Chapter 1

Introduction

Heroism, in the Aristotelian sense has a tragic stature and Promethean dimensions. Transplanted to the American Eden, it is manifested, for example, in the sombre majesty of Melville's Ahab, which is aptly summed up by Stanley Geist: "In proclaiming his sovereign power, the hero also proclaimed his solitude" (82). Furthermore, in Melville's "Theology," we are reminded, Pagan and Christian elements mingle freely. Ahab is "as proud as Lucifer" and "as proud as a Greek God," besides being conscious of his affinity to the "dark Hindu half of nature." We thus assume, with Geist, that "Melville, like his hero, admired the rebel archangel for his proud and heroic defiance." We also feel justified in assuming that it is an intensification of this quarrel with God that makes Mark Twain an even more strident admirer of the rebellious Satan. Indeed, the concluding incidents of The Mysterious Stranger portray the heroic Little Satan's efforts to dispense justice to the heathen natives of India, suffering under an oppressive Christian imperialism. However, the adolescent archangel has little of the Olympian pride of Ahab, which is a world apart from Twain's commitment to egalitarianism. Not so easy to rule out are the Vedantic
elements that have been consciously or unconsciously assimilated into Twain's concept of heroism with a human face.

In this connection, it is worth noting that S. Ramaswamy has suggested that in his philosophical essay *What is Man?*, Twain's concept of man has taken into account the body-mind complex which is the "illusory self" (35) according to Vedantic thought. Whether, and to what extent, this eastern ramification has compromised the western credentials of Twain's heroes, remains to be seen in the context of Robert Regan's categorization of them as "unpromising" for the reason that "the power of innocence is not the power which wins success, and the innocent who struggles against the authority structure is destined for martyrdom" (143).

The proposed aim of this study is to explore this aspect of Twain's concept of heroism in comparison with the view of an appropriate counterpart from Indian Writing in English. For some very obvious reasons R.K. Narayan has been chosen. Considerable research exists to validate comparison between St. Petersburg and Malgudi; Huck and Swami, as well as an entire range of literary analogies that seem to link these two novelists from America and India. What is even more relevant is a thought-provoking insight about the "average" calibre
of the Narayan hero in the estimation of Rajiv Taranath (307). This study will attempt a comparative evaluation of the "average" and "unpromising" classifications applied to the heroes of the two novelists, and seek to assess their implications for the art of fiction.

Twain and Narayan belong to two entirely different geographical areas which can proudly boast of having distinctive literatures of their own. Americans were able to establish their own literature written in English, with due acknowledgement of indebtedness to the mother country. Soon, they developed a very forceful and vibrant literature with its characteristic "Americanness." Twain pertinently affirms: "There is nothing as the 'Queen's English.' The property has gone into the hands of a joint stock company and we [Americans] own the bulk of the shares" (Following the Equator 211).

In India, too, there have been parallel developments. Indian Writing in English came to be recognized by the reading public all over the world. When Twain, paid a visit to India, he was so fascinated by the linguistic hybridization that he devoted a chapter-long discussion of the topic, "Baboo Errors No Worse Than Ours" (Following the Equator 273-84). Today, Indian Writing in English has taken great strides and has improved in quantity and quality.
Narayan, one of the "Big Three" (Srinivasa Iyengar 300), established himself as a writer of comedies with a sharp eye for the oddities in men and matters. Narayan's merit lies in combining gentle humour with serious insights, making them dearer to the hearts of the readers. It is curious to note that *Swami and Friends*, the first novel written by Narayan, was first published not in India, but in England, and secured a warm reception.

