CHAPTER - V

NARAYAN'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE
BASED ON
CULTURAL AWARENESS AMONG WOMEN

(198-244)
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The word "philosophy" is derived from the Greek word philosophy or sophid which means wisdom. Philosophy, in the sense common people use the word, indicates an adoption of such approach to life that is calm and uncomplaining in defeat or difficulty. A philosopher is therefore a lover of wisdom. Philosophy of life, in the context of women in Narayan's novels, means their attitudes and beliefs and adherence to values inherent in the Hindu social structure in continuity and change, inherited largely by tradition and modified partly by personal observation and experience or necessity. In other words, philosophy of life is similar to a general code of conduct expected from a good Hindu.

Most women of Narayan's Malgudi lead traditional lives, but a few are confronted with modernisation which brings with it newly emerging attitudes and tensions. These aspects of socio-cultural change percolate into the Hindu ethos, but over a very long period of time. The resilience of traditional values in India has been tested time and again by the pressures of the various ramifications of the modern. An account of Narayan's philosophy of life would be truncated if it is based only on the cultural awareness of women. Men, in their individual lives as well as in their roles as fathers, sons, husbands, are equally, if not more, aware of their culture, and therefore inclusion of their awareness, wherever necessary, is essential to present Narayan's philosophy of life as a whole.
Narayan was a supporter of traditional values, of which his first impression was his school-initiation ceremony, and which gives us a foretaste of the kind of philosophy of life expected from his creation of numerous men and women.

**School-initiation ceremony**

In South India, the school initiation ceremony is held on *Vijaydashmi*, a day devoted to the celebration of good over evil. This day is also Saraswati Puja day. Saraswati is the goddess of learning, and her worship is as old as the Dravidian culture itself. Narayan himself was initiated in the prescribed manner. The child is given ceremonial oil bath early in the morning. He is then dressed in a special set of new clothes chosen for school-going on the first day. A new slate, chalk pencil, and an alphabet book are placed on a decorated platrom. Then prayers are offered to the goddess to shower her blessings, so that the child's educational career is successful. A plate of rice and paddy is also placed before the child, who writes the first letter of the alphabet on the grain, his hand being guided by the eldest member of the family. The child is then taken in a modest procession to the nearest school, which is kept open on Vijaydashmi day for this purpose. The child is then made to repeat a short Sanskrit verse, the English translation of which is:

To you, O goddess Saraswati, I bow:
Confer on me your blessings and piety.
Today I begin my career of learning:
Help me fulfil this ambition of mine.

**Marriage: the importance of caste and horoscope**

Marriage is the ceremony of marking the union of man and woman, or boy or girl, as husband and wife, not only for the gratification of sex but also for the establishment of a family by procreation of children.
leading to the perpetuation of the human race. No one can explain the attraction between two human beings. Attraction just happens. It is on one of his wanderings by the riverside that Chandran gets a glimpse of the beautiful girl, Malathi, and falls in love with her. For him, she is the most beautiful girl in the world, and he is bent upon marrying her. He contemplates a suitable solution to one of the major matrimonial problems of the Hindu society:

If India was to attain salvation, these watertight divisions must go - community, caste, sects, subsects, and still further divisions. He felt very indignant. He would set an example himself by marrying this girl, whatever her caste or sect be.

(BA, 56)

As chance would have it, the horoscopes of Malathi and Chandran do not match. Chandran's horoscope has Mars in the Seventh House which means Malathi's death soon after marriage.

In utter frustration, Chandran carries his dejection to the point of renouncing the world and becoming a Sadhu.

But Chandran's renunciation was not of that kind. It was an alternative to suicide. Suicide he would have committed but for its social stigma. Perhaps he lacked the barest courage that was necessary for it. He was a sanyasi because it pleased him to mortify his flesh. His renunciation was a revenge on society, circumstances, and perhaps, too, on destiny. (BA, 108)

**Parentally arranged marriage**

On his return to Malgudi, to his entire satisfaction, Chandran gives up his sanyas and marries Susila, a girl proposed to him from Talapur, a neighbouring town. The marriage is arranged by this parents, and Narayan proves his point that parentally arranged marriages in Hindu society, based on matching horoscopes and consent of parents, are more satisfactory and successful than love marriages.

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Love and sex outside marriage

Narayan does not approve of extra-marital sex relations, but he gives plausible reasons how Rosie and Raju come to have such relations—Rosie as a matter of necessity, she being in search of security and economic independence as well as an opportunity to show her dancing skill to an appreciative audience; and Raju because of Rosie's sexy body and of minting money by becoming her promoter-agent-manager. Narayan's disparagement of such relations is revealed when he shows that they are not enduring, that they break down at some time or the other, and that, as in the case of Raju, they lead to tragic results.

