Conclusion
CONCLUSION

R.K. Narayan is completely different from his contemporaries. Raja Rao who imposes philosophy. On the other hand Anand, who is a propagandist raises his voice against the evils of the society and shows clearly that he is fighting for the welfare of downtrodden. But Narayan is a very simple writer. He does not force his readers to a mode of high philosophy because he does not deal with the situations or events to eke out a hidden philosophic point. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar comments on R.K. Narayan’s writing- “The novels of R.K. Narayan do not offer the academic critic sufficient scope for explication, analysis or interpretation. The canon is one of modest bulk, the writing is not knotted with obscurity, and plotting is uncomplicated. Narayan’s fiction is not weighted with politics or philosophy, nor is it an excuse for communicating a particular weltanschauung. Also, while some of the earlier work is autobiographical, there is little room for literary detection or phycho-analytic probes.”

Iyengar admires Narayan’s novels for their art and also believes that they cannot be better.

Richardson commented about Narayan’s novels that his novels are sentimental like other Indo English writers.

“More than one Indian novelist writing in English has used his novel as a vehicle for sentiment-patriotic or Philosophical- and left the story to look after itself”.

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Narayan does not glorify India as a great country. He deals with his own experiences. He presents his characters with their actual virtues and vices. His fondness for the archetypical Indian narratives *Mahabharata* and *Puranas* contributes generally to his artless narrative and direct yet subtle shading of characters and story. Ved Mehta has said that he used to consider Leo Tolstoy, James Joyce and Faulkner “bores”.³ According to Narayan the best novel is that, which does not make a reader feel bored due to its length. In one of his interviews Narayan told Naseem Khan, “Character came first and plot only second”.⁴

Narayan’s fictional world is the every day world with its happenings. While holding a sympathetic view towards his characters, Narayan was also aware of the absurdities of life. He picturizes his characters as people who carry real values of life and yet are weaklings who possess vices, vices of no grand order but still those which render the character imperfect.

Narayan’s application of the Philosophic vision is very surprising because his heroes go up like a rocket and also come down as quickly. As in *The Financial Expert*, Margayya the money maniac is wrongly attached to his son and money. He wants to earn a lot of money by legal or illegal means for his son’s progress and status. Following a short cut way he becomes a wealthy man easily. Very soon he also becomes bankrupt by the evil machinations of his one-time confident and friend
Dr. Paul who, we can say is the maker and destroyer of Margayya. In the end Margayya starts his journey of life at the same point with his tin box under the same banyan tree. But now he was changed internally. Now he knew the real values of life as what are the real attachments and detachments of life.

Like most other Indian English novels Narayan’s novels also end on a peaceful note but the peace Narayan suggests is completely different and unique. His hero has known the reality of life. According to Buddhism the last stage of consciousness is a state of Shunya. In Narayan’s work, this stage is slightly different from others because for Narayan Shunya means the full awareness of the realities of this materialistic world. His hero while continuing in a quest for his Self lives in this world with his responsibilities finally attains the condition of Shunya. It is not necessary to go to the shelter of the forest like Mahatama Buddha. According to Narayan every one may be a Mahatama. He, who living in this world becomes aware of the riddle of this life and materialistic world is more strong. This is Narayan’s moral vision. Every Narayan novel ends with a subtle moral lesson. All his novels make us aware of the riddles of this world and our real attachments and detachments. In the case of Raju, the hero of Guide, he achieves illumination in the last part of the novel. This condition implies the capacity to know everything and becoming free from temptations. It is only possible when we believe in the theory of Karma (Nishkam Karma); and living in
this world like a karmyogi fulfilling one's duties without wishing for any reward, and trusting in the ways of God. In the novel *Guide* whenever Raju does anything for reward and for his own benefit he is not happy. He has no mental peace. He encourages Rosie to dance to earn a lot of money and fame due to his attachment for her and also money. It was a false attachment because Rosie was a married woman. According to Indian values of life if we violate the rules of nature we will never get happiness. But at the end of the novel when leading a life like a Mahatama he fasts for fourteen days for the welfare of common people because they were starving and because of their implicit trust in him, suddenly the rain dropped on the earth. It was a symbol of forgiveness of his past sins. Rain was a symbol of *Amrit*. By touching it he became *Amar* and died as a martyr.

Narayan's heroes lead their normal lives; and yet they behave like Sanyasis. According to the tenets of Hindu philosophy Raju has entered the fourth *Ashram* of life. The hero of *The Vendor of Sweets* is shown consciously preparing to go to forest for a *Sanysa Ashram*.

All his other heroes continue to live in this world, fully aware of its absurdities and riddles of life; and lead a very simple life. It may be said that his heroes are very simple with potential for high thinking, so much so that the folly ridden stage is the stage of purification by fire. P.S. Sundaram comments that Narayan has created a
new world the people prototypes of mythological figures. Margayya has the touches of Midas and Raju who stayed deep in the water to satisfy the public has a miraculous experience when he transcends his selfhood.

