Chapter Three:

The English Teacher:
Search for Roots
CHAPTER THREE

THE ENGLISH TEACHER: SEARCH FOR ROOTS.

The very concept of 'rootlessness', the loss of one's own cultural moorings, can justifiably be claimed to be characteristic, more or less, of any realist fiction writer of a nation that inscribes an experience of colonisation leading to a distinctive cultural marginalisation. Thus the theme of alienation with the search for one's cultural roots, in a way, forms a major issue in Indian English Fiction, though its perception and treatment differ from one writer to another. But in the case of R.K. Narayan, who is essentially a writer of the 'individual', the idea of 'roots' is, interestingly, not merely confined to the search of his characters only. Instead, it is seen to form a major part of his writerly self also.

As it has been already mentioned earlier in this book, R. K. Narayan once said to Ved Mehta that having roots in family and religion is the essential quality of being a good writer.

It is obvious that in the fictional world of Narayan, family stands for the unitary form of life that determines the pattern of life in community/society. The format of relationships among the members of the family, the protocols of behaviour that have been sanctioned by tradition, provide the individual with the immediate space where his/her sensibility operates. On the other hand, 'roots' in religion do not necessarily imply an overt, uncritical and biased valorisation of a particular creed in Narayan's novels as critics like Naipaul try to suggest. Instead, they validate Narayan's claim to be a 'realistic' writer who aspires to revive his tradition within the Euro-centric norm of fiction writing. Narayan believed that life in the [joint] family with peculiar experiences of 'strains and stresses', an awareness of social realities including the complexities of the caste system and an acknowledgement of the religious/philosophical dimension of Indian life (the existence of gods, demons and others in the Indian psyche) -- are essential in 'any accurate portrayal of
life'. Therefore, the idea of discovering roots in a society and civilization – in one's own tradition, values of culture and philosophy, the local milieu changing with the approach of modernity, the alteration of family system, and in one's own community affiliations – is important in Narayan's development as a writer.

Naturally, any study in this direction includes the perception of the multiform Indian life, not only in its social conventions and customs that constantly show a negotiation of the emerging reality of Western influence, but also in the cultural, philosophical, religious and spiritual ideology and values. The novels of Narayan aesthetically project the multiplex character of the Indian way of life -- where incompatibilities like predictability and unpredictability, illusion and reality, chance and mischance, sanctity and sin coalesce under the presiding influence of the law of life. In the Indian context, this 'law of life' is perceptible to the individual self only when it (the self) is qualified by such attributes as the primeaval simplicity of approach and innocence and an enlightened notion of *Karma* or role-playing. The scientific and rationalistic framework of Western thought after all, can not offer these concepts as arguments.

Narayan's *The English Teacher* (1945) is, in a way, the story of Krishnan, the protagonist whose search for his cultural roots takes him along a process of evolution to forge independently a philosophy to assimilate his emotional, intellectual and spiritual ties with his country or society. In course of the novel, Krishnan, the English teacher of Albert Mission College where he was once a student, finally resigns his post in favour of an option for teaching in a nursery school of an indigenous model. Such an evolution in his being is prompted not only by his ingrained antipathy for the system of English Education in colonised India, but also by some sort of spiritual enrichment gained after a strenuous meditation and psychic communion with the spirit of his dead wife. Maturity in Krishnan can be traced in terms of his tension between the
conventional modes of existence and the ideal sort of a harmonious existence, sensed in his quest for the inexorable law of life, or truth. After a sort of cultural odyssey of the 'self', acceptance of life is encouraged within the assurance of native culture and tradition. After all, tradition with its pristine, surviving elements, manages in Krisnan's perception, to catch a glimpse of the abiding law of life, something not yet satisfactorily explained by the rationalistic Western outlook.

As the novel begins, Krishnan is shown as an established 'English Teacher' of Albert Mission College who is dissatisfied with the very system of teaching the youngsters for his own livelihood. Intellectually, Krishnan is quite aware of the discrepancy between his aspiration and achievement, and naturally the resultant experience is, a vague work-weariness that spills over the very opening pages of the novel:

The urge had been upon me for some days past to take myself at hand. What was wrong with me? I could not say, some sort of vague disaffection, a self-rebellion I might call it. The feeling again and again came upon me that as I was nearing thirty I should cease to live like a cow (perhaps, a cow, with justice, might feel hurt at the comparision), eating, working in a manner of speaking, walking, talking, etc – all done to perfection, I was sure, but always leaving behind a sense of something missing.

The very beginning of the novel sets the tempo of a search in Krishnan – a predicament faced by any sensitive individual who seeks to problematise the question of identity of the 'marginal' in a colonial society. The ironic recounting of his daily life by Krishnan himself highlights the need for some inspiration that his soul aspires for:
I took stock of my daily life. I got up at eight every day, read for the fiftieth time Milton, Carlyle and Shakespeare, looked through compositions, swallowed a meal, dressed and rushed out of the hostel [...] four hours later I returned to my room; my duty in the interval had been admonishing, cajoling and browbeating few hundred boys [...] so that they might mug up Shakespeare and Milton and secure high marks and save adverse remarks from my chiefs at the end of the year. For this pain the authorities kindly paid me a hundred rupees on the first of every month and dubbed me a lecturer. One ought, of course, to be thankful and rest content. But such repose was not in my nature perhaps because I was a poet, and I was constantly nagged by the feeling that I was doing the wrong work.

In the use of the very expression 'to mug up Shakespeare and Milton', Narayan perhaps attacks through Krishnan the very credo of colonialist education which seeks to iconise the Western literature and history at the cost of marginalising the entire gamut of literature and history of the colonised 'others'. 'To mug up Shakespeare and Milton' and reproduce the same verbatim on the examination-script – have been set as criteria for a brilliant result. Narayan seems to be critical about the faulty evaluation system of the Western education that fails to take into account the intelligence and originality of the learners.

