CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, an attempt has been made to analyse the typology of the characters that R.K.Narayan has created in his novels. In the process, this study has traced the evolution of the writer and his genius in character portrayal. It is noted that although Narayan enjoy a general critical consensus as a comic-ironist, his critics often register a note of dissent as regards his unchanging and undeveloping characters. It is also pointed out that the Forsterean terms (flat and round) the other western parameters and even the existing Narayan criticism, although helpful to a certain extent, remain inadequate to fully deal with the preordainedly conceived and traditionally realized Narayan characters.

It is stressed that the protagonists in Narayan's novels, imbibing the spirit of their creator as the faithful follower of the sacrosanct tradition, seem to have been precluded from growth, at least in the material plane of realization, as most of them, in the final analysis, seem to accept the norms and the codes of the society. Since rebellion in the sacrosanct tradition is interpreted as deviation or aberration, the so-called rebels (taken as the deviants) in Narayan's novels almost
invariably withdraw from their rebellion and return to the world of the ordinary life of sanity. Most importantly, the apparently unchanging protagonist seems to have no other go but to remain flat.

It is also underlined that the undeveloping protagonists in Narayan’s novels unmistakably suggest the growth in their consciousness, especially as they seem to realize the illusory nature of their existence (at the end of the novel they are seen returning to the world of normal life). This subtle growth, mainly realized on the mental or spiritual plan of meaning, may not be measured by the parameters mentioned earlier. It is at this that the present typological approach comes into being as a framework, primarily conceived to realize the typical characters in Narayan’s novels.

The present typological study may be regarded as a strategy of employing ‘wheels within the wheels.’ Putting it differently, the general types (stock characters) in Narayan are further considered as the characteristic sub-types (through the typology). For instance, a stock type, namely a student, plays here an innocent type, and a doctor plays an eccentric. Eventually the typology seems to become a strategy to serve a three-tier purpose: (a) to deal with most of the (relevant) characters in Narayan’s novels realized through their traditional trappings, (b) to underline different most used by the novelist to reveal the character-roles in the novels and (c) note the world-view of the novelist emerging out of the thematic development and character delineation in his novels. In fact
the typology is conceived with a modest purpose to underline the basics or the essentials of the novelist.

The character-oriented approach considers four major types of the Narayan character formed on the basis of their overall nature. It may also be noted that the typological frames-innocence, rebellion, eccentricity and sanyasa-seem to accommodate most of the major and minor characters in Narayan’s novels. It may also be stressed that although the types focused in the present study show an unmistakable kinship with the well-known types considered by Ben Jonson, Forster, Scholes and Kellog, and Northrop Frye, they basically have a typically Narayanesque stamp or realization. It may be worthwhile to underline the characteristic features of each typological operation to see how far it fulfils the three-tier purpose and, finally, to deduce certain overall conclusions emerging out of it.

Significantly, most of the characters in Narayan’s novels with their umbilical chord may be viewed through the typological frame likened to a large joint-family. Each typological frame has been realized through its distinct family trait. Thus, the characters in the first typological family seem to share the common trait of innocence. Although every Malgudi character has a nuclear innocence, the first family has only those characters who are primarily realized through innocence. Understandably, the children characters happen to be first to be dealt with. The typological study reveals that most of the children characters,
especially in *Swami and Friends*, have been realized for their commonly known trait of innocence, viewed in the sense of "divine innocence." The children in Narayan’s later novels, for instance *The Financial Expert* and *The Guide*, however, seem to have been projected in the sense of the child being the father of the man. Taken in its entirety the children portrayal may also be taken as a symbolic projection of Narayan’s notion of incorruptible and untainted human consciousness, breathing pure joy and godliness. *Swami and Friends*, being the only full-fledged study of childhood innocence, has been dealt with underlining all the shades of innocence like naïveté, ignorance, et al. The typology has also noted that the novelist seems to project innocence through the brahmacharyashrama. Excepting Swaminathan in (SAF), most of the children play secondary roles. In the final analysis, most of them are treated ironically (creating a kind of innocent humour) and are realized as flat characters. Most importantly, Narayan employs the strategy of rite de passage to suggest a subtle realization (and growth) in *Swami and Friends*.

