Chapter V

THE REAL IN
NARAYAN’S NOVELS
CHAPTER – V

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_I always speak the truth. Not the whole because there’s no way to say it all. Saying it all is literally impossible; words fail. Yet through this impossibility that the truth holds onto the real_

Jacques Lacan

_There is nothing that can be called as "self", and there is no such thing as "mine" in the world_

Lord Buddha

Lacanian concept of the real is a complex and difficult issue but once discussed along with the categories of the imaginary and the symbolic, as Lacan himself did in a lecture (in 1953) called “Le Symbolique, le imaginare et le re’el” (The symbolic, the imaginary, and the real), it becomes obvious that the real is “that which never ceases to write itself”. The real cannot be reduced to meaning because “it does not lend itself any more readily to univocal imaginary representation than it does to symbolisation”.¹ It is primarily due to its discussion in isolation, and not in relation to other Lacanian categories, that has given rise to various misunderstandings: some interpret it as a ‘slide into irrationality’ whereas others identifying it ‘with trauma’ make it a cause of fear and anxiety’. However, viewed from Lacanian perspective every individual in life has an

¹ En. Wikipedia. Org/wiki/The_Real
'intuitive experience' of the real in such phenomena "as the uncanny, anxiety, the nonmeaningful, and poetic humour that plays upon the words at the expense of meaning". As a result of it, when the framework of 'the imaginary wavers' and when 'reality' no longer appears organized by the 'fantasy screen', the experience of the real emerges in a way that is unique for each person.2

Viewed in this perspective love, beauty, truth and God are some of the evident instances of the Lacanian real. In the Hindu as well as Christian tradition – which Narayan seems to adhere in his novels – love has been identified with God and gods. Lacan too identifies gods with the domain of the Real and strongly believes that the gods are the mode of the revelation of the Real.3

2 Ibid.

Like Lacan, the Hindu perspective puts forward the notion that love is transcendence of thought and language. In fact, it is stepping into pre-linguistic or pre-reflective moment, living in eternity outside time and it transcends primordial subject-object duality. It demands a jump into no mind i.e., a zone or realm that is beyond the linguistic notions and explication. The domain of thoughts, desires, imagination and all kinds of ego-projections make up the mind, which is itself, a principle of alienation.\(^4\) Here, it is important to mention that the Sanyasi—‘…Sanyasies who have renounced…’\(^5\) ‘…Yogis can travel to the Himalayas just by thought ...(TG, 32)— or ascetic of Narayan leads simple life keeping away from the material world and always remains in search of the ultimate. His only purpose of life, as discussed


elaborately by Ashok Kumar Jha, is to please God.\textsuperscript{6} He lives outside language and thus shares undoubtedly in true sense the realm of Lacanian real.

R. K. Narayan gives his own concept of Sanyasi saying:

When one is seized with a passion to understand oneself, one has to leave behind all normal life and habitual mode of thought, one becomes an ascetic ... sanyasi. A sanyasi is one who renounces everything and undergoes a complete change of personality.\textsuperscript{7}

He is no longer a \textit{subject} in Cartesian sense because he transcends his desiring self-consciousness and becomes witnessing self or a mirror that simply reflects whatever comes to pass through it. We know saints remain detached from the samsaric becoming or worldly concerns as a result of which attaining sainthood or becoming a saint means to regain the lost paradise that we lived in prior to our entrance into the mirror stage.

It is true that Psychoanalysis does not understand love's spiritual reality but deals only with its purely psychological aspects. However, Freud and Lacan did not aim at the 'cure' of the patient, by drugs instilled from outside but helped a person to love and love, as we know, does the trick of healing. Love, in Indian

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{6} Ashok Kumar Jha. \textit{R. K. Narayan: Myths and Archetypes in His Novels}, Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 2000, pp. 92 – 120.
\item \textsuperscript{7} AIR Interview on September 8, 1961 published in Writers Workshop \textit{Miscellany}, 8 (1961), p. 50.
\end{itemize}
mystical perspective, is not to be identified with a certain feeling or emotion. It doesn’t belong to the domain of psyche but to the spirit. We must remember that spirit isn’t governed by the laws of the psyche with which Lacan deals in his theory.

It is important to note that love alone cures our split subject and the miseries in which an individual is caught once he/she enters into the symbolic order or the law-of-the-father. Love is not desire but an escape from all determinations and conditionings which are associated with desire. It demands sacrifice, the sacrifice of ego and, therefore, presupposes transcendence of ego and, therefore, demands acceptance of fate, as there is no desiring willing self that wishes things cut according to its own measure. It is not a rejection of the law of desire or symbolic domain but transcendence of them. Without getting attached in any way to the worldly conceptualization or pleasures, the samsaric becomes a loving person while moving in the world. Lacan too believes that love is to give; it is a continual act of self-sacrifice and an escape from personality.\textsuperscript{8} It is absolute and unconditional giving, a crucification, and denial of all claims of self. Accordingly, lover

just is: his action is no action because he has only needs but not demands and desires and also because he has no need of recognition from the Other, a reciprocal act of love from the Other⁹. It is an open death of self for the sake of the Other. It is to be written or constituted by the Other and the Big Other is God, the totality. It is dissolution into the whole, the existence and, therefore, the notion of love logically follows from the recognition of the illusoriness of ego that is Lacan’s fundamental tenet.