The 'work-weariness' in Krishnan, further aggravated by a 'perpetual self-criticism' as Krishnan himself admits, comes to the fore once again when the Principal summons all the English teachers to his room one day to convey to them his sense of shock after he has noticed a student spelling 'Honours' without 'u'. He describes such an experience of his as a blot on the ennobling efforts of the colonisers to preserve the importance and purity of the English
language. Krishnan can see a sense of pride and supremacy in the role of Brown as a self-appointed custodian of the Indians learning English:

Brown’s thirty years in India had not been ill-spent if they had opened the eyes of the Indians to the need for speaking and writing correct English! The responsibility of the English department was indeed very great.(6)

To Krishnan, all this seems to be a fiasco, projecting an attempt to catch and garner the chaff instead of the grains which alone should be preserved with proper care. His indignation at the supposed gravity of the offence (ie, dropping, ‘u’ from the word ‘Honours’) bursts out in his interaction with Mr. Gajapathy, Assistant Professor and Krishnan’s senior in office. Gajapathy considers such a mistake as ‘disgraceful’ and Krishnan can not help blurting out: “Mr. Gajapathy, there are blacker sins in this world than a dropped vowel’. Krishnan’s position is however unequivocal: the Western colonisers have done a sacrilegious onslaught on the Indian culture and tradition; therefore any mistake on the part of the natives in learning a foreign language is not an unpardonable drawback. Moreover, Krishnan’s approach to the problem is unbiased: acquisition of any language by any foreign learner entails some stumbling-blocks to anyone, irrespective of the rank and status of the learner -- coloniser or the colonised. What happens to the poor fellow who drops ‘u’ from ‘Honours’, may apply as well to Mr. Brown who even after spending thirty years in India, will fail to translate into any one of the two hundred regional languages a simple expression like ‘The cat chases the rat’(6).

In the character of Krishnan, readers notice Narayan’s exposition of the postcolonial urge to ignore the exaltation of the West, a trend well set since the publication of Macaulay’s historical ‘Minute’. Such an urge is characteristic of India’s social condition of the colonial period when the introduction of English Education led to the fragmentation of the traditional models of Education. It is
relevant to discuss here briefly the introduction of Western Education vis-à-vis the conventional modes of education in colonised India.

The traditional systems of education in Tols, Madrashas and Maqtabs experienced an incompatibility with the emerging challenges posed by the Western models of education that came in the wake of the rise of the British power in India. The incompatibility between the two ideals of education had a deep sociological repurcussion in so far as, it led to a distinctive cultural amnesia in the colonised people. To be honest, the traditional model of education in India is seen to be breaking up bit by bit, since the mid-eighteenth century owing to its failure to negotiate the new challenges. The direct patronage of the Britishers began to establish, slowly and steadily, a new form of cultural elitism in colonial India. In accordance with the 1833 Charter of the British Government, the East India Company was directed to work towards the dissemination of English education. Macaulay’s [in] famous Minute in 1835 served to give the imperial sanction for promoting the claims of English Education. It is also worth considering that following the Recommendations of Charles Wood, who was the Chairman of the Board of Control in England, the universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were established. Moreover the Government Circular in 1844 made the knowledge of English compulsory in government jobs. Gauri Viswanathan in TheBeginnings of English Literary Study in British India, has asserted that the spread of English education led to Britain’s ideological control over the people of India – ‘maintaining control of the natives under the guise of a liberal education’ (Oxford Literary Review, 9, 1987,p-17). In her The Masks of Conquest (1989), Viswanathan further observes that Britain’s English Education Policy shrewdly furthered the colonial interests through the controlling tactics of imperial textuality: “A discipline that was originally intended in India primarily to convey the mechanics of language was thus transformed into an instrument for ensuring industriousness, efficiency, trustworthiness, and compliance in native subjects”(93).
However, Krishnan’s repudiation of the standard, mechanical system of English teaching once again comes to the surface as he broods over the probable reaction of his students to his own poem on nature composed on his new experience of getting up early for an outing. Reading a poem should be, ideally speaking, an experience in itself. But teaching poetry in the class-room often proves to be a debacle in the absence of an acceptable methodology. The annotator’s desperate efforts to convey a meaning, the teacher’s doubly desperate efforts to wrest a meaning from the annotator and the poet— all transform the poetry class into a gruesome experience that the students have to withstand with ‘grim tolerance’. Through Krishnan’s meticulous choice of words, Narayan throws into focus the failure of the Westernised system of education during the colonial period in igniting vision or creative imagination in the mind of learners, since the system can neither enable the learners to assimilate an appropriated culture nor make the Western culture compatible with the indigenous traditions. Krishnan’s experience broadly corresponds to Narayan’s critical attitude⁶ to the existing system of Education.

The spirit of search in Krishnan does not however subside after its initial outburst as discussed in the beginning of this chapter. One day as he is making roll-calls, one of his students requests him to defer the roll-call to the last few minutes of the class as the process of attendance takes most of the learning hours. The teacher refuses to do so with a showman’s rage and thus manages to silence the murmur with a threat to mark all the pupils absent. Later on, the thought of being strict in the class goads him on to a remorseful self-analysis which has been suppressed by his overbearing consciousness of being an English teacher:

Who was I that they should obey my command? What tie was there between me and them? Did I absorb their personalities as did the old masters and merge them in mine? (12)
Krishnan has the clarity of outlook to take stock of his ‘being’ in the network of the colonial system of education in India:

I was merely a man who had mugged earlier than they the introduction and the notes in the Verity edition of Lear, and guided them through the mazes of Elizabethan English. I did not do it out of love for them or for Shakespeare but only out of love for myself.(12)

Such a clean confession shows Krishnan’s disillusionment with the Western model of education that obstructs conformity between earning and learning. Notwithstanding the lack of personal motivation for teaching in the existing set up, Krishnan bears his cross in his professional life in the absence of any immediate solution. But he is soon baffled further on discovering the incompatibility between the craze for learning literature and the lack of requisite accomplishments, in course of his interaction with one of his students, Ramaswamy. With a characteristic touch of irony, Narayan underscores this vain colonial mentality in the form of a conversation between Krishnan and Ramaswamy. Inspite of his inability to perceive the meaning of a poem, Ramaswamy writes two pages on it in his note book.

Krishnan: Does this poem make no sense as far as you are concerned?
“No sir....”
“Then why do you write so much about it?”
“I do not know, Sir....”(14)

Krishnan expresses his doubts also about the educationists’ insistence on the subtleties and niceties of English grammar which in stead of encouraging, practically impedes the progress of the learners in the colonised society. He
mentions his feelings in one of his classes on composition where he is set at correcting the grammatical errors made by his pupils:

I spent the rest of the period giving a general analysis of the mistakes I had encountered in this batch of composition – *rather very, as such* for *hence*, split infinitives, collective nouns, and all the rest of the traps that the English Language sets for foreigners.(15)

Life for Krishnan is now a mere routine in terms of facing challenges and tackling them in his own way – rising early, going to the college, resolving the problems faced by the pupils, arguing with colleagues over little things, spending the rest of the day in the hostel and then going to bed at night. But a deep-seated insatiety that has been indicated from the very beginning of the novel, coupled with a vague search for an ulterior satisfaction and a source of inspiration, comes into play under the appropriated or acquired placidity of existence. Krishnan’s journey at different levels away from his cloistered and protected existence begins after he receives the unexpected news of the arrival of his wife and daughter at Malgudi. Now, such a prospect of leading a family-life makes Krishnan nervous since he has been used so long to lead a cloistered life: ‘God what am I to do with a little child of seven months?…”(19).