“The ancient aesthetic theorists had conceived and prescribed certain patterns of heroism, which became the basis for the Traditional Hero in the world of Literature: Dhirōdātta, Dhirōdhata, Dhirośānta and Dhirolalita”⁵. According to the concept of heroism in Indian English literature, such categorization of the Heroes is made with respect to their characteristics. According to the Sanskrit literary dictum the hero should be “Sāttvika (of high character) Shōva (graceful), Vilāsa (Luxurious), Mādhurya (handsome), Gambhirya (impressive), Sthīrya (steadfast), Tējas (Bold) and Audāriya (of honorable nobility with readiness for sacrifice)”⁶. “The epic heroes of Ramayana, The Mahābhārata and The Bhagavata, were Divine incarnations, who not only assumed the ideal characteristics but discharged the primary function of eradicating Evil”⁷.

Aristotle’s writings were inspired by the Greek tragedies of Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus. Their heroes had to pay for their faults. Facing all these difficulties and obstacles of life the hero achieved spirituality and illumination.

“The Greek Tragedies of Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus served as models to the Aristotelian
prescription; and their heroes did attain Spiritual glory although they fell owing to a fatal flaw.8

P.S. Sundaram comments: “Narayan is not a social crusader like Dickens and Mulk Raj Anand. His mind is not made that way.”9 No doubt the seeming over-signification can be irritating.

V.S. Naipaul has said in An Area of Darkness that Narayan—tells us an Indian Truth which is not complete. “Too much that is overwhelming has been left out, too much has been taken for granted. There is a contradiction in Narayan, between his form which implies concern, and his attitude which denies it.”10

In a B.B.C. interview in 1968 William Walsh asked Narayan about his strain of writing. He said, “I never had any idea that I was writing in another tongue. My whole education has been in English from the primary school, and most of my reading has been in the English language ... . I am particularly fond of the language ... . I wrote in English because it came to me very easily.”11

Narayan points out the disadvantages of English education, which affect our life. We are going to be enslaved because of it, becoming completely alien to our real values of life which are the root of our life. If we are distanced from our roots how can we live. Root means religion and its teachings. In the very first paragraph of The English Teacher he tells, “The urge had been upon me for some days past to take myself in hand. What was wrong with me? I could not say, some sort of vague,
disaffection, a self-rebellion I might call it .... but always leaving behind a sense of something missing.”12

Western education and English studies breed in the Indian student's a meaninglessness. “Western education has been a kind of slow death”.13

We find Krishnan struggling with the questions about human existence. In search of the real Self he becomes a complete stranger towards his job as a teacher.

He also answers himself about Literature, “don’t worry so much about these things-they are trash, we are obliged to go through and pretend that we like them, but all the time the problem of living and dying is crushing us....”14

In the last part of the novel Krishnan says, “My mind was made up. I was in search of a harmonious existence and everything that disturbed that harmony was to be rigorously excluded, even my college work”.15

Narayan remarked about the circumstances and responsibilities of being a fictional writer. “The subject matter of fiction became capably political, the moods of comedy, the sensitivity to atmosphere, the probing psychological factors, the crises in the individual soul and its resolution and above all, the detached observation, which constitute the stiff of fiction, were forced into the background. After independence, however the writer in India hopes to express through his novels and stories the way of life of the group of people with
whose psychology and background he is most familiar, and he hopes that this picture will not only appeal to his own circle but also to a larger audience outside.\textsuperscript{16}

Ved Mehta commented on Narayan “He seems to carry his home, his cosmos, on his back, as did the ageless swami.”\textsuperscript{17}

Narayan was Indian in thought and spirit and their complexities as they prevail in India, with an insider’s confidence. He successfully presented human relationships. R.K. Narayan’s power of creative imagination remained fresh even at the age of ninety.

M.K. Naik commented: “R.K. Narayan is the novelist of the individual man, just as Mulk Raj Anand is the novelist of the social man and Raja Rao that of the metaphysical man”.\textsuperscript{18}

Skillful in telling the story of the smooth plot, he also portrayed human psychological behaviour with telling effect. His language is simple with slight touches of humour.

