Chapter Two:

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THE BACHELOR OF ARTS: SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Narayan’s second novel, *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) is a tale of transition from rebellious adolescence to mature adulthood. The general pattern of search evident in Narayan’s presentation of his protagonists culminates in this novel, in the acquisition of identity (both social and familial) by Chandran, a Bachelor of Arts. The novel opens with the college life of Chandran, a Bachelor of Arts in his adolescence which is, according to Erik C. Erikson, a stage of ‘Identity versus Role Confusion’\(^1\). It is a critical phase in which childhood proper terminates and youth begins. A developing youth faced with physiological changes within and important adult responsibilities in terms of family and society, discovers himself in a paradoxical situation of tension between - what he appears in the eyes of others and what he thinks or feels he is. It is interesting to note in this connection that even though this novel specifically deals with the acquisition of identity by an adolescent-turned youth, the search for identity in Narayan’s characters broadly speaking, can be located in the inherent dialectic between two levels of perception/experience as implied in Narayan’s concept of comedy: “... that vast gap that exists within what a man thinks of his surroundings and what it happens to be.”\(^2\) In different novels, this search in the major characters of Narayan operates in different forms of contestation. In *The Bachelor of Arts*, however, the protagonist’s search for identity takes place in the transitive period of life - between adolescence and adulthood.

A desire to assert identity often prompts a youth to flout parental authority and other codes of the adult-dominated world. Vineypaulkaur Kirpal aptly observes in *The Bachelor of Arts* a theme of ‘growing up’ and points out that the story here is “a record of Chandran’s attempt to come to his own and carve a niche
for himself in the intriguing world of adults”(115). Though Chandran’s search for identity actually comes to be apparent after his graduation, the urge for the same can be traced from the very opening page of the novel.

Chandran is introduced as a student of History, deemed good at debating, sometimes cynical, indifferent, warm or insolent with friends and often obsessed with the impact that he is able to make on others. The dilemma of stance, which is a reaction of identity-crisis, impinges upon him when he is entreated by Natesan, the College Union Secretary, to open a debate on a conflicting subject (“should Historians be slaughtered?”) that goes against the ethics of a History student. Even more, his initial aversion to the proposition appears to underlie also an escapist mode of thought in a sensitive adolescent who is still unequipped to face the world of adult intellectualism and activity:

Chandran was just climbing the steps of the college union when Natesan, the secretary sprang on him and said, ‘You are just the person I was looking for. You remember your old promise?’ ‘No’, said Chandran promptly, to be on the safe side.(139)

Even when reminded that Chandran once promised to Natesan to help him whenever the latter would be hard pressed for a speaker, Chandran finds no dearth of excuse to help his stance – ‘to be on the safe side’: “I am a history student. I can’t move the subject. What a subject! My professor will eat me up”(139).

But Chandran’s apathy subsides and when he accepts his new role, he garners all his energy and thoughts to do well as the prime-mover of the debate. As a prime-mover, he delivers his speech for about twenty minutes ‘inspired by the applause with which the audience received many of his cynicisms’(142). Chandran’s ego for leaving a distinctive impression on others
immediately after his speech is received with applause, is also mentioned by the writer:

After that the prime-opposer held the attention of the audience for about twenty minutes. Chandran noted with slight displeasure that the audience received his speech with equal enthusiasm. (142)

During the deliberations, Chandran compares his self-identity with that of the others. Seated on his chair, Chandran gazes at Professor Brown, the Principal and his mind is also alive to the element of ‘centre-periphery’ binary existing in Colonial India which resulting in a privileged style of living for the Europeans, is bound to incur disfavour of the colonised:

Here he is, Chandran thought, pretending to press the bell and listen to the speeches, but really his thoughts are at the tennis court and the card-table on the English Club. He is here not out of love for us, but merely to keep up appearances. All Europeans are like this. They will take their thousand or more a month, but won’t do the slightest service to Indians with a sincere heart. They must be paid this heavy amount for spending their time in the English Club. Why should not these fellows admit Indians to their clubs? Sheer colour arrogance. If ever I get into power I shall see that Englishmen attend clubs along with Indians and are not so exclusive. Why not give the poor devils -- so far away from their home -- a chance to club together at least for a few hours at the end of a day’s work? Anyway who invited them here? (142).

However, Chandran proves his mettle; and the House ‘by an overwhelming majority voted for an early annihilation of Historians. Chandran felt victorious and he dramatically stretched his arm across the table and shook hands with the
The newly-won pride in Chandran gets hurt when the Secretary who has practically forced Chandran into participating in the debate, does not spend a single word in praise of Chandran immediately after the debate is over.

Chandran hoped that the Secretary would tell him something about this speech. But the Secretary was busy with his own thoughts. He had cringed for Chandra's help before the debate, and immediately the thing was over did not trouble to make the slightest reference to the speech.

The newly-bred urge for recognition in Chandran ultimately invites encomium from the Secretary: 'Fine speech, fine speech. So few are really gifted with eloquence.' On his way home Chandran calls on his dearest friend Ramu and enquires if Ramu was present at college to watch Chandran's grand performance as an orator. Knowing that Ramu could not turn up there, Chandran supplies the information mentioning his performance in an august, grandiloquent manner. In reply to Ramu's query ('How did it go?'), Chandran answers: 'Quite well, I think. The proposition was carried'. As Ramu exclaims in wonder and shakes Chandran's hands, the writer remarks: 'They were as excited as if it were the Finance Bill before the Legislative Assembly in Delhi'

With a new confidence brewing within him, which becomes a successful college student nurturing a kind of some adult-identity, Chandran now fixes up a trip with Ramu to a late night film-show. What is interesting is that, he does it in conscious repudiation of the fact that his father disapproves of viewing late-night films. But the emotional crisis in Chandran as he reaches home (before leaving for the show), gives credence as Kirpal suggests, to the observation of Dr. T.A. Harris on adolescence and adulthood, or that of Eric.C.Erikson's idea of "Identity Versus Role-Confusion".
Before the readers face the emotional turmoil in Chandran as he reaches home, it is worthwhile to take a look on what Dr. Harris observes on adolescent psychology:

Through the troubling years of adolescence, when young people sometimes seem to turn a deaf ear to the words of their anxious parents, there nevertheless is a hunger to hear and experience reassurance of Mum and Dad’s love and concern.

This postulate of psychological behaviour comes into play as Chandran reaches his house and one finds that, his erstwhile spirit fizzles out for a moment and the rebel-child relapses into the grips of some phobia of parental authority. At first, he opens the gate, slips in noiselessly hoping to sneak past his father so as not to incur his displeasure. Up to this extent, Chandran’s behaviour is sanctioned by traditional obeisance to parental authority; but the typical urge for adulthood and a separate identity in an adolescent come to be apparent immediately:

He realized that what he usually did was a piece of evasive cowardice worthy of an adolescent. He was not eighteen, but twenty one. At twenty one to be afraid of one’s parents and adopt sneaky ways! He would be a graduate very soon and he was already a remarkable orator! This impulse to sneak in was very boyish. He felt very sorry for it and remedied it by unnecessarily lifting the gate chain and letting it noisily down[...].(146)

Chandran’s calculated act hits the target. His father’s attention, as desired by Chandran turns towards him and as the father stands looking towards the gate, Chandran swaggers along the drive with an independent air but within, he has a feeling that he should have chosen some other day for demonstrating his independence. Vineypalkaur Kirpal detects in Chandran’s ‘calculated
defiance', - 'a natural hesitation and fear that usually accompanies such first acts of defiance'; and this may be regarded as 'the starting point of Chandran's break with parental authority and gives expression to his desire – to grow'(116).