While analyzing the concept of God in R. K. Narayan Ashok Kumar Jha indicates in his famous book, R. K. Narayan: Myths and Archetypes in His Novels, that for Narayan God is the Supreme power behind the creation and regulation of the universe. He believes that the Town Hall Professor who sits cross-legged on the parapet and delivers a spiritual message to the small circle of listeners best expresses the notion of God. He says:

So why worry about anything? God is in all this. He is one and indivisible. He is in yesterday, tomorrow, and today (PS, 25).

Similarly, the master of the tiger in A Tiger for Malgudi describes God as –

The Creator, the Great Spirit pervading every Creature, every rock and tree and the stars, a source of power and strength ...God must be an

enormous tiger, spanning the earth and the sky, with ...immeasurable strength to match (TM, 157 – 158).

In the novel, it is also interesting to see how master experiences the absurdity of existence. He tells the tiger:

I was a man of the world, busy and active and living by the clock, scrutinizing my bank book ... one day it seemed all wrong, a senseless repetition of activities ... and abruptly shed everything and fled away from wife, children, home, possessions all of which seemed intolerable...(TM, 161).

This act enables the master to enter into the Lacanian Real.

Since, Narayan’s characters live in Malgudi, Shantha Krishnaswamy rightly points out:

When Narayan thinks of Malgudi, of India, it is not in terms of a political or economic but as a spiritual entity.\(^\text{10}\)

Narayan describes the follies and irregularities as well as the empty revolts and dreams of the Malgudi folk. He finds majority of them trapped in their illusions, wooing their ladies, worshipping the self constructed gods or idols, hankering after wealth and power, gossiping, entertaining and doing a thousand other things. But there are jolts in life, the great experiences of nothingness that awake men from their dreams and slumbers. He

deftly shows many of his heroes such as Raju awakening from these dreams.\textsuperscript{11} Accordingly, his fiction has been treated as allegories and odyssey of self-discovery, the discovery of love. Dreams are given up and all passion spent. Life employs its built in ironic devices that trims individual instincts and ambitions.

In Narayan’s novels, irony underscores a fundamental fact of human existence that our instincts and aspirations are subject to the tantalizing nature of the society or the external world, that we are more or less Don Quixotes living with our Lady Dulcineas or fighting with wind mills. In these novels, tradition, society or collective self totally has the final word and the fate plays a perpetual hide and seek with man’s emotions and ambitions in order to shed their illusions ultimately.\textsuperscript{12} In contrast to Faustian and Promethean unbridled aspirations or figures who represent


tragedies of desires and transgression, Malgudi world presents an amusing sense of life with its small dreams and defeats. Jagan’s words are worth mentioning:

We are blinded by our attachments. Every attachment creates a delusion and we are carried away by it (TVS. 138).

They represent the governing logic of nemesis that characters meet in his fiction.

There is no room for individual sentiments in Narayan’s worldview. His protagonists assert their identities in the face of cruel world that always defeats their expectations, aspirations or dreams. Raju’s yearning for Rosie, Sampath’s ambitious projects, Ravi’s impossible vision of beauty and Raman’s passion for a woman who can’t love are certain example of frustrations of individual aspirations. Unfortunately, the world is not cut according to human desires, aspirations or demands. In mystical perspective ego surrenders other, to the big Other that constitutes us. The other, non - I, is from an Eastern perspective the final resting place, the vision of God or Enlightenment, realm of Real.

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In his book, *A Critical Study of the Novels of R K Narayan: A Malgudi Comedy*\(^{15}\), Jayant K Biswall makes it clear that Narayan’s protagonists, who are ordinary men and women, move out of their ordinariness in order to make life more pleasurable and meaningful. They passionately cling to a life that time and again betrays and batters them. He explicates the fact that Narayan treats not only individual’s experiences, but also a collective, social experience: we come to know that it is not only the life story of Swami, Chandran, Raju, Jagan and others; it is the saga of a vast Malgudi experience. Narayan portrays the diverse experiences of an average human existence – dreams, anxieties, actions, frustrations and so on in a manner in which

...it is not the phrase that lingers in the memory as the thing itself ...

Words are merely a plain glass through which one sees the things\(^{16}\)

While depicting the characteristic features of the people of his imaginative Malgudi, Narayan tries to inculcate in the mind of the reader that man dreams big dreams without realizing that these dreams remain ‘fantasies’ only because in this existential world

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outside, the human sufferings lead man back to the consciousness of one’s nothingness. Most often one realizes the futility of his experiences in the world where peace and salvation can be attained easily but in some situations and instances which remain beyond the comprehension of ordinary mind. As Biswall rightly argues while discussing *The Guide* that Malgudi remains the only true image of baby in Raju who after experiencing the toughness of life gets a new birth into spirituality in order to attain and experience what can be called the Lacanian Real. Raju in the novel is not hostage to the traps and illusions of symbolic domain but an incarnation of childhood, representing innocence of becoming a transcendental visionary who neither identifies himself with the ego nor possesses any individual demands or aspirations. He desires less, does not feel absence or lack of anything, and in the journey of life proves to be whole. He doesn’t need any trapping into the symbolic order as he hardly feels his requirement for himself and trusts existence. Against the ordinary human being, Raju flows with life, instead of imposing his patterns on life as a result of which, through love, beauty and joy, he connects the world with the Supreme Being, who remains above all worldly
concerns and other limitations, reaching very close to the Lacanian Real.  