M.K. Naik comments on his style: “The art of Rasipuram Krishnaswamy Narayan offers an interesting contrast to that of Mulk Raj Anand. Narayan’s delicate blend of gentle irony and sympathy, quiet realism and fantasy stands poles apart from Anand’s militant humanism with its sledge- hammer blows or his robust earthiness”.\textsuperscript{19}

Narayan used the Indian style of story telling, in contrast to Mulki…

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M.K. Naik comments: “Like Arnold Bennett, Narayan relies more on keen observation and steady accumulation of small details than on evocative description applying imagination than realistic presentation”.20

Narayan’s art came into its own in the post independence years. Commenting on the maturity of Narayan’s style, M.K. Naik says, “Narayan’s art reached its maturity after independence, when he was finally able to enlist his good humored irony as a firm ally of serious moral concern in his novels: Mr. Sampath, The Financial Expert, The Guide and The Man-Eater of Malgudi”.21

Narayan’s novels deal with the theme of money and power which were the main criteria of the 1950s and 1960s. Both his novels The Financial Expert and The Guide deal with the theme of money and power.

R.K. Narayan’s moral comment on this preoccupation is telling because of his gentle ironic style. Financial Expert is a story of an individual. It is through the depiction of these differently cast individual characters that R.K. Narayan culls out his philosophy of living.

“The end shows a chastened but by no means broken Margayya preparing to resume his first humble occupation. The ironic reversal brings home to him the
age-old lesson that prosperity and peace do not always go together”.

In Guide Narayan presents Raju, the hero as a skilful guide who is able to attract the tourists. He is a real guide. Raju plays many roles perfectly as a real guide, a Guru of dance and finally a Mahatama. The core of his personality, inspite of all his failings and vices is the attractive and endearing quality. In all his roles, his success measures up to the degree of this attractiveness.

“The role of Raju changes from time to time and fits to each and every role he plays... a railway guide, the Guru of dance and finally as the Sanayasi who has taken vow not to take food till it rains”.

M.K. Naik also says, “Raju’s transformation from a railway ‘guide’ into a half reluctant and half-purposeful Guru is worked out through a neatly woven pattern of ironic complications, but the irony is not a simple blend of the comic and the tragic. It raises many disturbing questions about human motives and actions, compelling us to ponder over problems such as appearance and reality, the man and the mask, ends and means”.

The female portrayals are also varied and interesting In The Dark Room Savitri is very much like the mythological figure, Savitri who got victory over death. In the beginning of the novel Savitri bears the cruelty of her husband but she comes to know about the illegal relationship of her husband with Shantabai, she revolts against him. She also declares that women’s
dependence is the root cause of all evils. She leaves her husband’s roof but her love for children forces her to return.

In *The English Teacher* Sushila is portrayed as a completely devoted wife. Krishna also loves her passionately. She represents the ingénue doll like child-wife whose company provides a blissful completeness to Krishna’s life.

Rosie is the most complex creation among the women characters of Narayan. She is portrayed with a lot of charm and fascination. Her husband is an intellectual who keeps himself busy in the pursuit of knowledge. He is an archaeologist. On the other hand Rosie belongs to family of Deva Dasis. During her visit of Mempi Hills Rosie’s heart is won by Raju. “Rosie’s adultery is the result of her husband’s coldness and passiveness.”

Rosie in a way represents the emancipated modern woman in the Indian society just as Shantabai in *The Dark Room* represents the free willed woman of low moral fibre. Through he avoids explicit or implicit criticism on moral grounds or prejudices, Narayan has a psychological insight for portraying different human possibilities. Harish Raizada says:

“Narayan portrays his characters only with the help of the fewest strokes of the pen. He possesses a rare psychological insight into the human mind and character. He has mastery over the analysis of the internal workings of the mind.”
Bharti in *Waiting for Mahatma* is represented as an ideal girl. She is an ardent disciple of Gandhi. She believes in Gandhian philosophy and makes it the foundation of her personal life. So she sacrifices for the freedom of the country.

According to Harish Raizada: "In the person of Bharati, Narayan has portrayed an ideal Indian girl who is strong in head, heart and character. She is an embodiment of Gandhian ideals..... In the character of Bharati, Narayan has tried to conceive of a girl who is brought up and nurtured on Gandhian ideals."27

Narayan’s craftsmanship allows him to skillfully arrange the actions and events in a structured plot. His plots are skillfully woven. No loose threads are seen anywhere.

“He is not lower to any English novelist in the technical perfection of plot. He employs irony as an artistic device to recount the actions and reactions of his characters. His plots are not episodic as we find in the plots of Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya.”28

In *The Financial Expert* Narayan presents the rise and fall of Margayya. This novel is divided into three parts:- the first part deals with the desires and expectation for money and Margayya’s ambitions and desires for his son Balu. In the second part his relationship with Dr. Pal is described; and in the third part the fall of Margayya is presented.
M.K. Naik admits: “The element of fantasy-represented by Dr. Pal, the unworldly scholar, the old man of Madras, who claims he is ‘only God’s agent’, and the episode of Lakshmi worship is made firmly subservient to the central theme and thus kept well within safe artistic limits.”