But what is important to note is that, even at the behest of ignoring parental authority in search of an independent identity, Chandran seems to suffer from a sense of compunction. This particular trait testifies to an almost gravitational pull of tradition, both social and familial, generating thereby an intricate consciousness of roots, which is conspicuously discernible in Chandran right from this phase of his search for identity.

Henceforth, Chandran’s search for identity is associated with a sense of growth nurtured by an urge to flout parental dominance on the one hand, and a naive operation of an intricate social and familial tradition rooted in his consciousness on the other.

Chandran’s life has so far blossomed within the matrix of love, protection and assurance. It is notable also in the present context when Chandran’s father does not mind the way Chandran comes in. He does not object to the late-night film either, perhaps because he does not want to spoil the festive mood that has followed the successful debating session of his son. Chandran shows the courage to directly approach his father with a genuine desire: “We are going to a cinema to-night[...]. We are in a rather festive mood after the debate”. Chandran’s father allows his son but with a cautionary comment: “Hm, But I would not advise you to make it a habit. Late-shows are very bad for health”. The father’s remark produces no ostensible impression upon Chandran who gets ready for his maiden late-night show programme with due preparation that becomes an adult. Far from being an ordinary one, cinema-watching is with Chandran, an ‘aesthetic experience’ that has to be approached with due preparation to squeeze from it the maximum delight. Therefore, in keeping
with the code of adult-behaviour, watching night-show of a cinema should be treated as an altogether adult-experience with an adult-like approach. Narayan writes in this connection:

You had to chew the betel leaves and nut, chew gently, until the heart was stimulated and threw out delicate beads of perspiration and caused a fine tingling sensation behind the ears; on top of that you had to light a cigarette, inhale the fumes and with the night breeze blowing on your perspiring forehead, go to the cinema, smoke more cigarettes there, see the picture and from there go to a hotel nearby for hot coffee at midnight, take some more betel leaves and cigarettes, and go home and sleep. This was the ideal way to set about a night-show.(148)

The fact that ‘joy when shared is doubled’ holds good also for an adolescent like Chandran who is getting initiated into the mystique of adulthood. He discovers the place of friendship in the scheme of his search. While watching the cinema, Chandran feels that his friend Ramu’s company is the most important to him. It is his presence ‘that gave a sense of completion to things’. He too smokes, chews, drinks coffee, laughs (‘he was the greatest laugher in the world’), admires Chandran, teases him, quarrels with him, breathes delicious scandal over the names of his professors and friends and unknown people. Vineypalkaur Kirpal traces here the quality of ‘shared interest’ in an adolescent: “Like all human beings Chandran seeks emotional sustenance not only within his family but also outside amongst people of his own age. The presence of Ramu is re-assuring to Chandran. The other important factor of their friendship is that they share interests and this adds to Chandran’s confidence”(117). Jayant K. Biswal remarks that there is, in Narayan’s characters, a ‘movement towards ripeness’(33). Therefore, the newly discovered desire in Chandran to assert his identity in terms of adult–adult rapport does not die out quite naturally after its immediate upsurge. Such a desire is seen to gain
momentum in the incidents involving Chandran and his college-teachers like Mr. Gajapathy and Prof. Raghavachar.

In the first incident, the readers experience Chandran’s detached and independent reaction to the boring lectures of Mr. Gajapathy. Instead of taking notes inside the class, Chandran screws ‘the cap of his pen and sat back’(156). Smelling something wrong, Gajapathy asks Chandran to keep writing on. Though Chandran obeys his teacher apparently, in reality he goes on scribbling and drawing. Gajapathy realises that his pupil is not actually taking class-notes, he decides to tackle him on that after the class. He asks Chandran to show his book. Initially, Chandran feels ‘non-plussed’ if he would escape this time by simply concocting and telling a lie. However, Chandran decides against such a feeling curtly and tells Mr. Gajapathy to excuse him: “Honestly”, he says, ‘I have not taken down anything sir. If you will excuse me, I must go now. I have to see Prof.Raghavachar’(157). While commenting on the situation, Kirpal quotes from T.A. Harris: “Chandran successfully breaks another of the imaginary barriers of awe and fear with which every two-foot child regards the six foot adult”(Kirpal 20).

Another encounter of Chandran, this time with Prof Raghavachar, the History teacher, is marked by the same urge for transcendence. Chandran is completely in the dark as to why Prof Raghavachar sends for him. In spite of the fact that this encounter immediately follows an interaction with Mr. Gajapathy, it is noticeable that on Chandran’s part, there is a momentary retreat to the child’s world as he constantly worries about the probable reason of being sent for. But he recovers from nervousness in no time:

He suddenly pulled himself up. Why this cowardice? Why should he be afraid of Raghavachar or anybody? Human being to human being. Remove those spectacles, the turban and the long coat and let Raghavachar appear only in a loincloth, and Mr.
Raghavachar will lose three quarters of his appearance. Where was the sense in feeling nervous before a pair of spectacles, a turban and a black long coat? (157).

With the help of this timely realisation, Chandran regains the lost self-confidence to strike an adult-adult relationship with Raghavachar whom he has feared so much till date.

Being asked actually to discuss on the matter of forming a Historical Association, Chandran enters the professor’s cubicle and at first, feels slightly nervous (as becomes an average adolescent in the weighty presence of a Professor) though he timely recovers from it: “Chandran felt a slightly thirsty sensation, but he recollected his vision of Raghavachar in a loincloth and regained his self-confidence” (157). When offered the post of a Secretary to the Proposed Association, Chandran has the guts to make a clean breast of his innermost desire – to shun the very thought of assuming any responsibility that seemingly poses any threat to his individual self-hood: “I was only going to say that someone else might do better as a secretary” (158). But the professor’s choice is final and binding and being yoked to the onus of a heavy responsibility, Chandran retreats from the professor’s room with a dampened spirit:

Chandran emerged from the Professor’s room with his head bowed in thought. He felt a slight distaste for himself as a secretary. He felt that he was on the verge of losing his personality. (159)

This internal personality-crisis in an adolescent is common at the juncture where tender youthfulness meets the emerging reality of shouldering responsibility in the world governed by adult behaviour. Chandran’s imaginary
sketch of the life of a secretary is tinged with self-pity arising out of a fear for a possible threat to his identity:

Now he would have to be like Natesan, the Union Secretary. One's head would be full of nothing but meetings to be arranged! He was now condemned to go about with a fixed idea, namely, the inaugural meeting. The inaugural meeting by itself was probably not a bad thing if it were also the final meeting; but they would expect him to arrange at least half a dozen meetings before March; readings of papers on mock subjects, heavy lectures by paunchy hags, secretary’s votes of thanks, and endless other things. He hated the whole business. He would have to sit through the lectures, wait till the lights were put out and the doors locked, and go out into the night with a headache, forgoing the walk by the river with Ramu.(l59)