Raju is not a distinctive or unique but perhaps typical example of how Narayan’s heroes initially fail to stand with their stupidity and rebel against all social constrictions that thwart their freedom: their actions embody their existential defiance against the universe but in the process they fall into incongruous and absurd situations in relation to their society. They also overstep their limits, forget the reality of their stations, and traverse along a path of follies and misadventures. They seemingly throw the social stability into peril and return to the fold of social, the apparent disasters resulting from their unbridled impulses and instincts of the hero to build up tension. However, while we laugh at the eccentricities and absurdities of these characters, Narayan affectionately presents the various existential compulsions that confront them. He accepts life and human nature and operates within a definite social framework with roots in traditional and

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moral values. He lifts common, ordinary men and women and fills them with their human ambitions, desires and flaws. Margayya, Raju, Jagan, Vasu, and many others are bound to their obsessions and thus exist in states of ritual bondage. A thorough analysis of the novels in which these characters figure shows that their obsessions are wealth, money, son or some other common human aspirations.

Narayan, however, takes some of his characters beyond ego and its imaginary props by making them experience sad things or bitter facets of life that are at the very human existence. He places them in a situation where they admit the painful fact that man is living in an ironical universe whether it is the painful process of aging, or death of a grandmother, whether it is disintegration of Jagan's dream and ideals compelling ordeal and Raju are woven into one fabric of life as inevitable facts of life, these are accepted not with bitterness but with humility.19


In Narayan’s novels, one also finds such characters who experience frustration and madness due to their impossible dreams or passion or limitless desires. In *The Guide*, for example, Raju’s obsession with the dancer Rosie, whom he dubs ‘lovely and elegant’ (TG, 65), is the best illustration of an individual’s aspiration for endless passions and unlimited desires. This philosophy of Narayan is apparent even in *Mr Sampath* when the old man, the landlord of Sampath and Srinivas utters the following words:

...When I become a handful of ash what do I care who takes my purse. who counts my coins and who locks the door of my safe. when my bones lie bleaching, what matter if the door of my house is left unlocked (MS, 170).

We also learn in the novel about the fate of Srinivas’s friend, Ravi, who comes to believe that the actress in the mammoth Malgudi film-epic, *The Burning of Karma* is the woman of his dream and turns mad with jealousy, destroying the film. The result is that he, like Raju, ruins his all possessiveness and family life and
ends up as a *sanyasi* to attain freedom of soul and thus gets transferred beyond the illusory empires of *ego* and imaginary.\(^{20}\)

In *The English Teacher*, one notices the hero turning almost insane, as he could not bear the absence of his object of love. However, the reader soon realizes that for the same hero Susila becomes an embodiment of divine power that brings a transformation in him and enables him to establish a union even after death, through spiritual communion: the ascendancy of the individual psyche is that to annihilate the terrible reality of time itself. In this context, A.V. Krishna Roa remarks:

Krishna’s psychic perception of Susila’s spirit finds favour with the traditional belief of the Visishta-Advaita that recognizes the individual salvation as freedom from this mundane existence.\(^{21}\)

At the end of the novel Krishna reaches a kind of harmony, a solace beyond joy and sorrow:

A cool breeze lapped our faces. The boundaries of our personalities suddenly dissolved. It was a moment of rare, immutable joy – a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death.\(^{22}\)


These and other such illustration, multiple in the novels lead us to conclude that Narayan too believes in the universal truth of the Lacanian Real according to which the intuitive, the unconscious psychic, or even the spiritual factor in man's life implies his realization of unification with the Absolute Reality that cannot be judged by any means even language as it is always above the linguistic signs, conception or domain.\textsuperscript{23} It can only be felt and experienced at the pragmatic or empirical domain because like death it is to be comprehended not in the physical sense but in the transcendental sense. Susila's spirit tells Krishna:

Between thought and fulfillment there is no interval. Thought is fulfilment, motion and everything. That is the main difference between our physical state and yours...Music directly transports us...I think of the subtlest perfume and it already pervades my being ... the real part of the thing is that which is in thought, and it can never be lost or destroyed or put away (ET, 131-132).

Further, she informs Krishna:

\textsuperscript{22} R.K. Narayan. \textit{The English Teacher}. Mysore, Indian Thought Publication, 2007, p.184. All subsequent references, given in parenthesis (as ET), are from this edition unless otherwise stated.

\textsuperscript{23} R.K. Narayan. \textit{The English Teacher}. Mysore, Indian Thought Publication, 2007, p.184. All subsequent references, given in parenthesis (as ET), are from this edition unless otherwise stated.
I think I look the same as on earth. Only free from all ailments, ills and cares (ET, 132).

The evident sacrifice element is seen when Krishna resigns from the college saying:

I'm seeking a great inner peace. I find I can't attain it unless I withdraw from the adult world and adult work into the world of children. And there ... is a vast storehouse of peace and harmony (ET, 183).

These illustrations make it evident that Krishna’s experiences and suffering are beyond the words to capture as it is an anxiety that corresponds to Lacanian notion of real.

*The Bachelor of Arts* as already analysed in previous chapters, is a romantic tale of two lovers. Narayan himself calls it an “optical communion”.

In this novel, Chandran falls in love with Malathi and wants to experience love with her to an inexplicable extent. It becomes evident from the assertions that he makes during the night. In fact, once ‘the thought of her melted him to such an extent that he clutched his pillow and cried in the darkness: “Darling, what are you doing? Do you hear me? (BA, 79).