Jayant.K.Biswal observes in Narayan’s heroes, ‘a movement towards ripeness’(33) and the readers find that the initial defeatism in Krishnan breeds finally a sense of confidence in him. Burdened with his primary duty of finding a suitable rented house as his father and his wife have emphasised, Krishnan now feels: “I felt I was someone whose plans and determinations were of the utmost importance to others…”(20).

Though one finds in Krishnan an element of tension regarding the availability of a suitable house, it seems that he grows resolute in his search and finally
finds such a house after his choice. In settling down to a family life governed by youthful passion, love and filial attachment, side by side with his college-job, Krishnan is now able to discover another truth – private happiness leads to public success.

But such a pattern of life graced with marital rhythm and familial harmony is, however not to last long because the change from the cloistered life to that of a family within a community does not augur well for Krishnan when his wife Susila dies a premature death. Interestingly, the circumstances in which Susila falls ill and dies of typhoid, have a striking resemblance to Narayan’s personal experiences as recorded in his autobiography My Days.

However, such an unforeseen catastrophe in personal life hurls Krishnan into an abysmal depth of despair and gloom. Here at this stage of Krishnan’s life, as a critic Ian Mackean observes, the element of unpredictability that has begun encroaching upon Krishnan’s life ever since he had moved out of his cloistered existence in the college hostel, delivers its severest blow and life almost comes to a standstill for Krishnan. But true to the mettle of Narayan’s heroes, Krishnan also shows the power of adapting himself to the changed circumstances. Right from his disastrous experiences in life, Krishnan is shown to have acquired a feeling of reality (or ‘truth’ in a broader sense) in his ordeals of life in the new set of experiences. Narayan records Krishnan’s thoughts in the cremation ground with a superb rhetorical touch:

Flames appear over the wall....It leaves a curiously dull pain at heart. There are no more surprises and shocks in life, so that I watch the flame without agitation. For me the greatest reality is this and no thing else.... Nothing else will worry or interest me in life hereafter.(96)
Now, the new responsibility thrust upon him – to keep himself going with an equal care for the little girl to the exclusion of any outside help - makes Krishnan now all set to play the role: “God has given me some novel situation in life. I shall live it alone, face the problems alone, never drag in another to do the job for me…”(97).

Krishnan’s maturity after Susila’s death comes at an astonishing pace. Profound shocks and sorrows in his personal life serve to sublimate his being to a state of a detached stoicism: “Condolences, words of courage, lamentations, or assurances, were all the same. I had become a sort of professional receptacle of condolence and sympathy, …”(98).

The phrase ‘like a receptacle of sorrow and pain’ reveals the significance of Krishnan’s realisation that has moorings in the rudimentary tenets of Hindu Philosophy. A perfectly stoic man, Sthitapragya⁴, remains unperturbed by any blow of sorrow or misfortune. According to The Gita, a balanced individual indifferent to pain and pleasure has the potentiality for an ideal existence. Krishnan’s mental state to some extent (at least a semblance to such an existence), corresponds to the therapeutic ethics of Hindu religion and philosophy. The rest of the story, so far as Krishnan’s action is concerned, is with a fair measure of justice, an exemplification of Karmayoga⁵ or the doctrine of ‘activity in detachment’ as propounded in The Gita.

Death of his wife restores to Krishnan’s life the ‘reality’ that has been so far perceived through the filters of academic perspectives offered by literature or rationalism in a cloistered life. The sterility of Krishnan’s literary approach to life is re-inforced a number of times in his confessions that he has been reading for ‘the fiftieth time Milton, Carlyle and Shakespeare’. Later on, his effort in lucubration to record his impression of the angelic entity of his wife turns out to be a mere copy of a poem by Wordsworth. Again, his venture to read a book on Plato too, is abandoned at the very first chance.
Krishnan’s search for balance in the matrix of the time-tested Indian philosophical convictions is, paradoxically, a reaction to the futility of academic disciplines in countering the basic issues of life and death and thereby providing men with a wholly workable set of values. In one of his attacks on literature as a mere academic discipline in the Westernised world, Krishnan says much later in the novel to his pupils: “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…”(149).

‘The problem of living and dying’ – apparently underscores Krishnan’s or of Narayan, a transcendental mode of reality. ‘Living and dying’ on earth stands, in the Indian spiritual context, for the essence of ‘leela’, the role-playing by the immortal soul on earth across the never-ending cycle of life, death and rebirth. The immortality of the soul and its transmigration across incarnations is an accepted tenet of Hindu scriptures. Such views are discussed at large in authentic books like *Life Beyond Death* written by Swami Avedananda

An awareness of this elemental reality or truth, the originating and regulating factors of life, needs as its seed-bed, a mind purged off all illusions. Krishnan’s urge to eschew every illusion or attachment that blurs the vision of reality or truth is unmistakable:

Living without illusions seemed to be the greatest task for me in life now.[...]. That was the stuff to give humanity, nurtured in illusions from beginning to end! The twists and turns of fate would cease to shock if we knew and expected nothing more than, the barest truths and facts of life. (98)
Ian Mackean has described Krishnan’s experience at this stage as an odyssey away from the ‘academic world’ to the ‘Law of Life’.  

But interestingly, exposure to the barest truths and facts of life fails to lead Krishnan into passivity. Instead, it generates in him gradually, a quest for the ideal approach to life, an approach that will tolerate to some extent the rival claims of self and soul. After the initial fragmentation of sensibility owing to personal tragedy, a re-orientation of approach is born in Krishnan that visualises life ‘with a place for every thing’. 