Twain knows America and knows it whole. Born in Missouri, he saw every type of man, woman and child, white and black, that lived in the vast Mississippi valley. As a pilot on the Mississippi steamboat, he was able to meet so many kinds of people who enriched his experience as a sailor. As Territorial Secretary of Nevada and Editor of the *Virginia City Enterprise*, he knew, at first hand, the mining camps of the pacific coast, the gamblers, the railway builders, and the politicians. Thorough knowledge and clarity of expression are the unique features of *The Innocents Abroad* (1869). It is a vivid account of the Quaker City pleasure trip to the Mediterranean and the Holy Land. This travel narrative was so entirely different from the existing ones that it won great acclaim. The pervading humour in the book is really noteworthy. *The Gilded Age* (1873) was written in association with Charles
Dudley Warner, his friend and neighbour. In 1876, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* was published. Right after a trip to Europe he published *A Tramp Abroad* in 1880. It was a very productive period for Twain, because in 1881 he was able to bring out *The Prince and the Pauper*. *Life on the Mississippi* followed in 1883. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* appeared in 1884 and an earnest, extended satire was written by him entitled *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court* (1889). Though personal sorrow and bankruptcy dampened his spirit, the books continued to come out, which to him, were a refuge against despair. *The American Claimant* appeared in 1891. *Tom Sawyer Abroad* and *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* were published in 1894 simultaneously. *Those Extraordinary Twins* appeared in 1894. The publication of *Tom Sawyer, Detective* and the *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* took place in 1896. His last book of travel, *Following the Equator*, came along in 1897, which told the story of his world travel. Mrs. Clemens' death in 1904 shattered the author thoroughly. His dark mood prompted him to write the philosophical essay "*What is Man?*" (1906) which was not included in his *Collected Works* until 1917. *The Mysterious Stranger* was posthumously published in 1916. This is just the bulk of his contributions to the literary world. He wrote a good number of sketches and
stories which were enthusiastically received by the readers.

Narayan is also a gifted writer who has quite a number of novels, stories, travelogues and sketches to his credit. He is justly admired for his wonderful gift of storytelling and for the delineation of the peculiarities of the people of a quiet little town called Malgudi. He chose to be deliberately different from his two noted contemporaries, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. "He is one of the few writers who take their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instrument, pursuing with a sense of dedication what may often seem to be the mirage of technical perfection" (359), observes K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar in Indian Writing in English. The themes he has chosen for his novels are of perennial interest. He is referred to as a regional novelist who wishes to be a detached observer of men and manners.

Swami and Friends (1935) was the first novel published by Narayan. It was met with approval by the reading public on account of the freshness and originality in the depiction of the world of children. The Bachelor of Arts (1936) and The Dark Room (1938) appeared in quick succession. He remained silent during the war years, by the end of which, The English Teacher (1945) was brought to light, followed by Mr. Sampath (1949). The Financial Expert
appeared in 1952 and Waiting for the Mahatma in 1955. It was during this
time he went on his American tour, after which he published The Guide
(1958) and My Dateless Diary (1960). The Man-Eater of Malgudi (1962)
soon followed, and Narayan took some years to conceive his next two novels,
The Vendor of Sweets (1967) and The Painter of Signs (1976). A Tiger
for Malgudi was published in 1983 and the next novel, Talkative Man in
1986. The World of Nagaraj (1990) and Grandmother's Tale (1992) are
his last works in the world of novels.

One of the significant aspects of his novels is their clarity of perception
and originality and freshness of depiction. Narayan's characters are not strangers
to any of us. They all look quite familiar to us, because Narayan seldom
focuses his camera outside South India. As K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar pertinently
remarks:

He is of India, even of South India. He uses English language
much as we used to wear dhoties manufactured in Lancashire
-- but the thoughts and feelings, the stirrings of the soul, the
wayward movements of the consciousness, are all of the soil
of India, recognizably autochthonous. (Indian Writing 359)
Twain and Narayan being quite popular writers, considerable number of research works have been undertaken by many scholars down the years. Bernard De Voto, one of Twain's most significant critics, while editing *The Portable Mark Twain*, sketches the literary achievements and stylistic singularities of the American author. His works, *Mark Twain's America* (1951) and *Mark Twain at Work* (1942) are documents that contribute towards a better understanding of the writer. James M. Cox's *Mark Twain: The Fate of Humour* is a study of the comic element in Twain. Peter Stonley in *Mark Twain and the Feminine Aesthetic* sketches the validity of the female characters in his novels, offering a solid motivation for further investigation.