Notwithstanding these initial misgivings, Chandran prepares for the inaugural meeting of the Association with deserving tact and agility. He consults Natesan, who in Chandran’s opinion, ‘must have conducted nearly a hundred meetings in his college life’(161). It is as per Natesan’s tips that Chandran goes to invite the Principal for the inaugural address but gets held up from admission into the Principal’s room by the attending peon. Chandran rises to the occasion through a little bit of craftiness. He softens the peon with a self-willed promise to give him an old coat and thus securing access to the chamber, confirms the Principal’s consent to grace the meeting as the lecturer of the Association. The inaugural meeting is held in a befitting manner under Chandran’s accomplished role of the Secretary. Chandran’s initial aversion to this heavy assignment is thus found to give way ultimately to a distinctive sense of maturity which marks Chandran’s brief stint as the secretary of the Historical Association. Beginning with the inaugural meet, he continues through several other meetings until the college closes for the recess preparatory to the final
examination. However, the aspiration for prominence and distinction that has initially characterised Chandran’s search for identity is seen, at this point, to be tinged with a sense of mature sensibility: ‘Chandran realised that there was more in these meetings than met the eye or entered the ear. Each meeting was a supreme example of human endeavour, of self-less service’ (161).

In Kirpal’s opinion, this recognition of ‘self-less service’ in the realisation of Chandran, is imbued with an ulterior prospect in his future life. However, in the farewell-meet in the college, readers find that Chandran’s sentiments match that of any average college student who is about to overstep the threshold of college education in search of an identity in the outside world:

 [...] Chandran was aware that he had passed the very last moments in his college life, which had filled the major portion of his waking hours for the last four years. There would be no more college for him from tomorrow. He would return to it a fortnight hence for the examination and (hoping for the best) pass it, and pass out into world, forever out of Albert College. He felt very tender and depressed. (178)

The first part of the novel comes to an end with Chandran’s becoming a Bachelor of Arts.

After graduation, one finds an almost alchemic change in Chandran’s life, as he falls in love with a girl. But presently, this change (which in an inclusive sense, is characterised in course of the story at first with Chandran’s renunciation and then with his ultimate re-location with a social identity), is preceded by a traditional phase of experience encountered by any average Bachelor of Arts. After graduation Chandran is undecided as to what he will do next when suggestions/queries about future keep coming in from friends, relatives and well-wishers to such an extent, that he seems to be a victim of ‘a feeling of
persecution’. Chandran’s initial defence to this machinery of counsels is to announce a decision that he would go to England to have a doctoral degree there and then come back with the prospect of some college-lectureship in India. The very idea of going to the West for a suitable career seems to be compatible with the sensibility of the intelligentsia prevailing in India in the colonial period; but here in the present situation, it serves Chandran’s immediate purpose of foiling the rising expectations from the familial corner that Chandran should be up and doing to take up some job in right earnest and shoulder its allied responsibilities. Meanwhile, with no further college life, Chandran enjoys his newly discovered life of freedom by frequently visiting the library to read the books that he had not been able to complete in his college life. Time passes also in the evenings when Chandran takes long strolls along the sands of the Sarayu, inevitably alone since almost all his companions including Ramu, have left Malgudi. The drift towards maturity in Chandran is discernible, as pointed out by Kirpal, at this stage of story with Chandran’s acclimatisation with the absence of Ramu, the same Ramu whose presence gave him once a sense of completion. In addition to his mature attitude to Ramu’s absence, Chandran, who has by now turned adult from an adolescent, has also the privilege of receiving the occasional, yet caring, company of parents as is found in any standard educated Indian family and all this makes Chandran happy. Narayan records this serene and quiet rhythm of Chandran’s life at this stage:

He went on long rambles by the river, returned home late, and sat up for an hour or two chatting with his parents, and then read a little in bed. As he settled down to this routine he got used to it and enjoyed this quiet life. Everyday as he went through one item, he eagerly looked forward to the next and then the next, till he looked forward to the delicious surge of sleep as he put away his book for the night.(181)
But this brief stint of a harmonious existence is however, short-lived, almost symptomatic of the proverbial calm which presages an impending storm -- here a phase of traumatic experiences that ensues in Chandran’s life with his falling in love with a girl called Malathi. Part Two of the novel begins with a direct reference to the situation in which Chandran who has just got past the threshold of adulthood, falls in love. In connection with the description of Chandran’s riverside rambles in the evening as given in the closing lines of the first part of the novel, Narayan begins the second part of the novel:

It was on one of his river ramblings that he met Malathi and thought that he would not have room for anything else in his mind. No one can explain the attraction between two human beings. It happens.(182)

Here the element of authorial omniscience (‘No one can explain the attraction between two human beings. It happens.’) sounds like a prefatory remark that seems to explain not only the unscientific, ‘irrational way’ in which Chandran falls in a love at first sight, but also the manner in which he begins to imagine that the girl too reciprocates his feelings so that there is a strong case for him to marry her. The writer practically sets the tempo for Chandran’s self-delusion projecting the mental set-up of Chandran just before his falling in love; and here, Chandran’s predicament corresponds, fairly enough, to that of any average adolescent in Indian society who for the first time in life comes to discover the mystique of love:

Chandran had been in the habit of staring at every girl who sat on the sand, but he had never felt before the acute interest he felt in this girl now. He liked the way she sat; he liked the way she played with her sister; he liked the way she dug her hands into the sand and threw it in the air.[...]. He would have willingly settled there and spent the rest of his life watching her dig her hands into the sand. But that could not be done. There were a lot of people about.(182)
The trend of thought in Chandran now seems to substantiate, as Kirpal thinks, a search for identity in terms of self-projection that has been propounded by Erikson in *Childhood and Society*. Erikson is of the opinion that the love relationship in an adolescent is just a way of his trying to understand himself; it is but a projection of his ego. Erikson’s analysis seems to help us perceive Chandran’s behaviour and feelings. Even though he lacks the courage to go to the girl and approach her straight way, he believes himself to be in love with her. This passion of love along with a parallel consciousness of cultural constraints of traditional Indian society, supports Erikson’s theory on the one hand and projects an ensuing disenchantment resulting in a crisis of identity on the other. Chandran’s infatuation (the term is rather preferable to ‘affair’), \( f_{07} \) Malathi seems to be pursued at the level of ocular friendship and even though Chandran can not form any fairly accurate impression of Malathi’s face, his passion for the girl is quite intense. Chandran’s dreams and fantasies about the girl also are not unnatural among adolescents in general. As the social constraints deny any sort of contact with the girl, Chandran’s feelings find an outlet only in the imitation of manners in which love-lorn heroes pine for the beloved in the movies.

The thought of her melted him. He clutched his pillow and cried in the darkness: ‘Darling, what are you doing? Do you hear me?’

He hopes also of a similar happy-ending: ‘They would sit in their creeper-covered villa on the hill-slope, just those two and watch the sunset’ (201).