This change in attitude becomes discernible for the first time when Krishnan overcomes his first inevitable inclination to change his residence after Susila’s death. Gradually, Krishnan realises the invaluable nature of his experiences of life in that house which has subtle links with a happy past. Krishnan is now endowed with an enriched vision to detect the sacrosanct nature of such experiences in the fabric of his ‘being’. He muses: ‘...they were not merely links, but blood-channels, which fed the stuff of memory...’(100). A non-committal attitude to experiences at their evens and odds, is one of the basic teachings of Hindu Shastra and Krishnan’s acquisition of ‘a new peace, new outlook’ fairly echoes his faith in the traditional values of life. 

But this self-adjustment, however complete in itself as the inner discipline, fails to match yet the social identity – Krishnan’s vocation of teaching English in the colonised environment. If Indian tradition and spiritualism restore balance to Krishnan the man, it is the lack of the same roots in his professional life that fails to motivate Krishnan the teacher. The prevalent system of English education in India appears in Krishnan’s eyes to be a fiasco and as artificial as a forcible imposition of one culture on another without a scope of necessary osmosis between the two. The resultant reaction is one of lethargy and lack of interest in Krishnan’s teaching self. The aggravation of these tendencies can not be fully subscribed to Krishnan’s personal trauma; instead, right from the
beginning of his career the development of the teacher in Krishnan is seen to be following a uni-linear progression. One day, as Krishna is preparing to leave for home, he is saddled with an extra-class on language. He implores his senior Mr. Gajapathy to spare him of that trouble on the ground of his lack of interest in language teaching. His feelings bear out a clean note of confession: ‘... as a student I had found language a torture, and as a teacher I still found it a torture’(104).

In fact, any performance when denied the supply of some natural and original sustenance, reverts to a drab and dull discharge of formalities. The same thing happens in Krishnan’s case also: ‘... it seemed to me all the same whether they listened or made a noise or whether they understood what I said or felt baffled, or even whether they heard it at all or not. My business was to sit in that chair and keep my tongue active – that I did. My mind itself could only vaguely comprehend what was being read...’(104).

Right at this juncture of life, where social identity no longer receives adequate spiritual support from within, Krishnan receives a catalytic connexion - a letter from an expert in automatic writing telling him of a possibility of Krishnan’s communication with the spirit of his dead wife.

Proximity with this man and regular sittings with him initiate Krishnan into the mystique peace of the world of the dead and Krishnan’s new knowledge serves as the passport for an entry into a new world of communication. Gradually, Krishnan learns in a process of meditation a power of spiritual perception so as to receive messages from his deceased wife. This spiritual communion enriches Krishna’s life and sensibility so as to make him discover and sift the abiding from the meritricious in personal as well as in professional life.

Krishnan’s strenuous attainment of maturity preceded by his personal tragedy, has its parallel in Narayan’s life. Narayan writes in his autobiography My Days:
The English Teacher is autobiographical in content, very little part of it being fiction. The “English teacher” of the novel, Krishna, is a fictional character in the fictional city of Malgudi; but he goes through the same experience I had gone through, and he calls his wife Susila, and the child is Leela instead of Hema. The toll that typhoid took and all the desolation that followed, with a child to look after and the psychic adjustments, are based on my own experience.(134-35)

Narayan’s actual contact and sitting with one Mr. Raghunath Rao, a ‘spirit medium,’ led him to experience and subsequent realisation (identical with Krishnan’s) that sublimate: sensibility to perceive the world beyond death. Narayan reminisces in his memoir:

Apart from the actual details of paper, pencil, and speed, I began to sense Rajam’s presence at that table. What she is supposed to have said or Rao’s pencil wrote was secondary. The actual presence felt at this sitting in the stillness and dimness of that little room had a profound effect on me. When I went home that evening, I felt lighter at heart.(143)

The professed autobiographical undertone lends to the novel an aura of credibility and Krishnan’s trials and tribulations here acquire an authenticity of real life refracted through the filter of art. Meena Sodhi has diagnosed in this connection, the ‘cross-over point’ (89) of life and Art in Narayan’s fiction. Another critic, Stephen Walker has detected in this context Narayan’s ‘soul-making fiction’ out of ‘literal truth’ and in the opinion of this critic, Narayan’s art here conforms to the Jungian concept of the unconscious:
R.K. Narayan’s early novel *The English Teacher*, which tells the poignant story of a bereaved Hindu school teacher in the last years of the British Raj, can now be said to offer an unexpected instance of autobiographical material used for purpose of fiction. Autobiography, in recent discussions of the genre, has been seen as always verging on fiction; in *The English Teacher*, however, it is fiction that turns out to be literal, autobiographical “truth”. [...] such “truth” may itself be open to further interpretation in the light of the anima concept in the psychology of Carl G. Jung [...].

Ian Mackean has noticed in the fusion of biography and art, Narayan’s conscious effort to break a fresh ground in the art of fiction. In his opinion, Narayan’s identification with Krishnan serves the writer’s artistic purpose to break the boundaries between ‘real life outside the novel and the life within the novel.’ Just as Krishnan faces life without illusions, so Narayan seems to create his novel without the usual illusions of the novelist in terms of fabricating a pre-planned plot and fictitious characters.

The quality of Krishnan’s as well as Narayan’s experiences, has its roots in Indian spiritual life. The Hindu religion views that marriages are made in heaven and life partners remain unchanged through different incarnations in the cyclic order of death, and rebirth. A belief in the immortality of soul and one’s posthumous identity in a different form is ingrained in the Indian psyche, and automatic writing under the influence of departed souls has long been in practice in Indian life. In this novel one finds that the stark emptiness engulfing the life of Krishnan after Susila’s death, finally starts to be dispelled when a spiritual proximity between Krishnan and Susila is established. Krishnan’s sensibility now gets regulated by the assurance of the spirit of his dead wife that she is always by his side with a strict vigil over his thoughts and over what is going on in the mind of their daughter also. This element of spiritual
experience serves Narayan the material - the veritable stuff of writing, thus registering a conscious departure from the Westernised code of writing.

To Krishnan, as to his creator, the spiritual interaction with the dead wife serves to unravel 'a glimpse of eternal peace' that breeds a serenity of soul to take a fresh stock of his experiences and re-define his identity. This element of transformation becomes conspicuous in Krishnan's own confession:

Now-a-days I went about my work with a light heart. I felt as if a dead load had been lifted. The day seemed full of possibilities of surprise and joy. At home I devoted myself to my studies more energetically. The sense of futility was leaving me. I attended to my work earnestly[...].(120)

The required stability in the life of the college teacher originates from his psychic maturity attained through the mystic ways of Indian spiritualism that teach a man to view life and death as the twin sides of the same coin of existence. The stability manifests itself in the form of acceptance of reality as a pre-ordained sequence of experiences. For example, Krishnan who has so far proved himself a loving and careful father all along even in a bleak period of his life, gradually experiences now an automatic, natural drift in Leela's life. During her father's absence one day, Leela has been taken to a nearby children's school by the old lady-attendant of Krishnan's household. The bid has been necessitated 'only to find some way of engaging her mind and keeping her from longing for her mother'(121).

