The matter appended is Anne Tyler's reply to the letter sent to her by the scholar on 15 January 2002. The answers provided by the novelist are in response to the following questions asked by the scholar:

1. Why are issues like 'abortion', 'violence', 'mass murder' etc. only touched upon and not incorporated into the matrix of your novels?

2. Your novels have many men who are 'deserters' of families. There are also men like Ian Bedloe who act as surrogate mothers. Is there any reason why you are critical as well as sympathetic towards men?

3. Blacks and Ethnic groups seem to be allotted only peripheral roles in your novels. Racial problems are apparently sidelined. Why is it so?
4. Your fiction depicts a certain amount of religious consciousness, but religion is used sometimes positively, sometimes negatively, and often as a means of irony and satire. Why is there such a tendency to make sinners of saints and saints of sinners?

5. Are the lovable eccentrics modelled on people whom you really know? Do you feel that eccentricity is a desirable trait? Why do you refuse to sketch a thoroughly villainous or frightening character?
Rani Paul Ukkan
"Poothokaran"
W. Kombara,
Irinjalakuda,
Pin - 680 121
Kerala, S. India

Dear Rani Paul Ukkan:

I'll be happy to answer your questions.

1. Although of course these and other issues concern me, I have never felt comfortable using my fiction as a platform to discuss my political beliefs.

2. You could also say that I am sometimes critical of women and sometimes sympathetic. I don't think of my characters as exemplars of their respective sexes; they're just individual people with some bad traits, some good ones.

3. Again, I wouldn't feel comfortable utilizing a political issue in my fiction. And although I would love to have people of different ethnic backgrounds take a more central role in my books, I think it would be presumptuous of me to imagine I could speak about the black (or Asian, etc.) experience with any authority.

4. I have nothing against religion, but I do feel people shouldn't proclaim that their way is the best way—and some religious believers do just that.

5. All of the characters in my novels are completely invented. I don't intend to make them eccentric; it's just that when you look closely at almost anyone, I believe, you're bound to find some eccentricity. And I've never sketched a thoroughly villainous character because I have to live with my characters for the two or three years it takes me to write a book; so I want them to be people I like.

I hope this is helpful.

Sincerely,

Anne Tyler