CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

To recapitulate, we have up to this point attempted to locate the position of Indo-Anglo fiction in the milieu of Indian literature, to recognise the Indianness of the alien language - English, to suggest how both R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao stand apart from the rest and jealously guard the Indian tradition, to seek an answer to the vexed question - "what is tradition?", to probe into the nature of the traditional way of life and culture in the South to identify the distinctive way of life and tradition of South India, to learn the historical background in moulding the outlook of South India, to find out the continuity of that rich tradition even in the modern India, to throw light on the indebtedness and contribution of R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao to the tradition by going through their biographies briefly, and to cull three best novels of each R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao for an indepth study with a view to tracing their artistic achievements to the timeless tradition.

In this final conclusive chapter we attempt to find out the oneness and the difference, in other words, unity and difference between R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao in their mode of thinking, their style of working their influences and their being moulded and guided by tradition.
R.K. Narayan's mother tongue is Tamil. Though he knows Kannada, Sanskrit and English, at heart he remains a Tamilian and carries the distinctive culture and tradition of this ancient land wherever he goes. So in him we find the confluence of the humour of the period of commerce, morality of the era of ethics and the precepts of the age of sages. He is guided by Kamban's *Ramayana* and Valluvar's *Tirukkural*. Thus he becomes the rendezvous of the rich traditions of North and South with more affinity to South. Valluvar says: "He who lives the true life of the house-holder on earth becomes one among the Gods" (4:10). Most of the novels come under the division of Tamil classics - 'Agam' (Domestic Life) where he Celebrates the bliss of marital status and domestic harmony. In him Valluvar lives and in his works marriage opens the door to salvation. Krishnan, the hero of *The English Teacher*, like the author himself leads a contented life and feels grateful to life and death as he could feel his wife's presence even after her death. Marriage anchors Chandran from his rudderless drift. Disturbance erupts in the absence of ideal marriage.

Raja Rao's mother tongue is Kannada, whose foster mother is Sanskrit. His inclination towards Sanskrit is greater. Renunciation has always been an Indian ideal of life and the search for Guru is the beginning of the process and end being surrendering to the Guru. In Raja Rao's novels one can always find this element of Guru and renunciation. In *Kanthapura Moorthy*, a young man, rises above the desires of all sort. He overcomes his desire towards
Ratna, a young widowed girl. He conquers the fear of being excluded from the social and religious functions of the village. He controls his instinctive revulsion when entering an untouchable's house. Ramaswamy in The Serpent and the Rope though physically married to Madeleine, seduced by Laxmi, his friend's wife and spiritually married to Savitri, his search for Guru, 'No, not a God but a Guru is what I need' (P.402) continues throughout the novel till he really meets one. Govindam Nair in The Cat and the Shakespeare becomes the Guru to make Ramakrishna Pai another Guru in the end.

Love is not lust and it is not explicit. It is tender and it is serene. A Tamil Phrase explains that it should be, whether it is before marriage or after marriage, presented like fruit covered by leaves (Ilai marai Kay). In Narayan one can find this 'convention of non-touch as to reflect a certain inner rhythm and a poetic undercurrent of the culture'. (1) Sex is not appreciated for its own sake. It has to emanate in some larger good by continuing procreation. It does not mean the absence of physicality. The normal erotic play is confined to the private domain of the couple, away from the Public gaze. Sexual ecstasy cannot be experienced publicly. Almost like Krishnan of The English teacher one can whisper to his wife that she is 'jasminke (Pg.57) or 'the divine creature' (P-56). Or like Raju and Rosie in The Guide, if the couple is emotionally overwrought, can spend a whole evening on the banks of a river, sitting side by side without apparently shoulders brushing'. (2) This sort of intimacy softly highlights its own tableau of cultural behaviour styles which makes itself felt over and beyond
the individual characterisation. In *Waiting for the Mahatma* Sriram's seizing Bharati though showed as 'an assault conducted', (P.89) presented discreetly under cover of the jungle hideout.

Raja Rao presents the ferocious, aggressive narration of sexual futility by combining ecstasy with revulsion. Raja Rao sneaks us to the bedchamber of RAMASWAMY and MADELEINE in *The serpent and the Rope* to hear the musings and see the scenes:

"Let me smother you in muslin and let me take the lip to its ultimate twist and congression. Madeleine, let me touch you here by the waist from which rises birth, and Madeleine, let me touch you on this right breast, that I lie there as on my death bed, Madeleine ......." (P.160).

How long one can go on like this? The result must be nauseating revulsion and futility. The marriage between RAMASWAMY and MADELEINE fails as they could not stay without touching. And this touching and charming have to come to an end at a certain stage. That is why Govindan Nair in *The Cat and Shakespeare* falls back and does 'namaskar' to the woman he has at last succeeded in enticing to bed (PP 49-53). When telepathy exists, it nullifies sexual action, as with SAVITHRI and RAMASWAMY in *The Serpent and The Rope*. One may, therefore, conclude that Raja Rao's aggressiveness in portraying love scene almost like lust scene is just to bring out the message of futility of sexuality.