Innocence is also reflected through the ripe old people passing through their second childhood. The prominent character figuring here is Granny in (SAF). If Granny’s innocence is basically focused through her ignorance of Swami’s modern world, as a character she symbolizes the old values and she remains a flat and symbolic character.
The third spot in innocence is located in the Malgudi rustics who, like their counterparts, basically function as background characters. If they symbolize innocence through their naivete and ignorance, as the collective unconscious they reflect the traditional values and play choric role. Although, basically mute and gullible, the rustics, particularly in The Bachelor of Arts and The Guide, are realized through their assertive and ironic roles of guiding the protagonists. As they are located on the outskirts of Malgudi, they seem to symbolise a protective ring to safeguard the innocents against their deviating tendencies. In the final analysis, the rustics seem to underline the recurring theme of the Malgudi novels, namely, illusion versus reality and emphasize the assertiveness of the average and the ordinary.

Rebellion, the second typological frame, seems to be Narayan's deceptively projected notion of acceptance of the traditional norms. In a way, the treatment of rebellion in Narayan also seems to be the reiteration of Camus's view that the Hindu feels the futility in rebellion as he regards the tradition sacrosanctly and finds his answers in the Indian myths. The typology stresses that the term "rebellion" in the sacrosanct society may mean more of deviation (from the norms) than defiance. The typology underlines different kinds of deviation in Narayan's novels. Although most of the novels seems of focus on the protagonist's deviation from the traditional norms such as Savitri's forsaking the household in The Dark Room and Chandran's in (TBA), for instance, it is
prominently reflected in the form of moral deviation as the deviants are seen flouting the moral codes especially in *The Guide, The Vendor of Sweets* and *The Painter of Signs*.

If the typology of innocence presents different faces of innocence, the typology of rebellion notes that almost every Narayan novel presents a distinctly characteristic rebel dramatizing the basic theme of illusion versus reality. Significantly, Narayan seems to have used the motif of journey to underline the illusory nature of life. The typology also notes that if the protagonists return to the point of beginning, at the end of almost every Narayan novel, suggests the cyclic structure of the novel imitating the Cosmic Order, it also seems to symbolize the normal and sane state of life and the protagonist’s quest towards a life freed from distracting illusion and hysterics. The typology has also noted Narayan’s reiterative employment of the strategy of rite de passage to mark the maturity and growth in the protagonist.

The typology has underlined the preordainedly realized role of the rebels. It is exemplified in Savitri’s rescue from death (The Dark Room), Daisy’s almost accidental exit from the scene, despite her agreement to lead a marital life (The Painter of Signs) and, the sinner’s elevation to sainthood (The Guide) to mention just the few instances. It is also noted that dealing with the rebellion, Narayan has heavily borrowed from the Indian mythology. In fact, every Narayan novel seems to have a mythic soul. But if he has used the Shantanu-Ganga (The Painter of
Signs) and the Bhasmasura-Mohini (The Man-Eater of Malgudi) myths, he also used the universally known stories like David and Goliath (The Man-Eater of Malgudi) and that of Icarus or the Man with Midas touch (The Financial Expert). Again, if most of the protagonists are realized through their cultural trappings and Karma consciousness, most of the novels reiterate the universally known themes of the return of the native or the story of the “Prodigal Son.” The typology of rebellion makes one aware of the grahasthashrama. Although most of the protagonists apparently remain flat and unchanging they seem to suggest a subtle spiritual growth. Raju in (TG) and Krishnan in (TET) may, however, be considered as round characters and Rosie (TG) shows all the potentialities of a round character. In the final analysis, the typology also seems to underline the novelistic roles of the protagonists their comic-ironic realization.