Narayan has a number of critics who have probed deep into all aspects of his writing. William Walsh's *R.K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation* offers an invaluable and indepth examination of Narayan's works. *A Critical Study of the Novels of R.K. Narayan* by Jayant K. Biswal highlights Narayan's comic vision. Lakshmi Holmstrom's *The Novels of R.K. Narayan* is a tribute to the Indian author who wrote only of the South Indian Middle Class, to which he also belonged.

Writers of any literary genre show a concern for man -- his situations in
society, his place in the universe, and his ultimate destiny. The humanities and social sciences, too, show a similar concern, but unlike them, literature enlightens this through a more intense vision. While portraying man in relation to his place in society, a writer is greatly influenced by his affiliations with the present and with the past, and through these affiliations we may learn of changing values and evaluations, which may, in turn, provide guidance to a better understanding of mankind. In spite of the geographical and chronological differences, when two eminent writers show some kind of an intellectual kinship, it calls for further evaluation. It is with this aim in mind that the proposed study on R.K. Narayan and Mark Twain has been conducted as these two writers show us an interesting world where heroism has a human face, whether it be Swami's kind of heroism, or Huck's.

That Mark Twain and R.K. Narayan belong to two different nationalities and two different periods is a fact, but this does not discourage an observant reader from noticing their remarkable affinities in picturing their responses to human predicament at different levels. Whether it is St. Petersburg or Malgudi, the characters that inhabit the worlds of these writers are no strangers to either an Indian or an American reader. They are, as it were, men and women with
real flesh and blood in them, if one may judge them, taking into account the universal appeal of these authors.

Human society is not only dynamic, but also diverse. Society exhibits diversity because people who constitute society themselves differ in complex ways. Consequently, it becomes the primary concern of any writer of merit to portray man in his diverse states of existence. Heroism, in its real sense of the term, is just one characteristic of human beings. It is not essential that all men are to be heroic throughout their lives. There could be sparks of heroism at some point of time even during the life of an ordinary human being. But these two writers under study, seem to be quite conscious of these occasional sparks in their characters without which they would have been termed thoroughly unheroic and average. Such a significant observation from critics calls for further attention and careful scrutiny of relevant circumstances.

A cursory glance into the worlds of these writers will show us a variety of characters -- from innocent urchins like Huck, Tom, Swami, and Rajam to crafty and beastly villains like Vasu or Tom Driscoll, or ambitious and clever characters like Hank Morgan or Margayya. But one thing common about all these characters is their desire to show a moderate, and at times, unpromising
attempt to prove their heroism at different levels though many of them fail to achieve their much desired goals. However, Twain's heroes do show more vigour and valour compared to the meeker Narayan heroes. Hank Morgan, David Wilson and Joan of Arc definitely are energetic nonconformists, like their creator. Perhaps, it is because of his varied experiences in life and his first hand knowledge of his country from California to Connecticut that shaped his vision as a novelist, a vision which grew sharper as he grew older and maturer in sensibility. His perception of reality, prevalent in mind-nineteenth century America, was essentially ironic, the kind we find in Melville, Conrad, and Faulkner. In fact, he is closer in vision to Conrad than to any of the other American writers. The psychological journey undertaken by his major protagonists like Huck, into the heart of American darkness, reminds one of Marlow's journey in *Heart of Darkness*.

Narayan owes a modest share of his popularity to the realistic and humorous observations of the South Indian middle class in all its variety. *My Dateless Diary* testifies to Narayan's popularity abroad wherein he comes out with his experiences in the New World. He quite modestly describes how he happened to meet many of his admirers there. One of them, Arthur Isenber rightly
remarks that the author (Narayan) found in the U.S., not Americans, but human beings, cut from universal cloth and therefore no different from human beings anywhere else in the world, Malgudi included (12).