This sort of romantic illusion built on an unreal, flimsy ground no doubt underscores Chandran’s immaturity and innocence. M.K. Naik analyses the self-delusion in Chandran thus: “Blissfully unaware of the fact that he had
only fallen in love with love, he fondly imagines that he has found his soul-mate in Malathi, whom he has casually seen on the river-bank and with whom he has not even exchanged a single word”(12). This element of self-deception is admittedly fated to face the hard blow of reality and while the inkling of this may have been already caught by the readers, Chandran continues to live in another plane of reality that finally caves in.

Quite obviously, the dichotomy of Identity and Role-Confusion is operative again at this point of Chandran’s life when he equates optical communion with love, dream with reality. He begins to live in a world of romantic illusion and cherishes a burning desire to marry Malathi. Gradually, Chandran’s fond illusions seem to be ironical particularly when he goes to the extent of scanning the faces of passers-by to discover any resemblance with his Malathi’s or of indulging in the train of thoughts as follows:

He had every reason to believe that the girl had told her parents she would marry Chandran and no one else. But how could she know him or his name? Girls had a knack of learning those things by a sort of sixth sense. How splendid of her to speak out her mind like this, brave girl.(201)

According to Kirpal, another theory that seems to explain Chadran’s case is that of Dr. Harris’s “probability estimating”. While considering the nature of the adult-functions, Kirpal mentions what Harris thinks in this context: “One of the Adult functions ought to be ‘probability estimating’ says Dr. Harris and adds that, ‘If the adult is alert to the possibility of troubles through Probability-estimating, it can also devise solution to meet the trouble if and when it comes’ ”(120). This element of ‘probability-estimating’ however, is presently lacking in Chandran and this later leads to frustration as one sees Chandran taking the broken affair very seriously. Prof. Naik traces in Chandran an unchanging quality throughout the whole gamut of Chandran’s experiences starting with his
falling in love and culminating in the breakdown of the affair. He sums up the theme *The Bachelor of Arts* in the following manner: "...the romantic illusions of youth and their persistence inspite of the lessons learned from hard experience"(11). But such an interpretation, so to say, does not take note of the element of 'growing up' (particularly stressed by Vineypalkaur Kirpal), in Chandran even amidst his traumatic experiences of love. In fact in the whole fictional ouvre of Narayan, the protagonists are shown to be shifted, according to Jayant.K.Biswal, 'from the plane of innocence and ignorance to that of experience and knowledge' (36). A prominent figure in Narayan criticism, William Walsh also notes the element of 'growth' through 'struggle' in Narayan’s characters trying to come to terms with society.

Thus even in the course of Chandran’s love experiences with its hysterics and heroics, the readers may discern the protagonist’s intention to make a strenuous adjustment of self and a gradual progress to maturity that alone can ensure one an authentic identity.

Some illustrations can be cited stage by stage.

Chandran’s plan to broach the subject to his parents is thwarted by his initial cowardice which in turn is followed by a timely self-respect that makes him regret his cowardice:

> He would be unworthy of Malathi if he was going to be such a spineless worm. Afraid of a father! He was not a baby asking for a toy, but a full-grown adult out on serious business, very serious business.(192)

This sense of assertion is in harmony with his earlier adult-behaviour (as evident in the case of opening the gate noisily during a late-evening entrance to his house in the face of his father). The same urge becomes conspicuous when
Chandran succeeds in announcing straightway that he wishes to marry Malathi, the daughter of D.W.Krishna Iyer. Chandran’s father, sympathetic yet non-committal, is primarily taken aback by such an unexpected outburst of his adolescent cum adult son, but realising Chandran’s earnestness, reacts in a manner any sensible father would: ‘I don’t know anything about these things, I must speak to your mother’(193). Now Chandran has only his mother to convince but she being a typical specimen of traditional Hindu woman, has no voice in such matters. Chandran’s bold proposal shocks and disappoints her for she has so long dreamt of a rich and beautiful daughter-in-law, not the daughter of a petty Head clerk like one D.W. Krishna Iyer. Her initial reaction is a hysterical negative; and a sharp exchange between a conservative mother and a modern son, equipped with Westernised education and outlook, takes place:

‘Chandar’, she tries to reason with him: ‘why don’t you consider any of the dozens of girls that have been proposed to you?

Chandran rejected the suggestion indignantly.

‘But suppose those girls are richer and more beautiful?’

‘I don’t care. I shall marry this girl and no one else’.

At this point, what the mother says, stresses the irony in Chandran’s illusions discussed earlier.

‘But how are you sure they are prepared to give their daughter to you?’
In reply Chandran says: ‘They will have to’.
‘Extraordinary! Do you think marriage is a child’s game?’ (193-94).
Now what the mother says, is an inescapable reality in the-then Indian life and culture. Traditionally, the stars as placed in the horoscopes, both of the bride and the groom and also of the girl’s parents, have to be reckoned with before a social marriage is finalised. But considering that Chandran has grown adamant and inconsolable, his parents relent and prepare for a compromise to the extent that they may be prepared to consider the proposal if it comes from the bride’s side in conformity with the minimum social courtesy or custom. Chandran with his mind still steeped in the Westernised spirit that repudiates indigenous culture, only blurts out: “To the dust pots with your silly customs”. It is obvious that Chandran here ventilates the conflict of generations; but his reaction in the given context, is meted with the unequivocal declaration by his mother that “as long as she lived, she would insist on respecting the old customs”(194).

In this stage of Chandran’s life, the only source of consolation and comfort is his friend Mohan from whose dwelling in Mill’s Street, Chandran can steal a look at Malathi everyday. His musings bred in the company of Mohan betray his most rebellious sensibility as an adult:

“Why should we be cudgelled and nose-led by our elders?” Chandran asked indignantly: ‘why can’t we be allowed to arrange our lives as we please? Why can’t they leave us to rise or sink on our own ideals?’(95).

It goes without saying that these ‘mighty questions’ surging in Chandran’s bosom project him as a veritable Titan at loggerheads with society with a desperate bid to win his own identity. Chandran’s repugnance of tradition at this juncture (though it is recompensed later on with his return to the folds of society) is, at least, a landmark in his journey at this stage of life.

However, Chandran’s efforts to marry Malathi fail. At the behest of his parents, a match-maker is sent to the house of Krishna Iyer to match the horoscopes of
the would-be bride and groom. But unfortunately, the bride’s father sends a regret-letter saying that the marriage can not take place as the horoscopes do not match. Failure to marry Malathi hurls Chandran into an abyss of despair. As a desperate attempt, Chandran writes a letter to Malathi telling her to wait till the malafide factors in the horoscopes are dispelled, but the letter fails to reach her. Malathi gets married to some one else and the world around Chandran seems to come to a standstill. Chandran takes the decision to leave Malgudi for a few days until he can forget his harrowing experiences. Chandran’s father suggests a visit to his uncle in Madras and communications are made to that effect. Chandran leaves Malgudi and here the readers once again note in Chandran, the mettle of ‘growing up’, the capacity to take autonomous decision. As soon as the train enters the platform, Chandran sees his uncle’s son sent for him but sneaks past him and checks in at a hotel. The rest of the story bears proof of Chandran’s capacity for decisions according to his own choice. In the hotel he comes across Kailash, a profligate. Being urged by that fellow, Chandran agrees to accompany him in a nocturnal travail but the nauseating smell of the night life in a metropolis, to which culture Kailash actually belongs, creates a sense of aversion in Chandran. The element of restraint and self-respect which is nourished by familial and religious tradition of Indian life operates in Chandran to enable him abjure, as one sees, alcohol and, the company of a prostitute. When Kailash offers Chandran a drink, the latter dodges the offer in a habitual way:

‘Why not a little beer or something? What a selfish rascal I am!’