Eccentricity, the third typological section presents the most bizarre kind of human spectacle. Every third character in the Malgudi novels seems to be an eccentric. Eccentricity, as the most characteristic trait of man, seems to be the caricaturist’s presentment of life’s inherent inconsistencies and incongruities. Expecting perhaps, Ebenezar in (SAF), the eccentrics play thematically related roles in the Malgudi novels. Kailas in (TBA), Balu in (TFE) and the Town Hall eccentric in The Painter of Signs may be recalled in this context. As regards their character delineation, the novelist seems to have given them certain distinct roles to play, besides their eccentricity. One recalls the cousin playing Jagan’s alter-ego
(TVS), the headmaster playing Krishnan’s catalyst (TET) and the half-moron playing a ficelle to Raju (TG).

It has been noted that in their distorting appearances and incongruous behaviour is concealed the source of Narayan’s comic laughter. It has also been noted that the comic laughter evoked by the eccentrics has almost invariably a ring of sadness. The mere mention of the headmaster in *The English Teacher* may suffice the purpose. Most of the eccentrics, excepting perhaps Jagan (TVS) and Nataraj (TMEM), play minor roles and remain one or two liners. The one or two liners may also suggest an assertion of the average and the ordinary. And finally, the typology of eccentricity also makes one aware of the third stage of the ashrama-system, vanaprasthashrama, especially through Krishnan in (TET) and Jagan in (TVS).

It is in keeping with the philosophic conception of life that the typological study, which begins with innocence, should culminate into the wisdom denoting sanyasa. In Narayanesque conception of life, too, the typological study, beginning with bramacharyashrama, turns a full circle at sanyasashrama. As in the case of the eccentrics, Narayan’s obsession with the sanyasis becomes quite clear as one notice every Narayan novel having a sanyasi or a character reminiscent of one. The fourth house of the typological study underlines (through Narayan’s presentment of different faces of sanyasa) significant implications underlying the novelist’s notion of sanyasa. As an ideal stage in human span of life, sanyasa --
renunciation -- has been seriously realized, not of course, without the Narayanseque irony in most of the Malgudi novels. Under the pervading and traditionally acknowledged influence of sanyasa, every Narayan novel seems to have something relevant to contribute to the concept of sanyasa.

Taken in their entirety, the Malgudi novels underline unique realizations of sanyasa. If the sceptic Jagan in (TVS), the sinner Raju in (TG) and the Man-eater Raja in (ATM) ironically underline the renunciation motif, they also illustrate the deep-rooted cultural ethos. In fact, the pervadingly felt influence of sanyasa has been presented through every conceivable specimen of a sanyasi: the fake sanyasi sponging on the charitable and gullible rustic’s faith and reverence may be seen in *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The Guide*. The symbolically realized ones, living like ordinary people but imbibing the sanyasa spirit, are seen in *The English Teacher*, *The Vendor of Sweets* presents in Jagan a man of the world, who, although yet to be freed from the human frailty, seems to see the spiritual light to other worldliness and heads towards it. Narayan has two sanyasinis marching away from the world of maya and worldly ties towards their coveted goal of moksha or salvation from the wheel or existence in *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *The Painter of Signs* respectively. Finally, *A Tiger for Malgudi* has a full-fledged sanyasi who, like Rudyard Kipling’s Puran Bhagath, having already discharged his duties in the earlier ashramas, comes to be realized as an exemplary one.
Sanyasa seems to be Narayan's yet another strategy to realize the basic theme of his novel: illusion versus reality. Significantly enough, like all the earlier typologies sanyasa also underlines the assertiveness of the average and the epic of the commonplace. It is here that the rustics with their 'mute force' figure prominently. In the last analysis, the unique combination of the essentially spiritual connotation of the sanyasa and Narayan's characteristically comic perception of it may certainly be regarded as a major source of his therapeutic comedy.