Leela's growing interest in her new school incidentally brings the headmaster of her school in contact with Krishnan to whom this experience adds a new dimension to his search for identity as a teacher. Such an achievement (i.e, the expected dimension) seems to be realised (as Krishnan feels after meeting the headmaster and later visiting Leela's school) only after a departure away from
the mechanised and institutionalised world of adult-education into some primeval, pure and simple experience that is not yet disrupted by any system of the adult society.

The eccentric and visionary headmaster and the children in general of Leela's school bring a Midas touch to Krishnan's self as a teacher. A visit to Leela's school at the behest of the headmaster unravels to Krishnan an epitome of a created universe of pure, unmixed joy. Glittering alphabets on partitioning screens between class rooms, models and paintings of men, trees, animals, skies, rivers with every conceivable playthings made by the headmaster, such as, the see-saws, swings, sand-heaps and ladders - all like the circus party in Dickens's *Hard Times*, stand for the phantasmagoria of such spontaneity and vitality that encourage life.

However, the catalyst in the transformation of Krishnan's realisation is none other than the crazy, visionary headmaster who points out: 'These are the class rooms,[...] For us elders to learn'(124).

The headmaster, a champion of the ideal of childhood, has devoted his life to this nursery school since he received the prediction of death (which however proves false) from a mystic. This futility of prediction by a mystic in the headmaster's life bears an ironic closeness to Krishnan's journey from predictability to unpredictability in his experience of Susila's death which thwarted the doctor's assurance of recovery ('No complications. A perfect typhoid run.'). Ian Mackean stresses thus the role of unpredictability: 'The scientifically-based prediction of life is thwarted by death and the mystical prediction of death is thwarted by in life' (*par* 14). To Krishnan, this headmaster acts as the curtain raiser to the law of unpredictability and the primeval simplicity, spontaneity and natural energy in the world of children, the qualities that are untarnished by the deadening, stifling educational system with its dogmas and principles. The protective measure to save such 'angels',

108
the ‘real gods on earth’, is according to the headmaster, the “Leave-Alone System” as in practice at this school. Such a system in his view does justice not only to the children with versatile potentiality, but also to the elders, who can shake off the stigma of inhibition, the constraints of the adult world:

The Leave Alone System, which will make them wholesome human beings, and also help us, those who work along them, to work off the curse of adulthood.(148)

The headmaster finds his roots, metaphorically speaking, in the children’s world as the space for the ideal kind of living as he has confessed to Krishnan earlier: ‘when I watch them, I get a glimpse of some purpose in existence and creation’(125). After an initial misgiving, Krishnan finally comes to believe in his ideals and views. Though Krishnan is finally seen to bid adieu to his college-job and decide to adopt a more genuine and authentic life-style as a teacher of Leela’s primary school, such a radical decision to renounce the stifling, mechanised world of adult-education is duly preceded by mental preparation coming in the wake of his growing perception of his own tradition and native culture. However, this is the turning point in Krishnan’s life. The emerging reality of a revelation is spelt out by Krishnan in an unequivocal manner:‘I had a feeling that I was about to make a profound contact in life’(125).

Side by side, a continuous spiritual enlightenment acquired through the process of psychic revelation serves to construct in Krishnan, a vision of life free from academic illusions. In this part of the novel, Narayan relates to the supreme knowledge of ‘reality and truth’, a metaphor of fixity and constancy as contrasted with the abiding flux of mundane life. This knowledge of constancy, of truth, of the immortality of soul surviving the cycle of birth-death-rebirth, generates in Krishnan, an urge for accepting an authentic style of living. Krishnan’s consciousness receives such flashes of illumination in course of his
communication with Susila such as --'Time' in the mundane sense is not applicable to the 'spirits' and in the eternal life of spirits, there is no interval between 'thought' and 'fulfilment'. Krishnan receives the message from Susila's spirit: 'Thought is fulfillment, motion and everything'(131). The pilgrim's progress in Krishnan matures with the knowledge that reciprocity of feeling is assured only when the wave-length of Krishnan's thought matches with that of his deceased wife. A tranquil state of mind is the precondition for decoding messages from the spirit world -- 'to receive impressions from our side, the mind must be calm and unruffled'. If such a height of realisation is achieved, the mind may be transformed into that of a Yogi. An excerpt from Susila's telepathic message for Krishnan may be studied in relation to the concept of Yoga, the foundation-stone of Indian philosophy.

By your intense and severe thought you make almost a stone image of me in your brain. Your thoughts must give me greater scope for movement within an orbit of feelings. Your mind may now be compared to the body of a yogi who sits motionless...

(160)

A strenuous effort is necessary therefore, to acquire such a power that offers a key to this new world. This self-development comes to be evident in the most enchanting episode of Krishnan's life leading him to a world of vague perceptions. A 'staunch belief' serves as the indispensable password into a spiritual solace by designating a complex site of self-realisation. Krishnan remembers Susila's message: 'at first it will be a matter of belief'. Krishnan's confession comes out:

I clung to it first; "Belief, belief". Above reason, scepticism, and even immediate failures I clung to it. "I do meet her when I sit down, and she is with me when I sit with my mind passive, calling her," I repeated to myself night and day, and it wrought a curious success.(169)
This spiritual proximity becomes prominent in the following message from Susila:

I am present at your side when you sit for development and communion. At other times it is as if I were in the next room, aware of the fact of your presence, easily accessible and ready to come at your slightest behest. You may even think of the walls separating us as walls of glass. (170)

In the novel, Krishnan’s spiritual pursuit regulates his life. An eminent literary critic like M. K. Naik however considers Narayan’s treatment of spiritual exercise as something redundant and useless to artistic purpose. Spiritualism and mysticism, however, have their roots in the Indian way of life and by virtue of the sublimating effects of Yoga, these encourage timeless value-systems of Indian life. In his monumental essay, A. A. Tkacheva comments:

Modern life, with its stressful rhythm and a changing flow of various situations increases its thrust on mentality and demands that man be more carefully aware of the temporal relativistic nature of the world of things and the eternal and blissful nature of spiritual being. Personal adaptation to shifts in social life [...] are impossible without yogic practices. Physical health and mental relaxation, the clarity of mind and purity of heart, the power of intellect and the light of human soul are but few fruits of yoga [...].(76-77)

Krishnan’s spiritual experiences in the novel have their anchorage in the trials and tribulations that Narayan faced after the death of his wife Rajam. Narayan admits in his autobiography that his experiences in meditation and mysticism were acquired under the tutelage of a philosopher Paul Brunton who visited
India to study Indian philosophy and mysticism. The supreme pre-occupation of spiritualism concentrates on the elimination of self, which restricts one’s view of personality. In *My Days*, Narayan records his realisation thus:

The full view of a personality would extend from the infant curled up in the womb and before it, and beyond it, and ahead of it, into infinity. Our normal view is limited to a physical perception in a condition restricted in time, like the flashing of a torchlight on a spot, the rest of the area being in darkness. If one could have a total view of oneself and others, one could see all in their full stature, through all the stages of evolution and growth, ranging from childhood to old age, in this life, the next one, and the previous ones. Some how, for the working out of some destiny, birth in the physical world seems to be important; all sexual impulses and the apparatus of sexual functions seem relevant only as a means to an end – all the dynamism, power, and the beauty of sex, have a meaning only in relation to its purpose. (148)

In the case of actual living, roots have to receive the influence of the sun and fresh air for survival. The quest for culture therefore presupposes a careful balance between ‘self’ and society. An artist also is required to combine a balance of divergent influences. K. Chellappan, a renowned literary critic, detects in Narayan’s works a quintessence of ‘Indianness as a mode of perception’ that appears to suggest a synthetic quality of Narayan’s vision that allows no binary between the tragic and the comic.

Chellappan’s analysis contends that the change in perception leads to the change in the individual’s playing of ‘roles’: “…in life what matters is to play a role and ‘become’ it…” (53). Krishnan’s resignation from his college-job prompted by a resolution to adopt a more genuine life-style as a teacher in his daughter
Leela's nursery school, is but an instance of a change of his role which is motivated by an inner transformation. Krishnan's search for identity culminates in the matrix of his 'own culture, traditional values' as has been mentioned by the author. The inner transformation in Krishnan is necessitated by two obvious factors – first the pristine simplicity of the children-world, the roots from where we all derive sustenance to grow into adults and secondly, the tedious and rational systems of thought and education derived from the Western culture.

Krishnan's decision to work among children seems to take its origin in the knowledge gained from his wife's psychic communication that children are by nature more in tune with the spiritual realities of life than the adults. After the death of Susila, Krishnan's only ordeal is to play the role of both father and mother to Leela, his daughter. Krishnan's anxiety and tension regarding Leela are retrospectively dispelled by Susila's message:

Children are keener sighted by nature. She sees me, [...] since children spontaneously see only the souls of persons. Children see spirit forms so often that it is natural to their condition and state of mind. (120)

Leela and her friends in the school unravel to Krishnan, a pure, sacrosanct world of spontaneity and naturalness. Their instinctive energy is not stifled, nor inhibited by the moribund educational system or canons of upstart morality in the world of the grown-ups. The headmaster of Leela's school, Krishnan's pathfinder, holds the view that 'children have a simplicity to which all human conduct must be reduced' (140). The headmaster is against such a modern education that consigns 'angels' to a strangling system of data-consumption. In fact, his glorious state of childhood has been tarnished by such an educational system and this is expressed in unequivocal terms:
Most of us forget that grand period. [...], a most balanced and joyous condition of life [...]. And then our own schooling which put blinkers on to us; [...] and made us into adults. It has always seemed to me that our teachers helped us to take a wrong turn. And I have always felt that for the future of mankind we should retain the original vision, [...]. (147-48)

Krishnan’s view of the children’s world as a countermeasure against ‘the curse of adulthood’; finally matures after his wife’s message, and this comes to be more intensified through the influence of the headmaster who forsakes his quarrelsome wife and children to seek his new janma in his school.

The headmaster’s views regarding modern education in Colonial India emphasise the problematic of cultural usurpation by the British leading to a distinctive cultural amnesia in the colonised and the resultant moral bankruptcy:

Multiply your expenses, and look to the Government for support, and sell your soul to the Government for the grant. This is the history of our educational movement. [...]. The main business of an educational institution is to shape the mind and character and of course games have their value. (135)

The goal of education as set by the imperialist policy-makers evokes bitter feelings in Krishnan. With a mounting distaste for the academic bias of modern education that is divorced from ‘truth’, Krishnan (like his creator Narayan) pines for a cultural historiography instead of a mere historicisation of some inane chronicles and literary achievements of a foreign culture:

Why do they make so much of the history of literature? They have to make a history of every damned thing on earth – as if
literature could not survive without some fool compiling a bogus history.[...] I will tell the boys what is sense and what is nonsense. I will tell them that they are being fed on literary garbage and that we are all the paid servants of the garbage department.(150)

The innate urge in Krishnan to re-establish and re-formulate the native culture is enkindled at the offer of the headmaster: 'I want you to take charge of my school and see that it does not go to ruin' (161). Krishnan's initial hesitation at the proposal makes the headmaster ask: 'But do you think you are happy in your work'? It is noticeable that Krishnan's immediate reaction to this question of job-satisfaction is one of helpless cynicism: -- 'But who cares for happiness in work? One works for the money'...(161).

However, he gets over this form of cynicism regarding routine activities and finally we notice in Krishnan an urge for self-development. The headmaster's destiny acts as a sort of revelation to Krishnan who has for all these months, been pursuing self-development as a 'perpetual excitement, ever promising some new riches in the realm of experience and understanding'(168). At this stage, a chance visit of Krishnan's mother has a salvaging effect on Krishnan's sensibility which has been groping for an avenue for self-fulfilment: 'it seemed to restore for a moment one's sense of security, the solid factors of life, and its warmth and interests' (172). After a couple of weeks, she leaves taking with her the grand-daughter who by now blooms with the warmth of a mother's touch. One week-end, Krishnan pays a visit to his ancestral house and finds Leela in 'splendid health', perfectly accommodated to the delightful company of cousins and above all, the presiding affection of her grand-parents. Krishnan comes back and remains preoccupied in his lonely house with the illuminating reflections on the inevitability of loneliness and separation as the 'law of life'.