‘No, no’, said Chandran with anxiety: “I have made a vow to my mother never to touch alcohol”.

Again, being urged by Kailash, Chandran agrees to accompany him to one of his friend’s house. But crossing the steps before the threshold, Chandran becomes sure that it is the house of a whore in some red-light area of Madras City. Instantly, on the pretext of noting down the taxi-number (of the carriage
that has dropped them there), Chandran leaves the place on a moment’s impulse as if on reflex-action. This act, though motivated again by the indigenous culture within him, displays once more, Chandran’s ability for ‘growing up’, his capacity for authentic decision which, truly speaking, becomes an adult.

However, fleeing from the company of Kailash and leaving several streets behind, Chandran feels exhausted and homesick. For a moment the very thought of Malgudi generates in Chandran a distinctive sense of nostalgia. But the next moment the hidden layers of ‘memory and desire’ centering on the very thought of Malathi and the Kalyani Raga played on shehnai in the celebration of her wedding-notice, create a resistance in him and Chandran decides ‘never to return to Malgudi’(219). The impetuosity of Chandran’s emotion that makes him take so instantly a deterrent attitude, is in itself, an exquisitely adult trait. Narayan reveals here the quick succession of thoughts in Chandran’s mind that on a momenta! fit of de·spair, terminates in a choice for the life of sannyas (renunciation):

Chandran realized that he had definitely left his home. Now what did it matter where he lived? He was like a ‘Sannyasi’, Why ‘like’? He was a ‘Sannyasi’; the simplest solution.[...]. The only thing possible; short of committing suicide, there was no other way out. He had done with the gamble of life. He was beaten.(219)

George Woodcock’s diagnosis of ‘holy withdrawal’\textsuperscript{11} as the only possible retreat for the colonised Indians under the Western prospect of material advancement and individualism (which however seems unrealizable), is worthy of mention here as a point of reference. It is true that Chandran opts for a life of sannyas, \textit{ie}, holy withdrawal; but it will be seen that inspite of being a marker of adult-like behaviour, Chandran’s decision to become a sanyasi falls far short of India’s traditional ideal of renunciation.
What Viney Kirpal thinks in respect of Chandran’s decision, seems to be more relevant to mention here. Kirpal terms Chandran’s behaviour as a consequence of ‘depressive reaction’. In her article she elucidates this kind of psychological behaviour as follows:

Psychologists describe ‘Depressive Reaction’ as a condition brought on by an unusual event – death of a beloved one, break up of a marriage, loss of a job or some impossible situation. Depressive reaction may simply be over-reaction to a situation, but it does not last long because as the situation recedes in his memory the person tends to snap out of it. Suicide is a danger during this condition but spontaneous recovery is the rule rather than the exception in this type of neurotic disorder.(125)

But Chandran’s option for Sannyas is not merely an offshoot of any psychological phenomenon, but also of a search for some authentic entity other than a stereotyped dependence on the human society. One may find some similarity between Chandran’s momental decision for sannyas and the scathing expression quoted from Osborne’s Look Back in Anger: ‘If you can’t be a human being, why can’t you become a saint?’

However, Chandran’s adoption of Sannyas, the life of a spiritual recluse, is not backed by this Western cynicism to asceticism (as has been implied by Osborne); rather the treatment that Chandran receives from people after he has don the ochre garb of a Sannyasi is important in another respect. It betrays the age-old approach of veneration to renunciation in Indian life and culture.

In any case, Chandran’s decision is, apart from its ulterior fate, a distinctive proof of his ‘growing up’, a radical step towards a search for identity. It is noticeable at this point that even in such a crisis of decision making, Chandran’s self has not in any way, dislocated itself from its own cultural roots.
in so far as, he does not forget to inform his family of such an unusual change in his life. With his mind settled for an ascetic life, Chandran writes a letter to his mother asking her not to worry about him and alters his dress and appearance in terms of his new choice of identity. Narayan writes:

[...] the shaven pate and the ochre loincloth, declared him now and henceforth to be a *Sannysi*, one who had renounced the world and was untouched by its joys and sorrows.(223)

Chandran begins a new phase of sainthood but right from the beginning of his new experiences, he lacks the necessary spiritual illumination that conditions such a type of life. But what comes as a redeeming feature in this stage is, his sheer honesty that helps him to realise the hiatus between his inner self and its outer manifestation. That his renunciation is prompted rather by some world-weariness born of jilted love than by a spiritual motive, is unambiguously documented by Narayan:

He was different from the usual *Sannyasi*. Others may renounce with a spiritual motive or purpose. Renunciation may be to them a means to attain peace or may be peace itself. They are perhaps dead in time, but they do live in eternity. But Chandran’s renunciation was not of that kind. It was an alternative to suicide. Suicide he would have committed but for its social stigma. Perhaps he lacked the barest physical courage that was necessary for it. He was a *Sannyasi* because it pleased him to mortify his flesh. His renunciation was a revenge on society, circumstances and perhaps also on destiny.(224)

The urge for self-immolation, largely contesting the materialist pattern of society, can be located in Chandran’s own deliberations during the first few days of his wandering. He would say to himself: ‘Go on: be miserable and
perish'. What follows next is Chandran’s ‘anagnorisis’, so to say, as he has acquired by now, the sensibility to detect the vanity of his odyssey. He diagnoses that his ascetic life (which is feigned) is hopelessly sustained by ‘charity’ given in mistake, given on the face-value of a counterfeit, a product of sheer gratis, ‘which he had neither earned, nor by virtue of spiritual worth, deserved’(226). Through a process of self-analysis, he finds that his present existence is a ‘degradation’ and the factors responsible behind this are ‘Malathi’ and ‘Love’. For a barren, unrequited passion, he has committed as if some sacrilege on family and society:

He had deserted his parents, who had spent on him all their love, care and savings.[...].This was all his return for their love and for all that they had done for him.(226)

This compunction arising out of ingratitude to parents has its roots in the texture of manners and conventions of Indian society that is sanctioned by the age-old tradition of socio-religious heritage which confers on parents the status of *divinity*\(^{13}\) to be compared with Gods:

\begin{center}
Pita swarga, Pita dhārma, Pitahi paramantapā
Pitori pritimapanne priante Sarvādevata.
(Pitr or Father is heaven, and religion, an ultimate object of worship. To satisfy Father is to please all Gods.)
\end{center}

and,

\begin{center}
Pituradhika Mata, garvadharana poshanat
Ato hi Trishulokeshu nasti Matrisama Guru.
(Mata or Mother, who conceives, is worthy of greater devotion than that to the Father. In the whole creation (comprising Heaven, Underworld and Earth, there is no guru or guide comparable to Mother.)
\end{center}
Now, the element of self-reflection serves to purge his mind in two distinctive ways. First, it dispels in Chandran the euphoria – the vanity of his holy appearance devoid of adequate corresponding spiritual qualities. In the second place, his nostalgia for home and parents paradoxically marks the beginning of Chandran’s new search for identity within the real metier – the framework of home in the society. Kirpal traces the psychological pattern in Chandran’s self-realisation consequent upon his disillusionment with the charade as a *Sannyasi*:

‘Instead of trying to come to grips with reality, he is merely trying to escape from it. Seeking good reasons rather than real reasons for his state of mind’ (122). Chandran is convinced that it is all because of Malathi’s mistake that he is where he is today. Interestingly enough, Chandran now completely forgets his own role, his silly infatuation, his blind, unrequited passion for Malathí and takes an emotional, childish, non-rational view of the entire matter:

[...] Women are like that, they enjoyed torturing people. And for the sake of her memory he had come to this. He railed against that memory, against love. There was no such thing, a foolish literary notion. (226)

Thus inspite of showing conspicuous signs of maturity, of ‘growing up’, Chandran’s views are yet to acquire the ability to form a fully mature, decisive attitude to the crisis.

Nevertheless, the extent of maturity so far acquired, is quite adequate to convince Chandran of the inanity of his charade and it is marked by his return to Malgudi to the relief of his parents who are completely unaware of Chandran’s whereabouts during the last eight months or so, and his ill-directed odyssey, that reaches only one point of return – to the folds of certainty, of home and society. Of course, the readers find now in Chandran, another
instance of his ‘growing up’ in so far as, he does not reveal his experiences to his parents in order to make them ‘sadder and wiser’.

However, as an adult, Chandran has now an intense urge to share the experiences of his arduous travails with his friend Ramu, his once soul-mate from whom he has not got even a letter. Ramu’s absence upsets Chandran so much that he relapses to his erstwhile favourite negative philosophy that ‘love’ and ‘friendship’ are terms belonging to the register of the Absurd. It is clear that Chandran’s search for identity through the tortuous journey towards maturity is not yet fully purged of self-delusion. In a bid to deny ‘love and friendship’, Chandran is blind to discover the fact that love and friendship have different forms of manifestation; and if it is his love for Malathi that has made him renounce the world once, it is his love for his parents that has brought him back; and again, though Ramu has become oblivious of their earlier friendship, Mohan has always proved to be a compassionate, sincere ally at hand.

Back home in Malgudi, Chandran slowly discovers that he is now able to lead a normal quiet life which seemed to him some days ago, an impossibility, a threat to individual existence. But at the same time, he also realises that, in spite of keeping himself busy in the garden or domestic tit-bits, he has not yet been able to shake off his feelings of love for Malathi. Chandran feels tormented and he pines for an ideal that can only be realised in a life, ‘freed from distracting illusions and hysterics’ (236). For such a life, Chandran finds two conditions to fulfil. First, he must exorcise himself from the thoughts of Malathi by any means. On the other hand, he must do justice to his increasing awareness that he must be up and doing to hunt out a suitable occupation instead of depending on his parents any longer as a ‘super-parasite’. Chandran is now mature enough to place in proper perspective his last ‘vagrant eight months’ but for which he would have already been now in England on his way to securing some highly paid job in the Education Department. Inspite of his father’s loving and sincere initiatives to send Chandran to England, Chandran, now a matured individual
coming to terms with real-life experiences, gains by now, some insight to re-
terrogate his proposed trip to England as another ‘illusion’, another way of
shirking responsibility. His consultation with Mohan only strengthens his
decision to make a most practical yet novel and challenging course of search
for earning his livelihood. Chandran decides to take up the chief Agency of a
newspaper called *Daily Messenger* if he can manage to obtain it. After the
Malathi episode, Chandran’s parents are now most accommodative in respect
of matters related to their son and so Chandran’s father, who is not initially
happy with Chandran’s choice of vocation, finally does not object to it
strongly. In fact ever since Chandran’s return home, his parents are afraid of
losing him again in case they impose their will upon him and this change in
attitude and behaviour in his parents indirectly indicates their respect for the
independent spirit in Chandran that took its origin during Chandran’s love-
experiences and even before.

However, having secured the Agency (again at the sincere initiatives of his
ever-caring father), Chandran mobilises all his clues and sources available to
expand and establish it in right earnest. As he settles down in his usual round of
professional life, the readers find in him that old Chandran, happy and cheerful.
About an year elapses thus in Chandran’s life which is presided over by
enthusiasm, prosperity and peace.

Chandran’s new existence, marked by a strenuous self-adjustment, comes to
take a new turn as his father visits him in his office one day and asks hesitantly
if Chandran would be interested in a new marriage proposal. Chandran’s
immediate reaction is an unequivocal ‘No’ to all such possibilities, but at the
same time, now far ahead of his earlier rebellious adolescence, he does not feel
like hurting his father’s feelings and apologetically says: “You have taken the
trouble to come so far Father, but I must tell you that I can’t marry, Father”(257). Chandran’s father, most sympathetic as ever, leaves it at that. But
after his father’s departure, Chandran realises that it is difficult for him right
then to concentrate on his work. He realises that his father’s sudden visit practically “opened a lid that had smothered raging flames. It started once again all the old controversies that racked one’s soul. It violently shook a poise that was delicate and attained with infinite trouble and discipline”(258).

Though such ‘over-reaction’ to a situation holds good in Chandran’s case, it seldom has a decisive effect on a person and according to Kirpal, it ‘does not last long because as the situation recedes in his memory the person seems to snap out of it’(125). The immediate impact of marriage-proposal upon Chandran can be explained by the psychological theory of ‘Depressive Reaction’ already discussed earlier. Infact, the marriage proposal leaves bare Chandran’s inner turmoil which being generated by his bitter experiences earlier, have been somehow covered up now by a delicately acquired serenity of social life. Right from this juncture of emotional crisis, Chandran takes some discreet moves that become a mature individual. First, he calls his friend Mohan to resolve this ‘problem’ with his help. For the first time in life Chandran is seen here to make an attempt to encounter reality squarely and even understand himself. Chandran seeks Mohan’s advice regarding what he should do now to do justice to the expectations of his caring parents and also to his personal indifference to marriage. What Mohan proposes as a solution is, in Mohan own words ‘callous realism’ which combines both practical as well as idealistic aspects of the social custom called marriage:

If one has to marry one must do it for love, if there is such a thing, or for the money and comforts. There is no sense in shutting your eyes to the reality of things.(260)

In reply, Chandran fulminates against the very concept of ‘love’: ‘There is no such thing as love’. But what follows next from Chandran after this initial vituperation bears no trace of his earlier adolescent rebellious self who once
repudiated parental authority. Chandran now recognises a mature and dignified ideal of familial and social responsibility:

If I am not unkind to my parents, it is because of gratitude and nothing else. If I get a wife I shall not wrench her hand or swear at her, because it would be indecent. That is all the motif of habitual decent behaviour we see, which we call Love.(261)

It is noteworthy that notwithstanding his bitter memory of a jilted love, Chandran is now increasingly aware of his role in the sphere of familial responsibility and social decorum sustained by traditional Hindu life. Chandran’s discourse with his friend further indicates a distinctive mental development that reflects a sense of self-introspection leading to self-discovery. His experiences distil in him the realisation that he has not yet overcome his feelings for Malathi; he has only succeeded so far, to suppress them for the sake of social and familial adjustment though the intensity of languishment has been tempered with the passage of time. Chandran’s dilemma, which arises out of the new marriage proposal, is however solved by taking a decision that is marked by a caution against any further step to hurt his parents’ feeling once again. Chandran’s option for a toss to solve the serious issue like indecision about marriage bears out the fact that he is at least keen to resolve the crisis which involves expectations of his parents.