The foregoing analysis of Narayan's characters through the four typological frames has brought into light several findings related especially to (a) Narayan's delineation of characters, (b) different strategies to realize the character's roles and finally (c) the emerging world-view of the novelist. Taken in its entirety the typological study may help one to deduce certain conclusion relating to the craft of Narayan, especially, his characterization. It has been a cliché to regard Narayan as a delineator of middle-class people. Since the typical middle-class milieu constitutes the matrix of all the Malgudi novels, its significance may hardly be exaggerated. The typological study underlines the pervasive influence of the middle-class milieu in Narayan's novels focusing on significant implication underlying it.

Since the conception of his first novella, *Swami and Friends*, Narayan has been peopling his novels with the middle class whom he knows as closely as
perhaps the skin of his palm. He strictly confines to the portrayal of the middle-class milieu. Significantly, all the typological frames underline the average and the ordinary middle-class protagonist as he plays the central consciousness and dramatizes the theme of illusion versus reality. In fact, the middle class portrayal seems to have become Narayans strategy to project several issues.

Basically the middle class offers the novelist an excellent material to dramatize his conception of humanity and the notion of man’s existence. What in fact the middle class milieu brings into light it that although Narayan is fully immersed in his material, and is confined to his South Indian (and Brahminical) middle class, he seems to have acquired the representative in his regional world and thus, in the final analysis, seems to touch the chord of universality, dealing with the tale of the common man. It is through the human spectacle of the middle class that Narayan seems to dramatize the theatre of the absurd. The typology also notes the reflection of the novelist’s autobiographical elements (especially in his trilogy), the clear indication of his sacrosanct tradition and his faith in the eternal spirit of India, through the middle class portrayal.

Again, it is through the middle class portrayal that Narayan seems to fix the family frame (in almost all the Malgudi novels) as the nucleus of his comedies. And, with family, he brings all the related issued like the intricate but inevitable web of human relationship, the idealized notion of family roles, the pervading influence of the cultural and especially the mythological background to underline
the idealized and sublimely conceived past juxtaposed with trivially and ridiculous
ly realized modernity. It is the family frame that seems to become Narayan’s strategy to telescope the protagonist through the traditional trappings, the implication of the (fast disappearing) joint family, the place and image of woman in the Indian (Hindu) household and, the most important member of the family, called Granny, as an epitome of cultural ethos. Most importantly, the typological study considers Narayan’s strategic use of the family frame as the culturally conceived stage offering the subtly suggested ashrama system to underline the characteristic struggle of the Malgudi protagonist. Significantly, all the four typological frames seem to suggest the four ashramas with their underlying implications.

It is through the middle class that Narayan seems to stress the preordainedly conceived and cyclically operating universe. It is the typical middle class that illustrates Narayan’s notion of the transitoriness of life realized through the role-playing motif in the Malgudi novels. Again, if the middle class stresses Narayan’s notion of character, it also seems to illustrate his moral attitude realized in his treatment of man-woman relationship. It is in this context that A.N.Kaul’s observation of the Malgudi milieu appears quite pertinent as he says: “Romantic or passionate love has no place in it. Any deviation from it, any impulse or act that denies its centrality is a prime aberration in Narayan. This is especially true of women.” There seems to be a clear indication that the morally deviated
individuals (Daisy in The Painter of Signs and Rosie in The Guide) are deprived of domestic contentment. Suggestively enough the typology of eccentricity rarely presents the Malgudi women as they seem to symbolize the sanity of the tradition. Again, there seems to be a clear indication that the deviants suffer and the tradition abiders seem to lead a comparatively peaceful and contented life. David Scott puts it thus: “The warning is loud and clear that those who transgress...may not find reintegration so easy”.

Most importantly, the middle class seems to have excellently served the novelist’s basic purpose of presenting the common man’s predicament, the illusory nature of this life and finally, the realization of his folly suggesting also a subtle growth in his consciousness. Putting it differently, the study stresses mostly the flat and unchanging protagonist in Narayan’s novels and his maturing journey or the spiritually realized growth symbolized in his final withdrawal to the traditionally accepted norms. It is in this context that one also notes Narayan’s ultimate concern never with “here and now” but always with “there and for all time”.