There are countless other instances — such as “She had no double in the world” (BA, 83); “He tried to force his mind to think

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of other things.... Staring was half the victory in love" (BA, 55-61); “Probably going to bed; blessed those pillows or probably ... crush her in his arms” (BA, 71) which reveal how Chandran is completely lost in Malathi’s love and can’t focus on any other activity. He is engrossed in such a blissful state that cannot be easily defined and described because this ‘anxiety’, in Lacanian terms, is beyond the grasp of words or signs of language. We realise about this ‘very disturbing phase’ of his life when he fails to express his inward pent up feelings and his passions remain unexplored due to societal and parental forces. He loses his dream girl — and the Lacanian object of love, home and even his own excitement and passion — and he finally ends in frustration, chaos and despair, becoming a sanyasi who wanders for a life free from distracting illusions. Narayan says:

> When he was hungry and found none to feed him, he usually dragged himself about in a weak, and enjoyed the pain of hunger...” (B.A., 107-108).

Chandran fits in Lacanian Concept of Real as a frustrated lover, liberated soul and sanyasi who searches for a state free of all worldly attachments and possessions.25

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Similarly, *The Guide* all along presents Rosie as a puzzle for Raju because his attraction towards her remains throughout as indescribable and inexplicable. Words fail to explain what or how he felt in her company, their passion and love for each other and how she reciprocates in terms of as his object of love, passion and *jouissance*. From the innocent days of childhood to the days of his later experience, Raju undergoes innumerable experiences related mainly to an instinctual way of living without any respect for social ethics. In a long series of unscrupulous acts, falls in love with Rosie, seduces her, drives out his mother, forges Rosie’s signatures and at last plays on the beliefs of innocent villagers. His entire career becomes one of deception and he is gradually led to its heights where he must meet the inevitable Fate of being doomed or being resurrected. It is because of the inherent goodness in him and the unique mask that he wears that Raju is metamorphosed from an impostor to a compulsion of his martyr. His life takes a dramatic turn when he meets Rosie and after this incident, he is engaged in perpetual conflict with the society or the world outside. For the satisfaction of his libidinal instincts, he offends not only Marco, but also his mother, uncle and Gaffur and the whole Indian Tradition.
The element of possessiveness is very clearly evident in *The Guide*. Here, Raju is greatly possessive about Rosie, never for once stopping to think that she is married to the person whom he hates for being associated with her. He even contemplates on terminating his links with Gaffur because he doesn’t like his association with Rosie. The height of obsession is reached when he even contemplates on Rosie and Marco’s sexual life and feels inclined to barge into the privacy of their bedroom saying: “I praised her art whenever I could snatch a moment alone with her and whisper in ear…” (TG, 9). ‘By and by’ as pointed out rightly by P. K. Singh, Raju gets close to Rosie and the impact of Rosie is so much on him that even in his loneliness he could feel ‘the girl’s scent filled presence’ (TG, 68). Raju couldn’t control and communicated the fact to Rosie that ‘…life is so blank without your presence’ (TG, 73). In fact, he becomes Rosie-centric and his own universe gets shrunk because of this he becomes mentally prepared to sacrifice everything for Rosie. Likewise, even Rosie’s love increases toward Raju and she ‘blindly entrusted her everything’, completely is lost in the world of her lover and art. Rosie too demands Raju’s

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company more and more even in front of her husband. She once
goes to the extent of saying: “Come along ... You are not going to
leave me to mercy of prowling beasts...” (TG, 78). For Rosie too,
Raju was always her true object of love. While soaring more and
more heights in love, she once voices her inner saying: “Here at
least we have silence and darkness, welcome things, and something
to wait for out of that darkness” (TG, 79). Here, Raju reacts saying:

I was overwhelmed by her perfume... Her bright eyes shone amidst the
foliage. She pulled my sleeve and whispered excitedly. ‘Something –
What can it be ... won’t you be my sweetheart?’ (TG, 79)

Raju’s profound obsession of Rosie can be viewed when
Raju sleeplessly thinks:

...Did they sit up in bed and fight or did she fatigue him with a curtain
lecture? I wanted to cry out. ‘oh. master, what do you do to her that
makes her sulk like this on rising? What a treasure you have in your
hand, without realizing its worth...”(TG, 80).

Raju’s expression of love toward Rosie is voiced in these
lines:

I praised her dancing. I spoke out my love, but sandwiched it
conveniently between my appreciations of her art. I spoke of her as an
artist in one breath. and continued in the next as a sweat heart...(TG.
84).

He further says: “I looked her up and down and ventured,
‘The finest, whatever it may be, and I don’t believe in class or
Raju says that she wanted a man like him who would prove 'a live husband' (TG, 85). On listening to this assertion of Rosie, he 'sighed deeply, overcome with the sadness of her life' (TG, 86). Raju realized that 'there was an appeal in her eyes' (TG, 86). In Raju's love, she sees 'the world' and experiences 'ecstasies' (TG, 87). Now Raju turns fully mad in his love toward her. He says:

All my mental powers were now turned to keep her within my reach, and keep her smiling all the time, ...I would willingly have kept at her side all time as a sort of parasite..."(TG, 118).

He makes a promise with her stating:

... I will do any thing for you. I will give my life to see you dance. Tell me what to do. I will do it for you" (TG, 121-122).

Raju's love compels her to leave Marco permanently and come into Raju's lap. He finds her one day outside his door. He feels happy and cries: "Here is Rosie! She is going to be a guest in our house..." (TG, 140).

It is Raju's love which strengthens Rosie to become brave herself and come straight to Raju for experiencing more and more of love in his lap. Here, she is absolutely free from the symbolic domain of the love for father or social restrictions and she does not even experience the imaginary because she is not wavering
between either / or so far as relation with Marco and Raju is concerned. She is totally absorbed in love and, like Lacanian concept of it wants always to gain more and more in love. It is a phase beyond the description of linguistic domain and realm of signs because it cannot be explained or elucidated through any medium of expression. It can only be felt silently.