115
The last chapter of the novel projects the last phase of Krishnan’s journey in his quest for roots (to the exclusion of everything else); for the set of values and the way of life as sanctioned by native culture and spiritual tradition. The very opening lines set the tempo of a Titanic will to cut across all barriers to reach the fountain-head of inspiration:

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. (178)

Depressed with the dissemination of colonial education and culture, he resolves to tender his letter of resignation to the college authority. Krishnan’s grudge against the cultural imperialism of the British educationists is evident in the following lines:

I was going to explain why I could no longer stuff Shakespeare and Elizabethan metre and Romantic poetry for the hundredth time into the young minds and feed them on the dead mutton of literary analysis and theories and histories, while what they needed was lessons in the fullest use of the mind. (178)

Notably, the expression ‘education in the fullest use of the mind’ highlights one of the basic concepts of Indian thoughts and philosophy that all cognitive disciplines, including education, must be basically directed to the development of the mind. Viewed in this perspective, English Education in pre-Independence India only indulges in the appropriation of a cultural sycophancy by the natives:

This education has reduced us to a nation of morons; we were strangers to our own culture and camp followers of another culture, feeding on leavings and garbage. (178)
Through Krishnan’s agonised perception (of being ‘strangers to our own culture and camp followers of another culture’), Narayan perhaps attacks a major sociological trend, a growing tendency for cultural sycophancy in the intelligentsia of India in the colonial period. The colonised middle class with orientations in English began to look upon the coloniser’s language as a model of cultural elitism. This subsequently led to the development of the Babu class. The emergence of this Babu class had its repurcussions and Meenakshi Mukherjee has shown in her book The Perishable Empire how this new form of social elitism served to dismantle the regional language and gradually substantiate the rival claims of the English language and culture.

However, with an acute sense of incompatibility between his inner self and his social entity as a teacher, Krishnan feels depressed with dull methods of teaching. It seems that in the absence of effective teaching methodology, development of true literary sensibility is almost impossible in a borrowed language. Thus even Shakespeare and Keats have been reduced to the level of mechanical examinations and critical notes:

What fool would be insensible to Shakespeare’s sonnets or the ‘Ode to the West Wind’ or, ‘A thing of beauty is a joy for ever’? [...] But what about examinations and critical notes? Didn’t these largely take the place of literature? What about our own roots? (178-79).

Krishnan’s painful reflections remind one of the immortal lines written by Tagore on the character of education in the colonial period: “We rob the child of his earth to teach him geography; of language to teach him grammar…”

Ian Mackean’s essay with a thoughtful title (“What about our own roots?”) is justifiably summed up with a classification of ‘roots’ that Krishnan’s self
quests for:

It could apply to all of us as adults alienated from our roots in childhood; to modern Indians alienated from their native cultural roots; and to humanity as a whole in that, we have become rational human beings alienated from our roots in the unknown. (par 32)

With the unflinching zeal of a visionary or an idealist, Krishnan now hands over his resignation letter to Mr. Brown with a precise but straightforward confession:

Sir, what I am doing in the college hardly seems to me work. [...] It does not please my innermost self [...] Of all persons on earth, I can afford to do what seems to me work, something which satisfies my innermost aspirations [...] I will write poetry and live and work with children and watch their minds unfold [...] (179-80)

Renunciation of a life dominated by the Western cultural influence and withdrawal from the adult world in search of an inner peace bring Krishnan into a realm of experience where this human mind becomes ultimately 'clean and bare and a mere chamber of fragrance' (184). The novel comes to an end with a new vision. The very night of his resignation, Krishnan comes home being enveloped with the aroma of jasmine, coming out of a rose garland given at his farewell. Putting it upon a nail right over his head, Krishnan lies down with his mind vaguely roaming over the day's activities, the farewell meeting and the memories of Susila. The word 'Susila' creates a hypnotic melody in his mind, a lullaby to make him oblivious of his existence. The moments of ecstasy amalgamates past, present and future all in one and Krishnan imagines himself to be waking up to find Susila by his side. The novel concludes with this
apocalyptic vision, a sublime realisation in Krishnan: ‘The boundaries of our personalities suddenly dissolved. It was a moment of rare, immutable joy – a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death’(184).

The surrealistic note with which the novel comes to an end does not appear artistically convincing to a critic like Srinivasa Iyenger. He wonders: ‘Is Krishna dreaming? Is it any more than an apocalyptic vision of Krishna’s psychic ecstasy? Even so, isn’t this a resurrection greater than life!’(370)

In defence of Narayan, one may refer to K. Chellappan’s consideration of Indianness as ‘a mode of perception’. Chellappan finds Narayan’s vision and art embedded in the basic awareness of an Indian view of life in which illusion and reality, the mundane and the spiritual, the cosmic and the human, the tragic and the comic easily exchange places and what matters, is only ‘a change in the mode of perception’(52). When the doors of perception are cleansed, life becomes immense and holy. In such a case, Narayan’s factual narrative of a subdued life suddenly explodes into disorder which is the beginning of order and reveals depths of reality unknown and unexpected. So, in Narayan, there is an Indian rendition of ‘the ambivalence at the heart of reality’ in terms of a fusion / confusion of values, earthly and spiritual…’(52).

In fact, Indian English fiction fits into that form of writing, where the writer attempts an ideal fictional historiography of a nation threatened by the cultural imperialism of colonial powers. Judged from this perspective, Narayan’s The English Teacher is an attempt, in the person of the protagonist, to construct a kind of self-image through the discourse of drawing sustenance from indigenous roots – that re-define the intrinsic cultural, philosophical and social values.