If the typological study marks the middle-class milieu as the back-bone for the realization of Narayan’s characters, it equally telescopes irony as the overall strategy the novelist employs for the delineation of his characters. Significantly enough, the analytical study of the characters in Narayan’s novels in their entirety, reveals that the irony, which begins as a technique or strategy to realize his
characters, eventually seems to emerge as his vision. It may also be noted that Narayan, realizing fully the essentially paradoxical and incongruous nature of life, seems to have adopted an ironic attitude to grasp the basically contradictory reality confronting the protagonist. The typology notes the pervadingly employed irony in the delineation of characters and the thematic development in Narayan's novels, and underlines several implications.

To begin with, irony for Narayan becomes an essential device to present the inherent theme of all the Malgudi novels: illusion versus reality. The present study reveals that Narayan delineates most of his characters and presents most of the situations on his novels through ironic filter. In other words, excepting a few characters (mostly the fathers, mothers and a few minor characters), almost every Narayan character seems to have been ironically treated. The typology also notes that the irony has often played a saving grace to conceal a message in Narayan's novels. Significantly enough the typology has underlined the characteristically ironic realization of almost every Narayan novel.

Swami and Friends, true to its image as the pace-setter, has been noted, among other things, for its simple but unmistakable irony. If the title underlines the simplest form of verbal irony as it deflates the readers anticipation for the conventionally realized sanyasi, what seems to be telescoped through the last scene of parting is sense of discrepancy in life as an inevitable element of man's predicament. Narayan underlines the essentially absurd element of life in The
Bachelor of Arts, but the novel seems to equally emphasize the mistaken identity as one of the elemental features of life through the situational irony. Even an apparently grim and serious theme in The Dark Room cannot altogether keep Narayan’s irony out. Through it Narayan marks an ambivalent attitude of Savitri towards her tyrant husband and especially her decision to commit suicide. It also seems to underline the despotic influence of the male-dominated society and expose the tyrant’s double-dealing, touching subtly the comic chord.

Casting Krishnan against the eccentric headmaster, the irony in The English Teacher underlines the paradoxical and inconsistent nature of life. More importantly, as the dead wife (Susila) enlightens her husband, the novel seems to suggest an ‘Eastern answer’ to the universally felt phenomenon called ‘the other side of the medal,’ death. Concealed in the deceptive eccentricity of Krishnan’s family doctor is perhaps the Indian attitude to death. It is here that the irony plays a saving grace as the novel tends to become overtly philosophical. In Mr. Sampath again, the ambivalent and inconsistent attitude of Srinivas seems to become an ironic strategy to underline his end by implication Narayan’s philosophy of quietism and non-doing, nature’s inherent power of balancing the temporarily disrupted peace of the world, the preordained nature of life and, finally, the novelist’s unshakable belief in the eternal spirit of India. The basic irony, besides the apparent verbal irony in the protagonist’s name and the title in The Financial Expert, seems to underline the spiritual realization in Margayya’s rise and fall.
The typology points out how in his case the rise becomes the fall and the fall, rise. The irony also focuses on the thematic relevance in the story of Icarus and that of the "Prodigal Son." It also seems to suggest the Wordworthian epigram: Child is father of man, as Balu, the only son, becomes Margayya's nemesis.