In Indian mystic tradition to which Narayan belonged, though he may not have confessed it directly, the 'sanyasi has no name, no class, no ancestry as he is a free soul, a mukta atma and any kind of bondage is foreign to his nature'.

Indian culture, philosophy and society acknowledge and recognize such people with respect and faith, and according to Narayan, "...A sanyasi is one who renounces everything and undergoes a complete change of personality...A sanyasi is a wanderer living on alms, never rooted to any place except when he seeks the seclusion of a cave or a forest at some stage of prolonged meditation."

Vivid and clear examples of sanyasi protagonist appear in most of Narayan’s novels including The Guide, The Bachelor of

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Arts, The Financial Expert, The Vendor of Sweets. Waiting for Mahatma and The Painter of Signs. In The Guide, Narayan not only exposes the modern man’s hollowness but also explores those saintly qualities of man that raise him above the self with no binding of linguistic compulsions. Here, man carries an unfractured psyche and stays in the realm of real only to act as a redeemer of mankind. Though his actions are not always guided by any religion or anti-religious inspirations, his transformation takes place under circumstances beyond his control and access. The hero’s worldly life, the life of desiring self, appears just meaningless and futile once he attains spiritual elevation. It is a fact that his suffering becomes a kind of ‘payment for his spiritual health and honour’30. He reaches a desire free world of cosmic consciousness radiant with the principles of austerity, universal love and sacrifice. Raju’s life illustrates man’s perpetual quest for happiness, which he attains only after transcending the limitations of the ego and the lure of worldly pleasures to seek fulfillment in universal love and sacrifice. The Guide, thus, narrates man’s metaphorical journey from the bondage of this sphere, showing how the killing of self

and ending of desire transports an individual into the world of Reality.\textsuperscript{31}

It is important to note that it is only when Raju transcends his self interests, desires and worldly pursuits and sympathizes with the needs of suffering people hit by severe drought becomes attuned to the cause of larger humanity. We know that his hunger strike enabled him to attain the impossible: He says that he is staying ‘for the first time, outside money’ in order to ‘bring rain upon the hills’\textsuperscript{32}. God and such noble ideals of behaviour form a state that is outside language. Lacan believes that the obsession for the Other, the craved things lead us to tragedy. The same is very obvious in \textit{The Guide} when Raju’s pursuits of material gains compel him to name his fractured psyche’s concerns only to inflict him suffering and despair; it constantly causes his degeneration and degradation. What is remarkable in the novel is in fact the part in

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which we find Raju, the worldly man, turning into a swami to perform saintly act of penance in order to 'reach the ultimate reality'\textsuperscript{33}, he negates the world of egoistical pleasure to seek in an act of goodness and God becomes the goal of his life. From the empirical reality, he journeys to world of eternal cause and his soul's return forms part of Lacanian realm of real.\textsuperscript{34} It is in a state of sainthood only that Raju's assertions appear like words of scriptures. While advising Velan's sister, we find that in Raju's advice Lacanian Real is in operation. He, as an ascetic says:

\textit{.... 'What must happen must happen: no power on earth or in heaven can change its course, just no one can change the course of that river'. They gazed on the river, as if the clue to their problems lay there...}(TG, 22).

Like \textit{The Guide}, the novel, \textit{The Painter of Signs} is highly pregnant with the evident instances of Lacanian real. Like Raju, Raman 'had liked Daisy... preferred' to sit with her 'without interruption...liked to look at her' (PS, 31-32). Her thought would


mean ‘a sudden racing of his pulse’ (PS, 41) and he would smell
her body and her ‘perfume, reminiscent of some strange herbs’ (PS,
42). Raman shares his experience saying: “She had touched him …
Till yesterday I was a free man with my mind unfettered. Today I
am unable to think about any other subject. She has even deprived
me of ... mental calm...” (PS, 44). These and other illustrations in
the narrative of the novel prove that Raman is enamoured of Daisy
and cannot stay without her. He seems rather mad, confused and
frustrated and says:

He would be saved if she did not flash her eyes on him...The eye was
really the source of mischief. One’s thoughts followed what the eye
saw. Thoughts developed from sight. He would wear coloured glasses
so that she might not note where he was looking (PS. 41).

He was so mad in her love that ‘at the thought of her, he was
conscious of a sudden racing of his pulse’ (PS, 41). He buys a pair
of sunglasses and the lenses are uneven and full of errors.
Everything looks grotesque. Seen ‘through the dark, smoked glass’
(PS, 42) even Daisy looks ridiculous. He finds her no less than a
demoness, heavy jeweled and grinning with the uneven, jutting –
out teeth. The result is that Raman is disillusioned and comes to the
conclusion – “To keep one’s mind pure” (PS, 43).
The novel also reveals how Daisy becomes his object of love and like Rosie, tells him once “come, dear to my side …” (PS, 45); “I have no freedom… This is true love - sickness…” (PS, 46) which prompts him to say: “She is planning to eat me up” (PS, 47) and “Her eyes seemed to acquire extra brilliance in that sunlight” (PS, 49). It is also important here to mention that Daisy acts like Rosie at Raman’s home. When Raman says: “I am sorry, I don’t have chairs; we mange with mats.” She replies: “Oh, what does it matter…” (PS, 55). Raman understands that “Love is blind. It probably also deadens the wits and makes one dumb. One likes to please the other at any cost. …” (PS, 63). Once it so happens that they together were at a shrine and Raman prays: “May Daisy be mine without further delay. I cannot live without her” (PS, 77). Raman whispers: “Don’t fear, it’s only me, my sweetheart. Don’t torment me …” (PS, 93). Soon we find him saying: “I love you, I like you” (PS, 125).