Like all the major characters in Narayan’s fiction, Chandran’s journey in *The Bachelor of Arts*, is marked by ‘self-transformation’ which often leads in the words of George Woodcock, to ‘self-discovery’ (17).

It is such self-discovery once again that disproves Chandran’s erstwhile favourite philosophy of denunciation of love the very moment he sees Susila, the girl of his parents’ choice and falls in love at first sight. While returning
home after the bride-seeing ceremony, Chandran’s mind is absorbed in the thoughts of Susila:

For the rest of the journey the music of the word ‘Susila’ rang in his ears. Susila, Susila, Susila. Her name, music, figure, face and everything about her was divine. Susila, Susila—Malathi, not a spot beside Susila. It was a tongue twister; he wondered why people liked that name. (265-66)

A few days later, with the announcement of Chandran’s wedding ceremony, Chandran’s attitude to Malathi also is seen to undergo a distinct change. As he takes stock of his experiences, he begins to judge things in their proper perspectives with a perfect sanity of outlook and impartiality. Chandran begins to realise that Malathi and Susila are to him, the denizens of two different worlds and comparison between them is absurd:

There was a radiance about Susila that was lacking in Malathi[...]. No, no. He checked himself this time; he told himself that it was very unfair to compare and decry; it was very vile thing to do. He told himself that he was doing it only out of spite[...] Poor Malathi! For the first time he was able to view her as a sister in a distant town.(268)

This moderation of outlook owes its origin to the acceptance of social norms and the tradition of Hindu life sanctioned and practised over the ages. This hard-won sanity of approach pervades over other aspects of existence and social identity. The rest of the story projects Chandran’s completely adult and mature attitude to the memory of Malathi as well as his own marital and occupational life. After his marriage with Susila, love, which once existed in Chandran’s philosophy as ‘a foolish literary notion’, now matures into appropriate perception of reality. He has acquired a good, enjoyable job, a
beautiful wife whom he adores and also a friend Mohan whom he trusts as a constant and dependable companion. The narrative of Chandran’s married life scattered over the concluding pages of the book, shows the poetry of such a life with all its pains and pleasures under the spell of youth and love. Experiences of life have a schooling effect upon Chandran now and his earlier negative, nihilistic attitude is now recompensed by the best possible palliatives to generate in him the sense of security – that after all he has learnt the art of making the world of dreams compatible with reality, though at the cost of necessary pangs and sufferings. The conclusion imparts the message that Chandran has grown up. With maturity as the protective talisman, he is now all set to sail into the adult world with his coveted identity – ‘a life freed from distracting illusions and hysterics’ (236).

In the whole fictional ouvre of R. K. Narayan, his protagonists are admittedly exposed to an exploration of his or her existential situation. Prof. Tabish Khair also in his problematising study of Narayan has stressed on the ‘existential’ (232) aspect of maturity in Narayan’s heroes. This feature of Narayan’s characterisation seems integral to the central paradox of his ironic vision of life. Jayant K. Biswal remarks on R. K’s art of characterisation in the following manner: ‘Narayan’s task is to shift his character from the plane of innocence and ignorance to that of experience and knowledge’ (36). A comic genius that Narayan is, he constructs a vision which ensures an ultimate return of erring individuals to the fold of society. Thus Narayan’s characters learn to be sincere through being insincere and their experiences project a journey from ego-centric individualism to an arduous social and self-awareness that ensures a sense of identity in the social community. An eminent critic like William Walsh discerns in Narayan’s heroes an ‘aspiration towards spiritual maturity’ which confers on them ‘a pattern of balance’ (14). Charles R Larson detects in them ‘...an evolving consciousness beginning in isolation and ending in wholeness’ (15).
Now, the crisis of identity faced by Narayan’s heroes may be problematised in the context of Indian English writing where the writer uses a borrowed cultural trope to express an indigenous experience. In defence of Indian English writing R. K. Narayan writes in his essay “A Literary Alchemy”:

[...] “Indian English” is often mentioned with some amount of contempt and patronage, but is a legitimate development and needs no apology. We have fostered the language for over a century and we are entitled to bring it in line with our own habits of thought and idiom.(197)

Consequently, Narayan’s characters are typically Malgudians rooted in the age-old local traditions. In a world of cross-cultural diffusion during the colonial period in India, there is an innate urge in an individual to find a meaning in life, to assert his identity in, to quote Jayant K. Biswal, ‘an imperious world’(67).

In the concluding part of the present survey, the identity-crisis in Chandran of Narayan’s *The Bachelor of Arts* is sought to be contextualised in the perspectives stated above. As a realistic fiction writer, Narayan has his own views regarding the approach that a tradition-bred Indian novelist like him can show to the man–woman relationship. For a writer in any language and of any civilized society, indigenous experiences among other things, supply the materials for an actual presentation of life. In this context, Narayan writes with characteristic sincerity in his essay “English in India: A Process of Transformation”:

In an English novel, for instance, the theme of romance is based on a totally different conception of man-woman relationship from ours. We believe that marriages are made in heaven and a bride and groom meet, not by accident or design, but by the decree of fate, the fitness for a match not to be gauged by letting them go
through a period of courtship but by a study of their horoscopes; boy and girl meet and love develops after marriage rather than before. The Eternal Triangle, a stand-by for a western writer, is worthless as a theme for an Indian, our social circumstances not providing adequate facilities for the triangle. (21)

Thus, a continuous search for the roots of one’s own culture invariably provides a creative writer like Narayan with the best viable means of projecting life in his own form of art. The same yardstick also is applicable to his characters and this holds particularly good for the study of Narayan’s characters. In The Bachelor of Arts, Chandran’s predicament – ‘the urge for freedom from the distracting illusions’ is, as rightly pointed out by William Walsh, embedded in the Indian tradition. By an arduous adjustment of self, Chandran too, like other protagonists of Narayan’s novels, comes out of the trials victorious to assert his own identity in the society. But the point yet unexplored by the major critics of Narayan is that, like other major characters of Narayan, Chandran too, in The Bachelor of Arts, discovers his identity mainly through his search for indigenous roots but only after an adequate measure of cultural appropriation of the Western-realist mode of search for an independent, highly individualised entity. Obviously, what Narayan pleads here for, as an Indian English Writer, seeks to prioritise the indigenous experiences, the “all about us and within” element, to borrow the term from Elleke Boehmer, that should ideally suit the purpose of an Indian English writer like him. This aspect of identity-formation is also largely evident in one of Narayan’s confessions where he validates the artistic potentiality of – ‘endless variations’ in ‘the broad climate of inherited culture’, individual beings with a marked distinction from one another, ‘a society that is not standardized or mechanized’ – as the automatic materials for an Indian writer.
So, the expressions – 'a broad climate of inherited culture' and 'a society that is not standardized or mechanized' suffice to envision the writer's microcosm which offers problems and their solution as well, to the characters. In the context of Chandran's search, it reveals that indigenous culture and tradition with their intricate influence act as the balancing factors for a rebellious adolescent, that Chandran is, in his tortuous Odyssey for an individual entity. The way tradition and ingrained culture operate, inheres every stage of Chandran's life – starting from his escapistic adolescence, passing through infatuation which is followed in turn, by renunciation and finally a resubmergence to domestic and social community. An in-depth study of the novel has been projected so far to elucidate that Narayan's the The Bachelor of Arts is a tale of a quest for an identity that proves to be feasible only through foraging into one's indigenous roots and culture.