The Guide remains the richest illustration in the context of Narayan's use of irony. The inherent theme of illusion versus reality, the role playing motif and the overall ambivalent nature of the novel lend naturally to irony. The typology notes the ironic treatment of the characters and situations in the novel. At the outset, Narayan seems to employ an ironic strategy to telescope the triangular love story. The typology underlines the basic inconsistency and absurdity in life and marks the totally disparate attitudes of Macro and Rosie and Rosie's ambivalent attitude to her husband, especially after her "fall" suggesting the formidable influence of the tradition on a Hindu wife. Apart from the strategic use of irony in the delineation of characters, Narayan seems to have employed it to focus on (a) the redemption of sin, (b) the mistaken identity and (c) the Karma consequence suggested in the lonely existence of the involved persons. But Narayan's telling irony strikes as the sinner ultimately seems to become a saint, a martyr. Significantly, as the secondary characters like Velan's half-moron brother and his sister practically dictate the life of the protagonist and virtually control the reins of his fate, the typology notes how the 'atomic' creatures explode (devastatingly) in
The Guide, suggesting vividly the extraordinariness of the average and the ordinary.

Irony once again seems to reign supreme in The Man-Eater of Malgudi. It primarily telescopes Nataraj’s altruism concealed in his eccentric role as the lord of the misrule. As Nataraj, symbolically playing David, kills Vasu, playing Goliath, Narayan’s irony reinforces the theme of the battle between the good and the evil. Again, in Vasu’s ironic death, Narayan’s intention of presenting the modern version of Bhasmasura becomes quite clear. In the final analysis, the irony in The Man-Eater of Malgudi underlines the triumphing of the good over the evil, of the ordinary over the extraordinary.

Through apparently dramatized eccentricity of Jagan, besides the irony in his name and the title of the novel, the novelist seems to underline the fundamental ambivalent nature of life. Jagan’s leaving for the forest resort with the bank book marks the ironic realization of his sanyasa suggesting the sceptic’s attitude in the context of the sacrosanct tradition. In The Painter of Signs irony is mostly indicative of the illusory nature of life and its absurd and inconsistent realization especially in the topsy-turvying of Raman’s resolutions and in Daisy’s eccentric behaviour. Looking closely, however, the irony in The Painter of Signs seems to be Narayan’s strategy to underline the nature and implication of rebellion as deviation, Narayan’s traditionally conceived notion of man-woman relationship, and the influence of the sacrosanct tradition. Finally, the fable-like A Tiger for
Malgudi, Narayan's version of the Panchatantra tale, has also come out with a subtle ironic realization as the man-eater (Raja) becomes the practitioner of ahimsa, especially as he is juxtaposed with Vasu, the man-eater of Malgudi.

Considering the use and development of irony in the total corpus of the Narayan novel, the typology notes that Narayan's ironic vision underlines his recognition of the fact that world in its essence is paradoxical and that an ambivalent attitude alone can grasp its contradictory totality. As regards Narayan's character delineation, the use of irony once again underlines the novelist's dealing with the flat characters and the subtle growth suggested through the realization of their folly of getting lost in the illusory world and finally returning to the world of solid existence and normalcy.

As regards Narayan's comedy, one notes that it is in fact a major contributory feature of the novelist's bifocal vision: comic irony. If the irony in Narayan tries to grasp the essentially paradoxical nature of life, his comedy becomes a strategy to perceive the essential incongruity and inconsistency in life. Significantly, Narayan's objective view of humanity and his unsentimental attitude to man's predicament (both constituting the essential features of comedy) are first illustrated in Swami and Friends and faithfully followed in the rest of the Malgudi novels.

The typology notes certain essential features of Narayan's comedy illustrated through his natural creations, the caricatures, and some endearing comic
portrayals. Narayan remains incapable of creating loud and resounding laughter. Instead, one often hears his gentle, subdued and tongue-in-cheek humour. The interspersed comic tone sticks like skin to the body of the novel. Most importantly, Narayan’s acceptance of the totality of life may account for his serious comedy. Narayan’s comedies have an inevitable ring of pathos. The typology illustrates Narayan’s characteristic comedy through two crucial instances: (a) as Margayya (The Financial Expert) faces the death-blow of insolvency, an ice-cream pedlar is heard shouting, ‘ice-cream’ and (b) the festive mode set absurdly Raju’s (The Guide) imminent death.