Like Raju, Raman turns Daisy-centric as he himself says: “…wasting himself in Daisyism” (PS, 137). Like Raju, Raman talks like a blind lover for whom it is difficult to find any hurdle between himself and his beloved that may separate them from each other. He states:
Nothing more than the name of a flower, that’s all ... only know that her name is Daisy. I have not thought of asking whether she is Christian or what. Never occurred to me to ask, that’s all. I’ll ask you not to bother about it. She is a human being just like you or me, that’s all. I like her very much (PS. 147).

These illustrations very vividly prove that like Raju, Raman wavers and to him reality itself, including his relation with Daisy, does not seem to appear organized by the ‘fantasy’ screen as Lacan would call it but emerges in a way that seems unique to him and, therefore, inexplicable in ordinary linguistic or social terms. This characteristic feature of an individual’s ‘unique’ experience is labeled by Lacan as the Real as Narayan in his mystic tradition calls it sanyasi, experiences of love and passion. Even Raman’s aunt refers to such a vivid experience in the narrative of the novel which shows clearly that the Lacanian notion of real is here evidently in operation. She says:

A darshnam of the God in Badrinath, and if possible to Amarnath, where the lingam is shaped in ice. I wouldn’t care what happened to me or to the world after I have seen the holy places and dipped into the Ganges from its birthplace all along its course, until I end my pilgrimage in Benares. After this I shall want nothing more in life (TPS, 151).
Her visit to the mentioned will end her all desires and she will experience a state that is beyond the description of linguistic domain.

Even Raman during his carrier several times offers to write a signboard for The Boardless Hotel, but the proprietor resists the offer. The Boardless, according to the narrator, is the solid and real world, which suggests that reality is without a label. This is what Lacan believes while arguing that the real can't be confined to linguistic signs or notions as it is always beyond all human comprehension.35

*The Vendor of Sweets* too exhibits numerous manifestations of the Lacanian Real. The novel primarily deals with Jagan's tremendous love for his only son Mali who abandons school and goes to America for becoming a writer. His fatherly feelings are thrown into still greater confusion when a year or two later he comes back with a half-Korean, half-American wife and a grandiose scheme for marketing a novel-writing machinery. Jagan is fully confused and is confronted by the new world shockingly.

The tragic-comic clash of generation deepens and he escapes finally from the galling chains of paternal love.

Remarkable about Jagan is the fact that he not only sells sweets but also preaches some philosophy. In fact, the novel opens with his philosophy:

Conquer taste and you will have conquered the self ...(TVS,7).

Even when we see Jagan busy in accumulating plenty of wealth; it is only for making his future life and son’s career bright one. Unfortunately, it is the same son who smashes his all hopes to ground hardly caring for any aspirations of his father.

To Jagan, Mali’s whole project appears useless and beyond any scope of yielding any profit either to the family or to the individuals even. As a result of his indifference, Jagan is informed by Mali that his would be wife wants to go back as according to her she has no work for which she had arrived in India. This disturbs Jagan and breaks his reactive and unexpected attitude and turns him heavily dejected. The novelist states:

Jagan was for a moment confused. He reaffirmed his faith in his son in the loudest terms possible ... He had always got him whatever he wanted ...after the boy lost his mother (TVS, 36-37).

Jagan further believes:
Every gift of life you are blessed with; what ninety out of a hundred people crave for – money; and what a hundred out of a hundred crave for – contentment. Yet you have not mastered one thing that is the art of looking happy. You are always looking love worn (TVS. 43-45).

After realizing how Mali has done harm to his aspiration, the novelist states:

...his mind was too full of confusion and questions. He felt hummed in: the room had lost its original appearance and looked like an office in a foreign country...(TVS. 78-79).

Jagan’s comfort was lost and Narayan says:

Jagan’s mind was in turmoil; at the time he had a feeling that his identity was undergoing a change. If that was so; why should he bother or resist the idea? Committed to various things ... he was no longer the father of Mali (TVS, 121 - 122).

Here the imaginings of symbolic and desiring economy collapse and one approaches the real beyond desires and constructions of mind. To quote Jagan:

I don’t care what he does. I am going to watch a Goddess come out of stone. If I don’t like the place, I will go away somewhere else. I am a free man. I have never felt more determined in life. I am happy ... Everything can go on with or without me. The world doesn’t collapse even a great figure is assassinated or dies of heart failure. Think that my heart has failed, that’s all (TVS. 184-185).

His renunciation is his escape from his personal anxieties or what William Walsh indicates:
Jagan's renunciation of the world, then, is of a piece with the Indian tradition. But he admits that he is also pushed into it by his personal circumstances.³⁶

Mahatma Gandhi says:

Renunciation of objects without the renunciation of desires. is short-lived, however hard you may be.³⁷