Chandran's predicament largely substantiates the most contentious problematic of Indian society: the contestation between prachin (old and traditional) and arbachin (new, non-conventional). This specific contention involves a process of evolution that reaches a spiritual maturity ad via negative.
NOTES


3. Dieter Riemenschneider in his article "British Characters in Indo-English Fiction" considers a comparative analysis of the treatment of British characters in the novels of Anand, Rao and Narayan. He thinks: "... it is not man in general, as with Anand, whose problems are the concern of the author but Indian man in particular; British characters are made to serve the writer's purpose of working out the essential Indianness of his people." Riemenschneider further thinks that, while Rao 'is more interested in India as an idea, it is individual man whose growth and whose search for Identity form the theme of Narayan’s novels... .'Chandran's opinion of Brown reflects in this context that ‘Narayan’s British characters remain rather lifeless and and serve as a means rather people in their own right.' Riemenschneider points out that 'Chandran neither here nor at any time later in his life, especially during the many crises he experiences after he has left his home, is made to reflect on himself as a product of an educational system totally alien to his own cultural background.' (Aspects of Indian Writing In English, 136-149). Regarding Narayan's treatment of British characters, Graham Greene also thinks: "...in Narayan's novels,
though the Raj still existed through the first dozen years of his literary career, the English characters are peripheral ... hopelessly unimportant." (Introduction, *The Bachelor of Arts*, 1978). Elleke Boehmer however finds a trait of postcolonial reverse-discourse in Narayan’s comparatively passive treatment of British characters: “In R.K. Narayan’s early novels, Indian self-sufficiency is brought to the fore through the simple **device of ignoring** the British presence. The British were still in power when Narayan first began to publish, yet in his novels they are marginal. If they appear at all, as in the first scenes of *Swami and Friends* (1935) and *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), they act merely as aggravating but avoidable hindrances to Indian Purposes.” (*Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 175-176). Emphasis added.

4. Narayan reminisces his experiences of British professors sweet and sour:
“We had professors from English universities to teach literature, which I always feel was a blessing. But the professor’s contact was strictly limited to the classroom. When he left the class, he rushed back to the citadel of professors’ quarter and the English club where no Indian was admitted except a bearer to serve drinks”. (“When India was a Colony”: A Writer’s Nightmare. p-231.) Emphasis mine.

5. Erikson finds eight stages of development in the human personality/life. Angela Winters thinks that “identity crisis” is ‘a conflict of self and society’ and in this context it is pertinent to note what she says about stage Five of Erikson’s theory dealing with adolescence (ages: 12 to 18 years) that is described as a phase of Identity vs Role-Confusion conflict:

“This stage could be a book in itself; the teenage years. They are hard on everyone, but especially the child herself. They are aware that they will become a contributor to society (industry) and the search for who they are drives their actions and thoughts. The desire to know what it is they want
and believe separate from what they've adopted from their parents is crucial to their self confidence.”


7. Kirpal in the essay “The Theme of ‘Growing up’ in The Bachelor of Arts: Chandran’s Transition from Adolescence to Adulthood”, tries to connect this ‘selfless service’ or altruism with Chandran’s departure from the accepted codes of conventional middle class life in society in his ultimate settlement as a newspaper-agent. Interestingly, the identity related to newspapers connotes a ‘service’ to the society.

8. Here is Angela Winter’s analysis of Erikson’s theory: Stage Six: Young Adulthood. Ages:19 To 40 Years.Conflict:Psychosocial Development. “Love relationships dominate this stage for all of us and relies heavily on our ability to solve the conflicts faced in stage five. Can you be intimate? Can you be open? Can you commit? Intimacy is referred to as the ability to make a personal commitment and doesn’t necessarily mean sex. Personal commitment, met with mutual satisfaction, make this a successful stage. If unable to handle this stage, an adult will resort to isolation.”

9. See, William Walsh, “Fiction: The Founding Fathers” in Indian Literature in English. Walsh writes about the journey of Narayan’s Malgudi characters: “It is against the presence of the town, finely and freshly evoked, and amid a net of family relationships, each thread of which is finely and clearly elaborated, that Narayan’s heroes engage in their characteristic struggles. [...] .At first the intention is obscure, buried under the habits of ordinary life, personal responsibilities and – since this is India
— a heavy, inherited burden. The novels plot the rise of this intention into awareness, its recognition in a crisis of consciousness, and then its resolution, or resolutions, [...]. This theme ... the aspiration towards spiritual maturity — is sustained throughout Narayan’s work.” (74-75). Emphasis added.

10. See, Joni, E. Johnston, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Psychology* where the author writes: “Although your self-concept begins at birth, it is its during the teen years that your identity really takes shape. According to psychologist Erik Erikson, between the ages 12 and 18 we begin to discover who we are, and, as many parents know first hand, who we don’t want to be. In fact much of adolescents’ rebellion against parents and other authority figures is a healthy attempt to get some space and figure out the lay of the land for themselves.” (“It’s Like, You Know, a Teen Thing”: Chapter 13, Me, Myself and ‘I’, p-215). Emphasis added.

11. George, Woodcock, “Two Great Commonwealth Novelists: R.K.Narayan and V.S.Naipaul” (p-19). Woodcock’s idea has affinity with the traditional, high ideal of *Sannyas* or renunciation:

jneya samniyasi yo na dvesti na kanksati
nirdvandvo hi mahabaho sukham bandhat pramuchyate
(He who neither distates nor desires should be known as one who has ever the spirit of renunciation: for free from dualities, he is released easily, O Arjuna, from bondage.) *Srimad Bhagavadagita*
V-III. Translation added.


13. ‘Pitristuti’ and ‘Matristuti’ in traditional reference. Also comparable,
Deba Pitrikarjyadhyang na pramaditavyam
Matridevo bhaba Pitridevo bhaba
(Taittiriya Upanishad, 1.11.2)


16. Elleke Boehmer uses the expression as the title of her analysis of indigenous writing included in Chapter 6, Postcolonialism and Beyond. Boehmer mentions some writers like, Oodegaroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) and Archie Weller (aboriginal or ‘Koori’ writers of Australia), and Canadian Beatrice Culleton as representative indigenous writers who ‘identify with the vision and objectives of other postcolonial writing: the quest for personal and racial/cultural identity, the belief that writing is an integral part of self-definition, the emphasis on historical reconstruction.’ (Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, pp.228-229).

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