To Narayan each character is a man or woman, equally important. He is mainly prooccupied with the role
of each character entrusted to him or her by tradition and environment. Therefore for him the story becomes primary. Whereas to Raja Rao the metaphysical idea is more important and man in relation with metaphysical reality becomes the focus of attention. Narayan's characters are allowed to play their 'life role' during the course of which he or she either matures or drifts to come back in the end to its orderliness. Narayan observes, meditates and allows the character to grow in his or her own way. To the question of Ranjana Kackar of *Probe India* (Sept' 87) regarding his writing process Narayan says: "...... I can't be so self conscious .... It is something unconscious. More things come from the unconscious level than from the conscious one".

3) To Raja Rao the story is secondary. He attempts to explain and explore the metaphysic vision that is embedded in India, in her history, in her religion and culture. Narayan achieves his goal through neat time schemes and fixed personal and Raja Rao through timeless and impersonal qualities of Vedantic philosophies.

To Narayan concrete evidence in continuity and mortality lies in little things. He gives great importance on the value of individual experiences and little things like matching of horoscopes clearly because of the awareness of this continuity and mortality. His love of actual and the concrete makes his imaginary world a transcription of the actual world in which he lives. The happenings and even the conversation in his novels is life-like. The socio-cultural change, the family bonds, the political and religious impacts, the influence of the West on the East, the individual awareness - into all these his
characters pass through quite smoothly. "Actuality one feels, is not being bullied or tricked into false positions. Nor is it being sucked up into some dominating and abstract symbolising system", (4) observes Professor William Walsh. His people and the world are the replica of the real world. Straight-forwardness and simplicity are the hallmarks of Narayan. His tone is down-to-earth, comical and at the maximum mildly ironical.

He allows the problem to be solved by themselves. Chandran lives happily with the girl of his parents' choice. Krishnan regains his paradise by communicating with his wife. Jagan sees off Grace and Margayya is back to the banyan tree to continue his business. Raju by sacrificing himself brings happiness if not, the promised rain to others. Shanti's one-line message brings sense to Mr. Sampath. Vasu destroys himself and the solution to the problems just occur. Narayan beautifully brings out the faith of the local tradition of cyclic order through these natural solutions. Everything withers away without any pain. He never delves or dwells in conspicuous philosophies.

Whereas to Raja Rao characters are the spokesmen of certain metaphysical ideas and the story is secondary. As such he transforms the real world into a world at once metaphysical, ethereal and surrealistic. He wields the wisdoms of East and West with ease. He has to argue, objectify, symbolise and establish to justify his views. Madeleine becomes the symbol of the West in decay and Ramaswamy the superiority of the perennial wisdom of the East.
What Narayan achieves through deceptive simplicity, brilliant realism Raja Rao does with complex profundity, a challenge to the reader.

To the Westerners, Narayan's novels serve as an eye-opener on Indian, especially, the South Indian culture and civilization. The complexities of the Indian Society are made spectacularly lucid in his inimitable style. Meenakshi Mukherjee feels: "R.K. Narayan's novels are so satisfyingly Indian perhaps because they are so authentically South Indian." (5)

Narayan tries to show through the epitome of Malgudi the whole of India. Readers not only see the good but also the bad there as essential parts of life. It is the centrifugal force he radiates from Malgudi. H.Y. Sharda Prasad says: "...... for Narayan the world must come to Malgudi. Even Mahatma Gandhi must visit there to be written about. His art is a variant of Blake's idea of seeing the world in a grain of sand. Malgudi is the magic prism which catches everything that happens in the world. The printer, the primary school teacher, the watchman, the grinder of knives, the painter of sings, the tourist guide, the family planning nurse - none of them is greatly concerned with the goings-on elsewhere. They are worried about themselves. The world is because they are". (6) Narayan with his simplicity is the centre with circumference at infinity. He is completely at peace with himself and his Malgudi surroundings. "Malgudi" observes C.D. Narasimhaiah "is the microcosm of traditional Indian society". (7)
Raja Rao's works open the windows of Indian wisdom not only to Westerners but to Indians as well. The simplicity of Indian life becomes teasing and challenging ideas even to Indians. His encyclopaedic knowledge of Kannada, Sanskrit, French and English; mature understanding of the East and the West; imbibed rich Vedantic heritage; deep love of the folklore, classics, legends and epics; and extraordinary eclectic ability and the capacity of assimilating all these make Raja Rao's books heavier qualitatively. He may travel all over the world, have a foreign wife, live in an affluent country, he always comes back to his mother land where his Guru is. He is the centripetal force that brings the whole earth to his hearth. His "roots hang out everywhere, his centre remains one he is like one of our aswatha trees". (8)

One can trace many more such differences and diversities between these two giants. These seeming polarities of opinion and execution of art are only skindeep. Actually both think, say and do the same thing and finally it is quite apparent that they serve their tradition and culture by reaffirming faith in them.