On the whole, we find Jagan experiencing a transformation, of his whole 'self'. He realizes that everything in this world transcends an illusion or an illusory act. In this way, he attains a state of the Lacanian Real because he transcends his desires, aspirations and demands. He no longer hankers after worldly possessions. In fact, we feel his plight but fail to put it in linguistic signs or to voice it because in him, we find a person who has nothing to cherish or to look for. He is now an enlightened being who has entered the realm that is hard to explain and undoubtedly

beyond linguistic domain; it remains beyond human comprehension.38

*The Financial Expert* also focuses on the question of human desire that completely destroys the hero. It is only towards the end that the eyes of the hero open and he realizes that nothing carries significance in this world which is full of illusion. He believes that neither wealth nor love for one’s son or of any possession earns a permanent joy or pleasure for a person. According to him the real joy lies in staying desireless and away from all worldly concerns as happens in Lacanian state of the real.39 Even Raman, the hero, in the novel, *Dark Room* is blindly obeyed, loved and respected by his wife, Savitri who even after becoming aware of the fact that her husband is infatuated with Santa Bai, his new office assistant hardly changes her love towards him. She after her husband’s repeated cynical irrational behaviour, and violent teasing goes to a dark room in his house where she moons and sulks. Soon she comes to know that possessiveness leads to suffering and in

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desperation and frustration, she leaves her home only to realize the bitter truth. Ultimately, she gives up her pride, her illusions and thus enters the Lacanian realm of real.

Narayan’s another novel, *The English Teacher*, is highly loaded with Lacanian brand of Real, and in the words of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar it is:

A chastened Romeo married to a sensible Juliet, this is a ‘lower... middle class’ Ferdinand enacting married love with a rather unesoteric Miranda.⁴⁰

Like Raju and Raman, Krishna also turns terribly lovesick, severely mad and finally loses his own *self* entirely after his object of love, Susila, dies. We come across the psychic communication of Krishnan with the soul of Susila, his dead wife. Narayan, like Lacan, believes that nothing is impossible for pure blind lovers and presents Krishna fetching her wife back from heaven on the earth on account of his platonic love. Krishna states:

Her complexion had golden glow; her eyes sparked with a new light, her saree shimmered with blue interwoven with Light as she had termed it ... How beautiful!”(ET, 184)

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It is important to note here that following the Lacanian concept of love, Narayan presents Krishnan-Susila affair in a conscious way. Krishnan very strongly smells Susila’s presence even in non-living objects that concern her in one or the other way: “I smelt...a mild jasmine smell surrounded her and all possessions ever since I had known her” (ET, 20). Further, we find a romantic love scene on the railway platform where the reunion brings a glow on his face:

I gazed on my wife. fresh and beautiful. her hair shining. her dress without a wrinkle on it. and her face fresh...

I looked at her and whispered:

Once again in this saree. still so fond of it (ET. 33).

He says on his return from college, he would find:

...hair dressed and beflowered. faces elegantly powered (ET. 36).

My mind unconsciously quoted:

“I was highly elated. The fresh sun. morning light. the breeze, and my wife’s presence, who looked so lovely – even an unearthly loveliness – her tall form, dusky complexion, and the small diamond ear-rings – Jasmine, jasmine … I will call you Jasmine, hereafter” (ET, 53).

Remarkable is Krishna’s imagined world tour in which he tells his beloved “You must see everything...”(ET, 56). Very
conscious and strange is also Krishna talks about Susila’s appearance in front of the image of God Srinivas: “...My wife...shone with an unearthly brilliance. Her cheeks glowed...I felt transported at the sight of it...”(ET, 64). After Susila death, for Krishna, ‘Malgudi becomes a tragic place’ fo Krishna. He turns blind and his life becomes meaningless. Talking about himself after her wife’s death, he says:

My feelings were all in a mess. I don’t know whether I was happy or unhappy...(TE, 109).

Hence, the strange love affair between the two reminds one of the journeys from the mundane empirical passion to a serious realization of the eternal, spiritual and transcendental or what can be termed as development from the Lacanian symbolic to real. It is truly a world which is free, absolute and perfect. Hence, it is beyond linguistic conception.

The ultimate aim of Narayan in The English Teacher, therefore, is his quest for a positive philosophy of life and attainment of spiritual maturity. In this context, it is important to look at the following a mystic sign of truth:


... Let her cry till she brings down the sky. I am going to treat myself as dead and my life as a new birth. You will see - I don't know if that hermit might my death, after all, in that sense...(ET, 166).

Further, we find him saying:

I tell you, friends, no more of this wife and family for me. You may treat me as one who has taken Sanyasa Ashrama (ET, 168).

Krishnan personally experiences the presence of strange spiritual forces:

Their delicate aroma filled every particle of the air, and as I let my mind float in the ecstasy, gradually perceptions and senses deepened. Oblivion crept over me like a cloud. The past, present and future welded into one (ET, 183).

Narayan's *A Tiger for Malgudi* is developed under the influence of philosophical Indian myths, allegorical mask and religious parable. It shows a belief in the pure spirit of Hinduism, a better understanding of Hindu’s myth of Bhasmasura or *The Vendor of Sweets*, composed in the Hindu concepts of cyclical existence and the four stages of human life. The religious tradition is the prime concern and the spirit of social consciousness remains a backdrop here. Raja, the tiger, is the hero of the novel who comes out better than most human beings. Religion is once again a major concern in the novel and Narayan probes into the sanctity of the terms Sanyasi, Sadhu, Yogi or Swamiji indicating more or less the
same state. Narayan says that a sanyasi is one who renounces everything and undergoes a complete change of personality. Why one would become a Sanyasi is not easily answered — a personal tragedy or frustration, a deeply compelling philosophy of life, or a flash of illumination may drive one to seek a change.