Narayan transmutes here life’s experiences through the mode of aesthetic self-distancing in the persona of Krishnan. In conclusion, it might be said in this connection that Krishnan’s quest is a metaphorical passage of an Indian whose
sensibility drives him through the ordeals of the hybridisation of culture to the assurance of his native cultural roots and traditional values. Such a culture with its original network of values and convictions, strengthened by the 'timeless history' of India, offers materials for Krishnan’s 'proper synthesis of life'. Krishnan’s search for ‘roots’, realised in terms of his own tradition, practically endorses the opinion of Elleke Boehmer: “Tellingly, it is the same transition and cultural change of heart – a move from dependency to self-reliance and greater wholeness – that India as a nation will also make”(176).
NOTES

1. Narayan writes in his essay "My Educational Outlook": “Educational theories have become progressively high-sounding, sophisticated and jargon-ridden (like many other subjects aspiring to the status of a science), but in practice the process of learning remains primitive. In the field of education, the educator and the educatee seemed to be arrayed in opposite camps, each planning how best to overwhelm the other"(106). Narayan is equally dismissive of the examination/evaluation system. In the same essay he recollects his discussion with a teacher of political science who had a progressive outlook on evaluation system. When he expressed surprise at the prevalent system of ‘hiding the questions till the last moment’ from the students, Narayan with characteristic irony explained, “We believe in mugging up; on an average 200 pages per subject, and fifteen subjects in a year. One who can demonstrate that he can recollect three thousand pages in the examination hall will be considered a first-class student in our country, although he need not understand a word of what he reads, or remember a syllable of what he has read after the examination. The whole aim of our education is to strain the faculty of our memory”(109). Emphasis added.

2. The following is an extract from MACAULAY’s MINUTE ON INDIAN EDUCATION, 2nd February, 1835 as discussed in Halsall, Paul’s “Thomas Babington Macaulay On Indian Education”. In his MINUTE, Macaulay exalts English language with a comparative inferiorisation of other native languages like Sanskrit and Arabic:

All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India, contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to
translate any valuable work into them. It seems to be admitted on all sides, that the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can at present be effected only by means of some language not vernacular amongst them.

What then shall that language be? One-half of the Committee maintain that it should be the English. The other half strongly recommend the Arabic and Sanscrit. The whole question seems to me to be, which language is the best worth knowing?

I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic.--But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the Committee who support the Oriental plan of education. (par 1-3).

Emphasis added.

3. Narayan writes in “My Educational Outlook” : “If a classification is called for I may be labelled ‘anti-educational’. I am not averse to enlightenment, but I feel convinced that the entire organisation, system, outlook and aims of education are hopelessly wrong from beginning to end; from primary first year to Ph.D., it is just a continuation of an original mistake.” (p-106)
4. The concept of \textit{Sthitapragya} is explained in \textit{The Gita} by Lord Krishna:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Prajahati jada Kaman sarvān Partha manoggātan}
\textit{Atmanyēbātmna tūshta sthītāprajnostadochyāte}
\end{quote}

(Oh Partha! when \textit{Jiva} forgoes desires arising out of illusions and the mind thus purified, receives satiety in the soul itself, it can be called \textit{sthitapragya}.)

\textit{Srimad Bhagavadgita}, II-55.

(Translation added).

5. \textit{The Gita}, explains the concept of ‘\textit{Niskama karmā}’:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Tasmadsaktā satatāṅg karjāṅg karmā samachāra}
\textit{Asaktā hacharāṅ karmā paramāpnoti purūshā}
\end{quote}

(He who works always without any attachment, deserves the attainment of the Supreme Knowledge.) \textit{Srimad Bhagavadgita}. XI -19

(Translation added).

6. Swami Avedananda has dealt with the existence of the soul even after bodily death in his \textit{Life Beyond Death}. There are references also to the concept of spirit-medium, automatic writing, etc. that Krishnan experiences in the novel. Swami Avedananda’s philosophy regarding afterlife and the soul verges on the doctrines propounded in authentic texts of Hindushastra like \textit{The Upanishads} and \textit{The Bhagavad Gita}.

7. Ian Mackean in his article on Krishnan’s journey in \textit{The English Teacher} describes the change in Krishnan’s perception (that has a close parallel to Narayan’s) after the failure of predictions regarding the recovery of Susila:
Now he is discovering how ordinary people encounter the big issues of life and death, not as seen through the perspective of literature or philosophy, and not in a way that would imply that some profound universal conclusions could be drawn, but as they actually experience it in everyday life. And Narayan himself, insofar as we can identify him with the character of Krishnan, is writing at the level of those ordinary people. He does not adopt the position of a novelist presenting the reader with fictitious characters which he has created, and which are under his control, as for example Charles Dickens does, but in the guise of Krishnan he places himself firmly among the ordinary people, and breaks down the boundaries between real life outside his novel and the life within the novel. Just as Krishnan faces life without illusions, so Narayan seems to create his novel without the usual illusions of the novelist, such as pre-planned plot and fictitious characters. (par 16-17)

8. Stephen Walker even seeks to explain the future course of events in Krishnan’s life like -- the change of his vocation and his reunion (?) with Susila at the end of the novel in terms of the Jungian theory of the unconscious. Here is an excerpt from Walker’s article:

As a reader with his own independent perspectives, I am thus willing and able to accept Krishna's alleged spiritualistic conversations with his dead wife (which Narayan later revealed to faithfully reflect his own experience) as signs of actual Jungian "conversations with the anima," although there is no evidence that at the time of writing the novel Narayan knew anything of Jung or of such a Jungian technique; nor is there any indication of such familiarity with Jungian psychology in the autobiography My Days. [...] (par 24)

Working with young children, cherishing an original and creative vision of education these have come to him through "conversations with the anima"; through such meaningful activity the feminine side of his
psyche has become more "integrated," as the Jungians would put it. When the novel ends dramatically with the actual vision of his wife, we can feel that, beyond the literal meaning of the text (the description of such a psychic phenomenon), it is this integration of the feminine side, of the anima, that is symbolized by the evocation of their reunion. 


10. M.K. Naik writes on the spiritual element in the novel: “Narayan's imagination being certainly not of the type which can effortlessly make the supernatural natural, this tame exercise in spiritualism is hardly convincing” (162). Emphasis added.

11. In the essay entitled “A Poet's School,” Tagore has emphasized the necessity of an ‘empathetic sense of interconnectedness with the surrounding world’. The following extract seeks to validate the poet's idea:

We have come to this world to accept it, not merely to know it. We may become powerful by knowledge, but we attain fullness by sympathy. The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. But we find that this education of sympathy is not only systematically ignored in schools, but it is severely repressed. From our very childhood habits are formed and knowledge is imparted in such a manner that our life is weaned away from nature and our mind and the world are set in opposition from the beginning of our days. Thus the greatest of educations for which we
came prepared is neglected, and we are made to lose our world to find a
bagful of information instead. We rob the child of his earth to teach him
goography, of language to teach him grammar. His hunger is for the
Epic, but he is supplied with chronicles of facts and dates...Child-nature
protests against such calamity with all its power of suffering, subdued at
last into silence by punishment.(116-17).

From *Personality*, 1917. Emphasis added
WORKS CITED