Narayan recollects:

A recent situation in Mysore offered the setting for such a story (the subsequent enforced sainthood of Raju). A severe drought had dried up all the rivers and tanks. Krishnaraja Sagar, an enormous reservoir feeding channels that irrigated thousands of acres, had also become dry, and its bed, a hundred and fifty feet deep, was now exposed to the sky with fissures and cracks, revealing an ancient submerged temple, coconut stumps, and dehydrated crocodiles. As a desperate measure, the Municipal Council organised a prayer for rains. A group of Brahmins stood knee-deep in water (procured at great cost) on the dry bed of Kaveri, fasted, prayed, and chanted certain mantras continuously for eleven days. On the twelfth day, it rained, and brought relief to the countryside.

(My Days, 167)

To Narayan, a novel is about an individual living in a world imagined by the author, performing a set of actions (up to a limit) contrived by the author. But to take a work of fiction as a sociological study or a social document could be very misleading. My novel The
Guide was not about saints or the pseudo-saints of India, but also a particular person. (RG, 9-10)

The novel has two The meslove and sex outside marriage and the sainthood thrust upon Raju's by the villagers of Mangala. According to Raju,

the essence of sainthood seemed to lie in one's ability to utter mystifying statements. (The Guide 52)

The second theme follows from the first. Rosie had a husband with whom she does not bed and a lover whom she cannot wed. There is no Eternal Triangle, because two men do not love one and the same woman or the woman does not love two men.

**Oppressed womanhood**

Narayan tells us:

I was somehow obsessed with a philosophy of woman as opposed to man, her constant oppressor. This must have been an early testament of the Women's Liberation movement. Man has assigned her a secondary place and kept her there with such subtlety and cunning that she herself began to lose all notion of her independence, her individuality, stature, and strength. A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society was an ideal victim of such circumstances. My novel (The Dark Room) dealt with her, with this philosophy broadly. (My Days, 118-119)

This philosophy is a powerful indictment of the position of most married women in Hindu society, even when their husbands have the outer trappings of modernism, such as college education, Western-style clothes, a car, and membership of an elite club.
Narayan's philosophy of life not only explores marital discord but also emphasises the difference between individuals' traits as well as social status in Hindu society. The tragedy of Savitri is as much due to her middle class origins as to her own timid nature. She suffers sorrow and her husband's indifference to her feelings, because she lacks the confidence to fight out her case. She is furious with herself, but is finally reconciled to her fate:

What despicable creations of God are we that we can't exist without a support. I am like a bamboo pole which cannot stand without a wall to support it. (DR, 189)

Savitri has two friends - Gangu and Ponni. Both women said they would neither allow their husbands to bully them in any manner nor let them do anything they do not like. Having an affair with another woman and brazenly flaunting it before their wives is something Gangu and Ponni can never imagine. But Ramani tells Savitri to mind her own business or get out of the house.

The near-tragedy that befalls Savitri, when she discovers her husband's infidelity, is the result of the progressive policies of the Engladia Insurance Company - policies that include training an Indian woman for executive employment. The liberated divorcee, who takes up the job, deprives Savitri temporarily of her vain and selfish husband.

**Transition from life to death and beyond**

The philosophy of love in marriage in *The English Teacher* has much autobiographical content. Narayan describes his experiences, including those of his wife's illness and death, which he did not even remotely anticipate:

More than any book, *The English Teacher* is autobiographical in content, very little part of it being fiction. The English teacher of the novel, Krishna, 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
psychic adjustments, are based on my own experience.
(My Days, 134-135)

The philosophy of The English Teacher is divided into two parts­
the domestic life of matrimonial harmony and the transition form life to
death and beyond. Narayan says:

A reporter interviewed me, and tried to elicit my views
on life after death, which happened to be the theme of my
novel The English Teacher (known in the United States as
Grateful to Life and Death). I was asked if I believed in death.
I was asked if I thought it possible to communicate with spirits.
I was asked if I had seen a ghost, if I was prone to mystic
experience. I answered the questions candidly, emphasising the
fact that I was writing fiction.(RG, 10)

Message for Krishna from his late wife Susila

A few months after his wife's death, a boy came to Krishna and
gave him a letter. It was a bulky envelope. Krishna tore it open. There was
a long sheet of paper, wrapped around which was a small note on which
was written

"Dear Sir,

"I received this message last evening, while I was busy writing
something else, I didn't understand what is meant. But the directions,
address and name given in it are clear, and so I have sent my son to find
out if the address and name are of a real person, and to deliver it. If this
letter reaches you (that is, if you are a real person), please read it and, if
it means anything to you, keep it; otherwise just tear it up and throw it away,
and forgive this intrusion."
He had given his name and address. I opened the other large sheet. The handwriting on it seemed to be different. It began:

"This is a message for Krishna from his wife Susila who had recently passed over... She has been seeking all these months some means of expressing herself to her husband, but the opportunity has occurred only today when she found the present gentleman a very suitable medium of expression. Through him she is happy to communicate. She wants her husband to know that she is quite happy in another region, and wants him to eradicate the grief in his mind. We are nearer each other than you understand. And I'm always watching him and the child." (ET, 106)

Spirits working to bridge the gulf between life and after-life

The boy and his father lived in village Tayur, on the other side of the river, a couple of miles off. The boy took Krishna to meet his father. There was a lotus pond beyond a casuarina tree, and on its bank a temple in ruins. It is said that Sankara when he passed this way, built it at night, by merely chanting the name of the goddess on earth, and it stood up, because the villagers had asked for it. The goddess is known as Vak Matha, the mother "who came out of a syllable."