Whatever the cause, when one becomes a Sanyasi one obliterates one’s entire past only to experience oneness with God. A Sanyasi therefore is to be taken as he is, and not asked or questioned about his earlier life, nor need he to refer it because in that case everything would sound chaotic. Once a person turns a sanyasi, he is supposed to have liberated or redeemed himself from all possessions and humanities. Among certain sects, the man will even perform his own funeral ritualistically before becoming a Sanyasi. A Sanyasi is thus a wanderer living in alms, never rooted to any place except when he seeks the seclusion of a cave or forest at some stages for prolonged meditation. Thus, he lives outside the symbolic world.⁴³

Viewed in this context, it sounds strongly unexplainable that the novel, A Tiger for Malgudi, opens with an aged tiger Raja lying in its cage contemplating on its past, its cubhood and wild days in the jungle, and later life from a film shooting camp and wanders

into the town. The terror-stricken public attempts to get it shot; an ascetic appears on the scene and adopts as a companion after protecting it. Its master becomes a Sanyasi. Narayan shows, how credulous people, like the villagers in *The Guide* keep blind faith in his sainthood even after his protest. Before going to attain Samadhi, the master explains religious philosophy of Hindu’s in a nutshell saying:

No relationship, human or other, or association of any kind could last for ever. Separation is the law of the law of life right from the mother’s womb. One has to accept it if one has to live in God’s plains (TM, 174).

The novel vividly highlights the glimpse of Lacanian real and glory of Hindu Society and philosophy.

The lover in *The Painter of Signs* feels very protective towards his beloved. When their affair has been consummated, he overcomes with tenderness and she becomes serene, a totally un-Daisy like quality:

Her angularities and self-assertiveness were gone. He was struck by the elegance of her form and features, suddenly saw her as an abstraction—perhaps a goddess to be worshipped, not to be disturbed or defiled with coarse fingers (PS, 175).

His he-man temperament undergoes a transformation. He understands his role as a classic commitment to being both father and mother to the woman he loves. She on her part ceases being
Goddess Durga battling against the demons. She matches Raman in her appreciation of his tender, protective attitude towards her. Here, the background of Hindu metaphysics deepens the commonplaces of life into sublimity. Narayan evolves a concept of love that emphasizes the transcendental power of love, rather than its immediate physical allure.

Daisyism invades Raman's life so deeply that he turns himself upside down to get her favours, agrees to the strange and impossible conditions she lays down for a marriage and generally makes a fool of himself. This shows how love blinds a lover and thus he shuns aside all individual identity of himself and seeks something which is in fact beyond the domain or capture of linguistic devices. This state is truly Lacanian real, as it is inexpressible and beyond the usual human comprehension.

The lover, Raman, for her sake, tears up his roots, defies his old aunt who took care of him ever since he lost his parents in an accident. His same aunt refuses to live with them in the ancestral home. Hers is the classic objection: "What is her caste? What is her history? She ran away from home. Don't you know all that...? A girl who finds her parents intolerable! Those who are orphaned pray for parents while this girl..." (PS, 154) But she hardly knows
that love doesn't observe any consideration. For Raman, ‘she is a rare type of girl’; ‘she is a good girl’ (PS, 153).

Leaving him desolate, she decides to go on a journey to Benares and to spend the remaining days of her life, vowing not to come back to a home defiled by him and Daisy. This is similar to Jagan's flight from his house. Hence, she too experiences delusion and as such corresponds to Lacanian state of Real.

In Narayan's novel, we find usually mother's affection towards her son is purely Lacanian in nature because it is undoubtedly above linguistic conception and description. For instance, Swami's mother, Lakshmi, Chandran's mother and Raju's mother all represent those ideal Indian mothers who love their children blindly and can't feel at rest if ever anything untoward happens to their dear ones. In the Western context one may not be fully acquainted with this concept but in oriental philosophy and literature we usually come across those mothers whose love for children remains inexplicable. Narayan, in Malgudi, projects the only true image of a microcosm within macrocosm of Indian tradition, presents such diverse situations and events where the innocent, pure and transcendental notion of life transcends the

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self or ego in mundane sense. Since such situations remain incomprehensible and remain individualistic, one can include these in the realm of the Lacanian real.

It needs to be mentioned here that though the instances of the Lacanian Real traced in the Narayan’s novels amply reveal the reliability and authenticity of our conceptualization, these instances also reveal the influence of the Indian mystical thought on Narayan. Mysticism and Lacan sharply part ways in their conception of reality and liberation from mundane worldly passions and desires. Lacan in the strict sense of the term believes in impossibility of liberation whereas in Mystical tradition it is the ultimate goal of human achievement. However, Lacan’s importance for understanding Narayan’s philosophy cannot be denied because in the description of human condition Lacan offers quite useful insights and which converge in large measure with Indian world view, though in descriptive and diagnostic rather than prescriptive ways. Both Lacan and Indian mystics believe in the illusoriness of ego and all its subterfuges, both posit transcendence of ego regime, and both condemn the too much attachment to passion and desire. As a result of it, in both cases the access to ‘inexpressible’ is denied because language can lead only to the symbolic realm and fails to go beyond it. Again, Lacan is not a
mystic and one can’t claim that his psychological insights are similar to mysticism. For Lacan it isn’t possible to step outside the samsaric flow of events to be a detached witness, to rest in Transcendental One, to enjoy the repose of being that transcends all becoming. For Lacan, ascetic withdrawal isn’t an option. Lacan is preoccupied with body and psyche while as Narayan is ultimately concerned with spirit. However, both agree that in the human development there comes a stage when an individual fails to decide between either / or, his language does not help him to grasp the reality in an organized way. In such situations the events, incidents and images emerge in such a way that an individual in its own intuitive and unique way decides the future course of action. This is the Lacanian Real and Narayan’s Sanyasic transcendence or Mukti which can be experienced but not explained in words, signs and symbols.