Most novels of Narayan not only deal with humour as the main element of style but also are factually accurate and exact as regards cultural detecting and exact. He describes every situation with accurate and exact information of event. Commenting on Guide A.K. Dutta points out: “Like Daniel Defoe, he gives the minute details of every situation his hero has to pass through. His experience of life is so wide and his observation so keen that nothing escapes him, whether it is a description of Raju as a small boy sitting in the shop of the father and officiating for him, or as a shopkeeper at the railway station, or as a tourist guide, or as an impresario, or as a feigned saint. The description of the nature of his work and his experiences in all these various capacities are correct to the minutest details.”

Narayan represented the picturesque details of natural settings with a flair for poetic style.

“The branches of the trees canopying the river courses rustled and trembled with the agitation of birds and monkeys settling down for the night. Upstream beyond the hills the sun was setting”.
Narayan’s art seems to be complicated in The Guide. There is a kind of interconnection between the theme and the narrative.

M.K. Naik comments: “Of all Narayan’s novels, The Guide reaches us into thought to an extent no other novel of his does. Narayan’s fictional technique is also at its subtlest in The Guide. The narrative alternates between the past and the present, ‘Swinging backward and forward’ as Rosie does when she dances, thus emphasizing how Raju’s present is inexorably rooted in his past. The blend of the omniscient and the autobiographical methods of narration endows the story with a double perspective. The novel, which opens with Raju in the ruined village temple about to be reverentially accepted as a Sadhu, ends in the same locality with his enforced death, thus giving the tale a perfectly rounded, circular structure.”

R.K. Narayan is a psychological observer. His objectivity and beauty of narration embellish his novels with a realistic flavour. In Narayan’s writings there is a slight touch of satire on society. His satire is completely different from Mulk Raj Anand’s severe. His comic situations in the novels end with an oblique note on the ‘inadequacy of commonsense’.

“For the first time in his life he was making an earnest effort, for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application, outside money and love; for the first
time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested”.³³

“If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?”³⁴

“The usual criticism levelled against the Indian writer in English is that he is a self-conscious exhibitionist, always anxious to be liked and approved by the ‘reader’; Narayan is candid about his focus: “No, I wrote them for myself. I don’t have any audience in mind at all, at any time.”³⁵

Narayan makes no distinction between Indians and foreigners as readers. He says about his style that he was very unconscious of style, and he wished to make style as unnoticed as possible. “The idea must be more prominent than the style in which it is written. You have to have a watchful eye to make your sentences just right. It’s very hard. That’s what I try to do. I am aware of this style which is one that abolishes style.”³⁶ As far as my views are concerned, R. K. Narayan was a writer of the common man dealing with the middle class life. The happenings, events and incidents in a Narayan novel all belong to the middle class life. His hero is the common man. His contemporaries picturized this hero differently. Anand’s hero is a live symbol of propaganda against the evils of society; Raja Rao’s hero is a philosopher R.K. Narayan is completely different from both of the above because he neither strikes on the evils of society with an axe nor does he pose himself as philosopher. His heroes are noticeable in the very absence of any heroism.
In defiance of the Shakespearean precept of the tragic hero belonging to a high status in life, all Narayan' heroes belong to the middle class. The problems of his heroes are the problems of the common man and leading an ordinary, mundane life in this materialistic world. Fulfilling his responsibilities his hero's lead him finally to a life of a Sanyasi or a Mahatma. They know the reality of life and real attachments and detachments. Due to false attachments man commits mistakes and faces problems and feels sadness and pain. If we are aware of the real attachments and detachments we will also learn to overcome life's upheavals. The teachings of Vedas, Upanishads, Gita and Puranas etc. are the touchstones of our attachments and detachments. Whatever are the available models in Vedas and Gita should be followed by us.

According to Narayan there is no need to go to forest to be a Sanyasi for the real attachments. But final attachment with God is possible when we lead a life full of responsibilities before reaching the goal of final attachment after passing through the different stages of life with divinity. Bhramcharya, Grhastha, Vanprastha and Sanyasa Ashram. The simplicity of R.K. Naryan's style reflects the simple uncluttered personality of the writer. His ideas are open and not covered with any philosophic mists.

Narayan is not over burdened with the consciousness that he is writing about the teaching of Mahakavyas, Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Bhagwad Gita etc. His philosophic vision is completely internalised. His ideas come
spontaneously. R.K. Narayan does not see himself as a teacher. The theory of *Karma, Moksha* and detachment-attachment are not presented with any pomposity nor is the cryptic philosophic idiom ever used by him. Here is a writer, simple, artless and natural. A genuine story teller, his stories have the perennial value of the bedside purifying nightcap and lull the readers into a whimsical, ruminative mood where philosophy and gently worded satire prod us into seeing our own follies reflected in the unfolding of the narratives.
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34. Ibid. p. 213.