The typology also considers the sources of the comic laughter in Narayan’s novels. In terms of his characters the novelist seems to have succeeded in evoking a characteristic comic laughter primarily in the portrayal of the odd men. The gift of the caricaturist enables Narayan to present effortlessly most of his eccentrics. It is mostly in the idiosyncratically incongruous behaviour and the odd appearances of the eccentrics that Narayan creates an amused sense. In terms of thematic development, the comicality in Narayan’s novels is located in the dramatization of the absurd or mistaken identity in life.

All the frames of the typology note Narayan’s strategic use of the comic. If one is amused to note the naivete and ignorance of Narayan’s children especially in Swami and Friends, his rustics, mostly in The Guide, and grannies, especially in Swami and Friends, one also notes the underlying world of innocence, the
pervading influence of the sacrosanct tradition and the dynamics of the ordinary characters (especially in the case of rustics) in the above-mentioned instances. The subdued laughter, especially created by the eccentrics, conceals the novelist's suggestion of life's inherent inconsistencies. In fact, Narayan's serio-comic art seems to become an overall strategy for the ironic presentment of illusion versus reality, the basic theme of the Malgudi novels.

Most importantly, it is through the comic realization that Narayan's bugling hero, passing through the mistaken identity of the world as lila or maya, seems ultimately to mature. Putting it differently, Narayan's comedy seems to have become a maturing school for the essentially folly-prone protagonist. It has also been noted that although changelessness seems to be the characteristic feature of the comic characters as they play the 'Cards,' Narayan's 'Cards' do not seem totally immune from change as they suggest their growth. It is here that Narayan's apparently unchanging protagonist seems to defy the myth of the flat character. Narayan's comedy seems to function as a redeeming agent for the wayward protagonist. In a way it acts therapeutically in the case of an erring child. On another level of realization it also seems to imbibe the celebrative and continuity principles of life.

While considering Narayan's world-view (in the context of his novels, that is), it may be noted that despite his non-committal stance, the novelist has been known for his identifiable world-view. Narayan's world-view reflects his
characteristically traditional views regarding human existence, the mysterious phenomenon called life, and the most weird thing known as the universe. Although Narayan’s world-view is reflected in his stray articles, interviews and speeches, his preface to Gods, Demons and Others remains the fountainhead of it. It is through the preface – “The World of the Story-teller” – that Narayan seems to view the human spectacle cast against an enormously realized universe.

In Narayan’s world, regarded as lila or maya, life is essentially conceived as a game of shadows and man as a mere role player. In this Brahma-created and preordainedly realized world, human life, following the strict order of destiny, remains static in its final realization. Human existence also runs according to the inexorable law of Karma. Nature is realized with its inherent power of balancing the temporarily disrupted order of the world. The good is seen triumphing over the evil, often through the intervening of avatar to vanquish the rakshasa threatening the established peace and order. The tradition remains sacrosanct, the Vedas and the Shastras have irrefutable supremacy and are followed reverently.

Significantly, the world-view seems to have been fully mirrored in Narayan’s novels. Like his creator, the novelist too views his (novelistic) human spectacle with amused detachment. Rebellion in the sacrosanct tradition is regarded as deviation (from the norms) and is often seen heading towards his doomed existence. Consequently, change, especially reflected in the protagonist’s attitude or action running against the codes, is always interpreted negatively. It is
in this context that Edwin Gerow’s observation becomes quite meaningful: “The settle order of the customs is in the India view, the fundamental ontological fact; change itself is not seen for what it produces ... as, in other words, a positive factor..... but more negatively as a play of shadows within the stable whole”. This may, perhaps, account for the flatness of Narayan’s characters. The typology has noted a vivid reflection of the novelist’s world-view in all his novels.