Another thing common about these two writers under study is the fact that both of them are sprightly and hilarious writers and are endowed with a captivating style which could be called deceptively effortless. Both of them are delightful storytellers too. But, unlike the American genius, our countryman has an unswerving faith in the basic goodness of mankind which enables him to view men and matters, their idiosyncrasies and absurdities with affectionate, though sharp eyes. He exposes human frailties and chuckles over them. He does not seem to believe in castigating them ruthlessly. His humour could be termed gentle and irony, compassionate and poignant. In all his novels, he makes it a point to select his heroes from a middle class family, about which he had first hand information. It is as if he were pronouncing the truth that in this busy and mechanical world, many of us do not have occasions to be really heroic at all. But even a mediocre and quiet person may be driven to perform acts of heroism, though it need not necessarily be his basic and true nature to do so. We have the examples of Raju in The Guide, Raman in The Painter
of Signs, Chandran in The Bachelor of Arts and Krishna in The English Teacher.

A modest analysis itself will bring home the point that from the early days of his literary career itself Narayan has shown a conscious and steady preference for such kinds of characters. His first novel, Swami and Friends tells us the story of Swaminathan, an average boy who lives with a single-minded devotion to his sophisticated friend Rajam. The story deals with Swami's desire to impress upon Rajam and his final failure in fulfilling this wish. At the end, we find Swami standing on the railway platform, unsure of Rajam's attitude towards him. There are many other characters too in the novel who are just ordinary and mediocre. Speaking about the characters of Narayan, Taranath observes that an insignificant character like Samuel the Pea becomes a symbol of Narayan's outlook on life: "an attitude which cherishes and explores the unnoticed, subtle possibilities of the average and the unremarkable" (315). S. Kandaswami also shares the view of Taranath when he suggests that Narayan's heroes are unheroic ones (210). But the unpromising characters in the world of Narayan try to grow from a position of insignificance and averageness to one of positive self-confidence.
The American counterpart has, certainly, been one of the most popularly read writers all over the world. Though this folksy humourist is primarily known as the author of boyish tales, he has revealed himself as a modern writer capable of satisfying the demands of the sophisticated and cosmopolitan audience of our own age. In fact, it is not necessary for people to read Mark Twain in the original in order to remember him with affection. Probably, more people know of Tom Sawyer's slick method of getting a fence whitewashed, than have read the book in which it appears. Twain, like Walt Whitman, with his fathomless naivety prepared the ground for a new and unique American art of letters and his earlier books like The Adventures of the Huckleberry Finn, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, and the first part of Life on the Mississippi, which were composed before 1885, contained the seeds of a new American Literature with a broader base in the national mind than the other writers of New England. Huckleberry Finn, with its panorama of river towns and river folk, was the school of many a later western writer. The imaginative world of Sherwood Anderson was largely based upon it and it is believed that the style of Ernest Hemingway owed much to it as well.

However, Twain's primary concern as a writer was to unmask the
prevailing myths about America and to create fresh conditions for their re-appraisal. He examined many of the stereotyped American myths and found them inauthentic in the context of his times. He felt that the pervasive influence of Walter Scott, who created in the American mind the idea of romance and chivalry, needed to be countered before a fresh examination of American reality was undertaken. He felt that the best way to counter these myths was through comic techniques like parody, burlesque, and pastiche. Through playfulness and comic irony, one could demystify more effectively than through other devices, the existing notions of romance. It is no wonder then that his comedy became a tool for serious satire.

Narayan's concern also was not very different from this. He too was able to perceive life in its varied hues, like a detached observer, and by making use of comedy, was able to probe deep into certain issues which have profound psychological significance. Another noticeable trait in these two literary luminaries is their preference for a favourite locale for their fictional worlds. Narayan, like Faulkner, is famous for his permanent locale: Malgudi. Twain, on the other hand, looks more at home, dealing with St. Petersburg, the little river town on the banks of Mississippi. In fact, Twain's great books are set
along the Mississippi. As Edward Wagenknecht remarks: "On the highest level of creativity Mark Twain never left the village he grew up" (9). Bernard De Voto, in his "Introduction" to *The Portable Mark Twain*, examines this peculiar aspect of Twain's works:

It is not too much to say that he had seen more of the United States, met more kinds and castes and conditions of Americans, and observed the American in more occupations and moods and tempers -- in a word, had ultimately shared a greater variety of the characteristic experiences of his countrymen -- than any other major American writer. (12)

Consequently, Twain was able to feel the pulse of the society in which he lived and so was greatly aware of the growth of the heroic ideal shared by many literary figures of the day. In many works, the hero of the southern frontier was given a Promethean status, endowing him with qualities. It is always a difficult task to differentiate between the fiction and the factual writing of Twain as there is a good deal of fiction in his travel narratives and great many facts in his novels. When Twain started his literary career, literature of the frontier had already been established. There were much sentimental trash that
passed as popular novels at this time. But what appears significant about this period is the establishment of a heroic ideal in literature. The hero or the protagonist happened to be a person of mythical stature who was made to carry out heroic activities, achieving unimaginable glory. The common man always liked to read about "heroes" whose achievements gave them moments of pleasure and emotional satisfaction. Actually, they were attracted by the American dream of success shared by all the protagonists of the period.

Twain's America was a country where varied kinds of transformations were taking place, not only on the political level, but on the social level as well. A large number of American writers could not turn their backs on the American scene and they responded to the new currents of industrialisation and modernity, depicting in literature the impact of these forces on American life, which in turn, highlighted the possibility of the portrayal of an ideal hero in literature. Meanwhile, many of these writers vigorously criticized the new business order and re-asserted the older values of a democratic society in which everyone might seek a fairly satisfactory style of life with reasonable expectation of success. As a result, the protagonists of the fictional works of the period were presented as real "heroes" capable of performing wonderful deeds which would
bring about exotic results. Many of the creative writers have gone to the extent of making American heroes Gods, by endowing them with the most distinctive qualities. The protagonists of each period bear different styles and have distinct personalities. But it is as if many of them shared a few common qualities with regard to their attitude to life. The literature of any given period has always attempted to portray this changing ideal and the readers seem to have been quite satisfied with what they were able to see on the pages of their favourite books. Even where the writer is one who has got a political commitment to the common man, the portrayal of the "exceptional man" as the hero of the work goes unquestioned. This exceptional quality of the hero makes him attractive, though at times a bit unconvincing.

Literature being a true mirror of life, should not distort figures, however brilliant they may be. The following is an insightful observation made by Theodore L.Gross in his "Introduction" to The Heroic Ideal in American Literature:

The hero of American Literature is the exceptional man who seeks to realize an ideal. He may be Emerson's American Scholar -- an intellectual hero; he may be Arthur Dimmesdale
-- an ethical hero; he may be Ahab -- a religious hero; he may be the Southern Gentleman, who functions as a kind of social hero. Whatever his distinctive features and however idiosyncratic he may be, the hero pursues an ideal and in the process demonstrates certain common characteristics. Like the heroes in the writings of other countries and of other times, the hero of American Literature is a courageous, active social man, whose passions are more intense than those of the people whom he usually represents. (viii)

This observation, if examined along with the traditional Indian concept of heroism and hero, will definitely throw light on a few interesting facts. Irrespective of the country, the concept of heroism has followed almost similar routes. "The hero" in all kinds of fictional works, anywhere, seems to be an exceptional man whose mission in life is to achieve exceptional goals. Perhaps, this could have been due to man's desire to see his wish fulfillment taking place before him.

However, as pointed out by Gross, "Literary heroes are the ones who dramatize the moral texture of a country. They embody the unspoken ideals,
the dream life and the mundane existence shared by the readers" (v). Thus it becomes the business of a writer to depict the struggle on the part of his characters to achieve certain things in life. This struggle usually brings out a conflict with some kind of authority. It is during the course of this conflict that the characters are made to exhibit their characteristics and, which again, is the factor that decides the extent of their heroism. Heroes, undoubtedly, represent a people and by understanding the depth of their characters, by discovering the roots of their behaviour, the readers discover the moral figure in the tapestry of a nation.

