrays that his women face the existential issues by cultivating a balanced approach in life and by synthesizing the inner and outer reality so that they can live a meaningful life.

In a review of Narayan’s autobiography, My Days, John Updike described the famous Indian novelist with a touch of envy, as ‘the writer as citizen’. He has appreciated his ability to lucidly write issues, which pertain to him and the community around him. Narayan himself was highly impressed by the description and responded enthusiastically: I feel exactly the same way, It made me feel good to know that Updike understands my involvement with people--- as individuals and as community. The central appeal of Narayan’s work is undoubtedly, his strong sense of community and the significance given to the humanity of man. This is true of all his novels and short stories as well as other prose.
Narayan’s earlier novels take India as the locus of cultural confrontation and he brings western ideology into the traditional Indian cultural framework. Along with his extra-ordinary power of presenting multiple facets of life, he focuses on human emotions and human relationships. He is so sure about the psychology of the character he is writing about and he is able to read their minds as though it is happening to him. His humanistic approach emphasizes the significance of the individual’s subjective experience and the impact of this perception on their consequent actions. His fiction reveals the commitment to change and growth.

Though Narayan’s writings evidence his vast knowledge oscillating across Indian classical literature, history, religion, due to the fluidity in his writing style, he never comes across to be forcing the readers to believe his viewpoint. He describes the complications and ups and downs in the lives of his characters in an imaginary manner. His fiction utilizes certain philosophical ideas and each individual is confined within their own existential framework.

Even in one of the novels, Narayan through his protagonist has asserted on SELF and its importance in the Upanishads. The protagonist Rajuwas in an existential dilemma. Narayan conveys through his character that knowing the ‘self’ is most important. Only a true understanding of themselves with their strengths and weaknesses can allow these characters a chance of happiness. The Self is the key to self-fulfillment and that one can achieve by self realization.

Narayan uses irony as a strategy to highlight the predicament of common man’s struggle and extricate from it. According to him, his Malgudians not only grow but also develop their consciousness during the struggle in life. They pass through an illusionary and fantasy world and finally seem to attain some kind of spiritual realization or revelation. Narayan’s critics have dealt with the structural patterns, the character delineation, the recurring thematic pattern, modes of writing, flash back techniques, monologues, stream of consciousness, the milieu and several other elements in his novels.
The World of Narayan, indicates the richness and depth of his innate experiences. He draws his creative sustenance from the creative past and shows a subtle understanding of the present. Though the novelist appears to be unmindful of the socio economic changes sweeping across the country, it would be unfair to conclude that he and his Malgudi are impervious to changes. According to Narayan, the Indian man or woman, makes and lives with changes. Narayan’s mind perceives a balance of power in human relationships. He marvels at the invisible forces of the universe. He feels that if he can get a comprehensive view of all humanity he will be able to balance them perfectly. A perceptive reading of Narayan’s novels will throw light on the lacerated psyche of the protagonist momentarily and who find themselves in a catch-22 situation.

Narayan offers a positive portrayal of human existence. For a large part of the existence, human beings are absorbed in the actions, concerns and desires of their everyday life. The consciousness and circumstances are fused together. One should be truthful and self-critical in analysis of Narayan’s novels and stories. Each character faces existential crisis and overcomes them in their own way.

But one can draw attention that none of the critics have not touched upon the existential awakening in the protagonist of his novels. As argued throughout, his novels frequently introduce existentialistic views and its positive approach on the psychology of the protagonist. Narayan stresses that all his protagonists confront all types of existential anxieties and thus grow psychologically and spiritually. He has proved that human living and condition can be uplifted only when man accepts his life in toto. The philosophical and psychological dimensions of Narayan’s fictional exploration provides depth to his narratives. In one of his novels, Narayan has succinctly explained how man cannot avoid the law of life and how it comes into operation as soon as man is born into the earth. He relates all the sufferings and sadness in life to man’s constant attempt to not comply with the laws of life.
It is also said that the greatest achievement of Narayan lies in his capacity to sustain the faith in his Malgudians to encounter any existential givens.

The characters maintain a harmonious relationship, behave responsibly, make the choices and exist meaningfully in the society. Because of his balanced vision, Narayan’s protagonists are not seen transcending the realities, which form the essence of their existence. The characters in most of his novels undertake a voyage into their inner-self leading to epiphany, enlightenment and an existential way to self-discovery.

This true creative writer who has a unique voice turns ordinary situations—our existence into metaphors with passion and meaning. He always asserts that it is a delight in existence and all his novels urge us to live life meaningfully. For Narayan, alienation, loneliness, depression, despair, death seems to be a natural consequence of existence and does not rule the possibility of finding meaning in life. His characters show a gradual movement towards self-realization. He does not sympathize with characters who are self-centered, and existentially self-sufficient. The status-quo is restored at the end and the characters attain existential maturity. According to him, LIFE is certainly imperfect and it has to be lived. This positive attitude and approach towards life will enable people to survive and deal with the challenges that are thrown up in their lives.

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i Aristotelian Ethics Wikipedia.