Most of Narayan’s novels employ a cyclic structure. It begins with Swami and Friends as Swami is safely brought home from the forest escapade. The circular structure symbolizes the similarly realized cosmic order; the four yugas followed by the pralaya. It also implies the strategic use of journey as the realizing school for the protagonists in Narayan’s novels. Swami (SAF), Chandran (TBA) and Savitri (TDR) seem to illustrate the motif of journey. The circular structure also underlines the recurring theme of most of the novels: the return of the native.

Narayan’s conception of the preordained as predestined world has also been reflected in the Malgudi novels. The typology has noted Ranga’s noticing Swami (SAF), Savitri rescue by Mari (TDR), the sudden appearance of the Master (ATM) and other instances suggesting preordained scheme of the world. Of all Malgudi novels, Mr.Sampath stands out for the vivid reflection of the author’s world-view represented by Srinivas, Narayan’s most meditative protagonist, who says: “Life and the world and all this is passing – why bother about anything? The perfect and
the imperfect are all the same. Why really bother™. In fact it is Srinivas's unshakable belief in the predestined world that prompt him to think of the series of births and philosophize: “It didn't make the slightest difference in the long run ... in the rush of eternity nothing mattered”.

As a corollary to their preoccupation of the preordained scheme of the world, the protagonists in Narayan's novels are often caught musing over their Karma. The typology has underlined several instances reflecting the protagonist’s acute awareness of the Karma consequence and the implications underlying it. It has been noted that when the character like Rosie (TG) quotes Karma the novelist seems to underline its commonly understood denotation: the lot or destiny. But when Karma is referred to by the meditative Krishnan (TET) and by the Master (ATM) it seems to have philosophic connotation and is realized as an inexorable law of life. Finally, Karma also seems to become a strategy to underline the nemesis in the context of the deviant’s aberration. Thus, Balu seems to become Margayya’s nemesis. One also notes its (Karma’s) ironic realization as the ex-convict marches towards his ‘death’ in The Guide.

As “The World of the Story-Teller” specifies, one often notices the suggestively presented triumphing of the good over the evil. If it is consciously fictionalized in The Man-Eater of Malgudi, in most of Narayan’s novels it seems to be symbolically realized in its quieting of the warring elements. The influence of the Vedas and the Shastras in the character portrayal and in the thematic
development has also been underlined as a recurring feature of Narayan’s novels. It is difficult to pinpoint the influence because it is felt like the atmosphere. In the final analysis, it may be said that although the novelist’s world view -- the Hindu way of life -- is faithfully reflected in his novels, it certainly has become the indivisible part of the spectacle of life he presents. So natural is the compound of his world-view and the characteristic quest of his protagonist for maturity.

This study finds it essential to approach Narayan’s characters, rooted firmly in the soil of their culture, through a traditionally formed frame or reference, finding the Western parameter too inadequate to deal with them. The approach explores the myth of the flat character in the context of Narayan’s novels. It seems that the so-called flat characters remain the obvious and the inevitable choice of the novelist dealing with the people specially underlined for their unchanging nature and undeveloping personality. In other words, it has been noted that Narayan as the delineator of the comic and the preordainedly realized middle-class characters finds the flat characters as the only choice. It is in the context of the overall characterization in the Malgudi novels that the typological approach underlines the flatness of Narayan’s characters as the characteristic and not as the limitation of the novelist.

The typological approach notes illusion versus reality as the recurring theme of almost every Narayan novel. The theme of mistaken identity is realized through the characteristic role the Narayan protagonist plays against the
background of the essentially sacrosanct tradition. Most importantly, the strategy of rite de passage seems to underline the symbolically suggested growth of the deviating protagonists. The growth may be discerned in the recurring theme of the Malgudi novels: the return of the native. In short, the typological approach may be regarded as a strategy to focus on the essentials in the craft of Narayan’s novel. What stands out in the end is the essentials seem to have been reflected in Narayan’s presentment of the epic of the ordinary conceived on the stage of the middle-class Malgudi, in his bifocal vision of comic irony perceiving the essentially illusory nature of life, and in his positive vision of life despite it predestinate or karmaic conception.
NOTES