Both Narayan and Raja Rao represent the Indian sensibility. In the 'Foreward' to Kanthapura Raja Rao speaks about the unifying sensibility which makes every village have its own legendary history where the past mingles with the present and the Gods mingle with the men. He also mentions the assimilating quality of Indianness and the continuity of tradition and culture of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana even in the modern times. The same ideas are echoed by R.K. Narayan in the introductory note, 'The world of story letter' in Gods, Demons and others where
in he brings out the traditional spirit that only goodness triumphs in the end and the sufferings of the meek and the saintly are temporary. He also talks about the inexhaustible vitality of The Mahabharata and The Ramayana which makes people like to hear them narrated again and again.

Both have immense faith in myths, epics, legends, folklore, fables and Vedas as they continue nourishing the tradition and culture of this land. They use symbology on myth material as an excellent artistic solution to various problems. Raja Rao uses myth as a digressional technique and Narayan uses it as a structural parallel.

Both the writers are not only South Indians but South Indian Brahmins. Their pride in being Brahmins can be seen in their strong affinity to an Indian Brahmanic tradition, in their works especially more in Raja Rao as his mother tongue Kannada is the foster-daughter of Sanskrit. They freely adopt the philosophies of de-sensationalisation, limited significance of the human consciousness in the overall Cosmic vastness, etc of the Brahmanic tradition. The Southern philosophy of the deathlessness and immortality of the soul and the northern concept of death is the prelude to life and the cyclic view of life got expression in The Serpent and the Rope of Raja Rao and The English Teacher of R.K. Narayan.
Both advocate the philosophy of matriarchism. In the South especially in the brahmin Community, the bond between widowed grandmother and grandson is more strong. The widowed grandmother survives miraculously after the death of two important males in her life i.e., father and the husband. Widowhood is a torture in this Community. She cannot have intimacy with her son who is the husband of another woman. In such circumstances the grandson comes as an oasis in the desert and makes her life meaningful. Due to her loving, protective nature she becomes the source of all joy and love to the grandson. This nexus of grandmother - grandson occurs again and again in Raja Rao and Narayan in various forms. In Narayan's work she figures as grandmother, aunty, old servant, mother, etc. and in Raja Rao's she appears in the form of mother principle such as Gomata (cow-mother), mother cat, Kenchamma, Kanthapurishwari, Ganga, Bharat and human mothers, grand mothers and old servant.

We find perennial characters in the novels of both of them. Swami, Chandran, Krishnan and others of Narayanan are the reincarnation of the same soul or different stages of same individual. In the same way Raja Rao's Moorthy, Ramaswamy, Govindan Nair are the same individual who searches and becomes Guru.

Both respect the spirit of the individual and not the form. The drinking, smoking, dancing girl Savithi in The Serpent and the Rope is elevated by Raja
Rao to the level of puranic Savitri. In the same novel Ramaswamy's mother's melodious voice was compared to the concubine's by his grandfather. Though Rosie has extramarital relation with Raju in *The Guide* Narayan presents her as an ideal wife because of her devotion to her husband. Thus honouring the spirit is typical Indian tradition.

Every Hindu in the South longs to die at Kasi. This traditional longing is projected by both the writers Raja Rao sings the glory of Kasi and Ganges in *The Serpent and the Rope*. And Narayan shows the pilgrimage of Raman's aunt to Kasi in *The Painter of Signs*. Raja Rao concentrates more on metaphysical plane but Narayan dwells more on ordinary South Indian traditional life and beliefs. For instance he describes the Navaratri doll arrangement in *The Dark Room*, the faith in astrology and horoscopes in many of his novels and stories which are typically South Indian.

'Katha Kalatchebam' or 'Harikatha' is still a crowd-enthraling phenomenon in the South. Through this story-telling the past mingles with the present, the tradition becomes ever living and enlightenment with entertainment reaches the young and the old alike. Jayaramachar in *Kanthapura* through his Harikatha could blend the myth with the freedom movement, past with the present and stir the people to act earnestly and boldly. The Pandit in *Gods, Demon* and others could easily provoke laughter by fusing the Draupadi and her five husband's story with the fear phychos of modern mothers-in-law. Even Narayan expresses an enduring urge to become a "Dhagavadar" (teller of sacred tales).
Both wield the 'alien' English convincingly and comfortably to convey their Indian sentiments and ethos of Indian traditional sensibility with utmost nicety. "Both in their different ways show how unself-consciously and confidently such English can be used". (9)

Both, in spite of their popularity, all over the world, retain their Indianness in all their works. When Narayan was asked by Ranjana Kacker of Probe India to reveal his conscious effort, if there is any, to retain the flavour, the spice of Indianness along with the ethos he said: "If I were to analyse all that, it would be like the centipede who got along nicely till someone asked, "How do you keep account of so many legs"? - whereupon it became so confused that it rolled down into a ditch and died". (10) Indianness is in them like legs of centipede. They belong to the tradition, "that has, from time to time, tried to preserve and restore the classical norms of order and discipline in thought and expression". (11)
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. Ibid., P.45.