Meanwhile, the concept of the hero has provoked some of the most exciting criticisms and many critics have attributed different names to them. "He is the American Adam, Prometheus, and the Rebel-Victim" (viii), says Gross. William Gilman's argument also is equally noteworthy: "The capacity for perception, the nature and the quality of the perception, and the effects of the perception upon the perceiver would seem to be of at least as much important as a norm for the hero as anything else" (Patterns of Commitment 14).

If these have been the observations made by the critics while examining the nature of the American heroes, there are a good number of patterns
prescribed by the ancient aesthetic theorists of India, regarding the role of the traditional hero in literature. Narayan, who was well acquainted with the classics and the traditional literature of the ancient era, must have found ample guidelines while moulding his heroes. The traditional aesthetic theorists categorize the Indian classical hero as **dhīrodāta** (The self-controlled and exalted), **dhīrodhata** (The self-controlled and vehement), **dhīrasānta** (The self-controlled and calm), and **dhīralalita** (The self-controlled and light hearted). One thing common about this classification is the presence of the quality of "dhīrata" in all the heroes. One who is not "dhīra" is not worthy of being a hero. Dhanañjaya in, *The Dasārūpa*, a treatise on Hindu Dramaturgy, gives a detailed description of the four kinds of heroes to be presented by a writer thus:

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neta vīnto madhuras tyāgī dakṣaḥ priyamvadah
raktalokah śucir vāṁmi rūḍhavamsaḥ sthiro yuvā
buddhyutsaḥhasmrtprajnakalāmānasamanvitaḥ
śūro ṛṛḥhas ca tejasvī sāstracakṣus ca dhārmikah. (40)
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[The hero should be well-bred, charming, liberal, clever, affable, popular, upright, eloquent, of exalted lineage, resolute, and
young; endowed with intelligence, energy, memory, wisdom, 

[skill in the] arts and pride; heroic, mighty, vigorous, familiar 

with the codes and a just observer of laws].

The above category encompasses all the qualities that we find in any hero for that matter. But this concept has undergone a transformation, though residues are still found even today. The modern concept is that anybody can be a hero. Shakespeare has created an amazingly different variety of heroes: historical, romantic, and realistic. The heroes of James Joyce and Gabriel Garcia Marquez are not like the Shakespearean heroes. A deep probe into the true nature and the basic quality of the heroes presented by Twain and Narayan exhibit a certain kinship, though these two authors belonged to two entirely different periods and nationalities. There have been many works carried out all over the world by which Twain's Huck has been endowed with a really heroic stature, making him almost a myth, finding in him all the qualities of a traditional hero. Almost similar is the case of Narayan's guide, Raju, who seems to have undergone a transition or even a transfiguration at the hands of many critics, making him a martyr and a saint, climbing up the steps of heroism.

However great and attractive these heroes may be, their positive
mediocrity and unpromising simplicity can never be neglected. It is quite interesting to note Regan's observation regarding Twain's novels that they make use of an unpromising hero motif (viii). He points out that Twain's novels fall to some extent under this rubric with a single exception, his first attempt in this genre, The Gilded Age. "And even that novel [...] would have made use of this unpromising hero motif if Mark Twain had had his way (Regan 93). During the course of his analysis he successfully establishes the fact that even this book is a "medley of aborted Unpromising Hero Fables" (95).

Twain in fact was undertaking a challenge by which he was able to portray his protagonists as unpresumptive at a time when promising heroes were in fashion. By drifting apart from the accepted norms of the times, he was trying to establish his own identity in a world where anything new and out of the ordinary was looked at with raised eye brows. He was being deliberately different, but this deliberate act on his part has enriched the world literary arena with the entry of Huck, Tom, Hank Morgan, Joan of Arc, and David Wilson.

To turn our attention to Narayan, we have as many studies as possible on the middle class status of his heroes. All his heroes belong to the South Indian
middle class society to which belonged the author too. He felt most at home writing about the frailties and follies of the middle class, of their moments of happiness and apparently insignificant worries. Undoubtedly, the nature of his protagonists is such that they can never be called heroic in the real sense of the term. They too struggle, at times against authority, at times against fate itself, but never with a heroic bent of mind. His world is inhabited by common men with whom all of us are familiar, whom we may meet not only in Malgudi, but in any part of the world. D.V.K. Raghavacharyulu points out that Narayan's human specimens are not essentially cut out for great enterprises, and that they stumble into a Brave New World, performing roles not suited to their nature, or Svabhava (23). He further points out that Narayan's heroes are adept at improvisation and somehow they manage to transform their weakness into strength. Graham Greene, perhaps, pays the greatest tribute to Narayan while introducing The Bachelor of Arts:

There are writers -- Tolstoy and Henry James to name two -- whom we hold in awe, writers -- Turgenev and Chekhov -- for whom we feel a personal affection, other writers whom we respect -- Conrad, for example -- but who hold us at a long
arm's length with their courtly "foreign grace." Narayan (whom I don't hesitate to name in such a context) more than any of them wakes in me a spring of gratitude, for he has offered me a second home. (1)

It is this quality of offering a second home that has become characteristic of Narayan who never wanted to write about things with which he was unfamiliar. Swami's world in Swami and Friends, perhaps, might have been his own, and the pangs of love experienced by Chandran in The Bachelor of Arts is not unfamiliar to any youth; or the humiliation and negligence meted out to Savithri in The Dark Room is not so uncommon in the lives of many an Indian woman. The classical norm by which a typical Indian hero is to be presented is only partly accepted by the Indian author, and we tend to classify his heroes, to borrow the earlier mentioned classification, under the division called dhirasanta.

It is true that human nature is so complex and diverse that it can hardly admit any categorical demarcation capable of making watertight compartments. But our ancient aestheticians made conscious attempts to form classifications based on the personal merits of the hero. "The hero is also called neta or
nāyaka because the entire dramatic action culminates ultimately into his (hero's) benefit," observes Surendra Nath Shastri (204). These norms were laid down for the sake of theatrical performances when the novel as a genre did not exist in Sanskrit. But the hero or the nāyaka in all literary works of the ancient period was expected to be a man with fortitude and courage. Visvanatha in his work Śāhitya Darpaṇa points out that munificent, clever, high born, handsome, youthful, enthusiastic, prompt, devoted to people, powerful and tactful, are the special characteristics of a hero (40). The mode of behaviour and the frame of mind of the central character of a work of art is the factor which decides whether he is to be termed dhirodatta, dhiralalita, dhiroddhata or dhirasanta.

Though this forms the foundation on which the heroes of Sanskrit and the other literatures of India existed, Narayan seems to have deviated from this in the conception of his own heroes. With all due respect to the ancient theorists, he has chosen his heroes from among the South Indian middle class. But the lalita-santasvabhāva (simple and calm nature) of the Indian heroes seems to have made some impact on the writer who is known as a traditional storyteller. Almost all Narayan heroes are gentle, easy-going and straightforward with the
exception of Raju, the guide, and Vasu, the taxidermist. Taranath's opinion that Narayan's achievements could be described as the creative use of the ordinary (307) points to this peculiarity of writing which is a hallmark of Narayan.

Narayan's heroes, according to Suryanarayana Murti, show "man's thirst for prominent living," and his heroes live in a dream-world of achievements and are finally disillusioned (6). When an artist holds a mirror to life and society, the images he helps to reflect should also maintain their originality. Heroism is a rare thing in this world and the ordinary and the average type of people can never be expected to perform wonderful deeds. All that they can do is to struggle against odds but that too, in the novels of Narayan, is in a moderate fashion. Many of Narayan's heroes -- unlike Twain's -- are fatalists. The hero may be a schoolboy like Swami, or a college student Chandran, an English teacher Krishna, Gandhian disciple Sriram, an insurance officer Ramani, a speculator Mr. Sampath, a financial expert Margayya, a tourist guide Raju, a taxidermist Vasu, a sweet vendor Jagan, a painter of signs Raman, and a writer-cum-dreamer Nagaraj. Each of these heroes strives to attain something that they do not possess, but it is not generally through heroic acts. But in their
simple and comparatively uneventful lives, each problem attains mountainous stature and the tackling of each of these becomes a herculean task.

Twain's heroes, on the other hand, show real spirit though they appear inconsequential in the beginning. The men and women who inhabit the Twainian world are neither very heroic nor very meek. Tom, Huck, and Hank Morgan show more spirit compared to many of Narayan's characters. But Twain's attraction towards the story of the unpromising hero is easily discernible in many of his novels. It, in fact, is one of the perennial fables of mankind and it would have been found appealing to the volatile imagination of the American author.

For through most of his life, it was as this figure that Mark Twain saw himself, and it was in this role that he cast the heroes of his fiction who most clearly represented his own self-image. Tom Sawyer, Tom Canty, Hank Morgan, Pudd'nhead Wilson, and the Henry Adams of "The 1,000,000 £ Bank Note". (Regan 119)

This view becomes authentic enough, because Twain's own life exemplifies
the personal fantasy of success that drove him to resort to unusual enterprises. It is as if he wanted this fantasy to have the respectability of social usefulness too. The image of an exceptional man who seeks to realise an ideal itself must have been appealing to Twain, who was a democrat in spirit and an aristocrat in action. All his heroes are energetic and contemplative. But there are many instances where his great heroes are made to behave like little children who try to receive attention by showing off. If Tom Sawyer revels in attracting attention, Pudd'n head Wilson is a grownup Tom. Wilson's loneliness and isolation are not actually chosen by him; they happen to be thrust upon him by the public who are incapable of understanding him. The action of the story in Tom Sawyer, on the other hand, is "defined by Tom's unwavering commitment to a dream of himself as a hero" (Robinson 105).

There is always a period of painful insecurity experienced by all his heroes -- a sad reminder of his own personal lack of confidence prior to his success as a writer. At times, we see the author "being conscious of his secret fantasies made public and with an iron hand, he restricts the free play for fear that they may be known to the public and that they may embarrass him a lot" (Regan 105). It is, perhaps, this attitude that pervades the whole of The Adventures
of Tom Sawyer wherein we see Tom trying to win Becky's love, Judge Thatcher's admiration, and a fortune of unimaginable magnitude. But Huck Finn's story is different. Here, the protagonist is motivated by an impulse much more exalted than a mere dream of glory. Huck's actions, though, of first rate heroism, are not sprung out of any desire for glory, but out of his impulsiveness and generosity. Huck's confrontation with a society which has its own justifications to keep a slave is inevitable. Obviously, he cannot help being who he is. He is not even conscious of the moral ideal he represents and of the social authority he opposes. His heroism comes out as naturally as a bud that unfolds itself to become a beautiful flower.

The story of Joan of Arc is another instance where Twain seems to illustrate his idea of real heroism. The heroic activities performed by Joan, the village urchin-turned charismatic leader, due to circumstances beyond her control, are the most natural ones as far as she is concerned. In spite of all the glamour that surrounds her, she is presented as a lonely child amidst a crowd of admirers, among whom she cannot find a friend. Her actions are controlled by the "inner voice" and she doesn't find any personal heroism in her deeds, whatsoever.
Thus, the above mentioned factors form an interesting field of research in which a study in comparison could be attempted. Both the writers under discussion have been able to feel the responses of the society to which they belonged. They might have wanted to bring home the point that it was time for them to bid farewell to heroism, but not to the hero. It is not the sort of "militant attitude towards everything evil" in this world (Carlyle 11). Neither can they be called "leaders of men [...] the modellers, patterns and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass continued to do or attain." To both Twain and Narayan, their heroes represented a cross section of the society where real heroism is hardly found. Their heroes are devoid of the real spirit of heroism, though many of their acts could be termed heroic, like Huck's or Swami's, but they stem out of sheer necessity and innocence.