The man was a chubby and cheerful looking person. He wrote prose-poems since his undergraduate days. He then explained how he happened to receive Susila's message:

It was dusk when I sat down with the pad and pencil. Before the light should be fully gone, I wanted to write down my verse or drama or whatever it was that was troubling me.

I poised the pencil over the paper. Presently, the pencil moved. I was struck with the case with which it moved. I was pleased. All the function my fingers had was to hold the pencil, nothing more.

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"Thanks your", began the page, "here we are, a band of spirits who've been working to bridge the gulf between life and after-life. We have been looking about for a medium through whom we could communicate. There is hardly any personality on earth who does not obstruct our effort. But we're glad we've found you. Please help us by literally lending us a hand-your hand, and we will do the rest...

"You need do nothing more than sit here one or two evenings of the week, relax your mind, and think of us."

And then my hand wrote:

"Here is Susila, wife of Krishna, but as yet she is unable to communicate herself. By and by, she will be an adept in it. Will you kindly send the following as coming from her to her husband?"

And then I received the message I sent you and they also gave me your name and address.(ET, 111-112)

The next message illegible

Krishna and the Medium met a week later. The Medium had brought with him a pad of paper, a couple of pencils, and a pencil sharpener. They took their seats beside the lotus pond near the temple. The Medium shut his eyes and prayed:

Great souls, here we are. You have vouchsafed to us a vision for peace and understanding. Here we are ready to serve in the cause of illumination.(ET, 113) He sat with his eyes shut and, as the dusk gathered round them, utter silence reigned. He poised his pencil over the pad and waited. Suddenly, the pencil began to move. Letters appeared on the paper. The pencil quivered as if with life. It moved at a terrific speed across the paper. It looked as if the Medium could not hold it in check. It scratched the paper and tore the lines up into shreds. Sheet after sheet was covered
thus with scribbling - hardly clear or legible - not a word of it could be deciphered.

**Attempt to turn the other side of the medal of existence called Death**

After a few minutes' interval, the Medium took his pencil to the paper again. His hand wrote:

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We are here, trying to express ourselves. Sorry if you find our force too much for you. It is because you are not accustomed to this pressure. Please steady yourself and slow down. You will have better results. (ET, 113-114)
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He gripped the pencil and steadied himself. His hand wrote:

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Relax, slow down, control yourself, even if you feel like rushing off. (ET, 114)
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His hand wrote:

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We are sorry to put you to this trouble. But please understand that this work may revolutionise human ideas, and that you are playing a vital part in it. This is an attempt to turn the other side of the medal, which is called Death. Please go on for just half an hour today and then stop or if, there are unfinished messages, a maximum of forty minutes. And don't attempt it again for a week more, that is, exactly the same hour, next week this day. We have to warn you that it will take some more sittings before your friend here gets accurate results, but for a start what you are going to receive today will be quite good. Now put away your pencil and then start after five minutes. Your nerves are too much in a tremble, and they must subside. (ET, 114)
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Susila: eager to communicate with her husband

The Medium put away the pencil. Five minutes passed. He asked aloud: "Is my friend's wife here?" His hands wrote: "Yes, she is here". The words covered half a page. Krishna's friend exercised control over his fingers, checked himself, and presently the writing assumed normal form. His hand wrote:

Your friend's wife has been here all along. In fact, we are at this task mainly for her sake. She is so eager to communicate with her husband. (ET, 115)

Krishna told his friend: "Please ask if my wife will be able to communicate now directly." In answer, his hand wrote:

She is very much excited, and she is also not able to collect her thoughts easily. At this moment, she finds it easier to tell us. (ET, 115)

Failure to recollect her child's name

After a few moments, Krishna asked if she remembered the name of their child. The pencil wrote: "Yes, Radha". This was disappointing... Krishna's child was Leela. What was wrong? Krishna's mind buzzed with questions. Back came the answer:

The lady is smiling at the agitation which this name is causing her husband, but she assures him that he need not feel so miserable over it. We've warned you that results will not be very accurate today. There are difficulties. We will do our best and gradually all these handicaps will be removed. Meanwhile, understand that That is as good as it can be. (ET, 110)

Krishna asked his wife how their child's name could ever escape from her mind. The spirits replied:
No. It can't and it has not. You commit the mistake of thinking that she is responsible for giving that name. As matter of fact, it is a piece of your friend's own mind. You see, there are particular difficulties in regard to proper names. We try to get through a particular name - for instance, your daughter's - but since we use the mechanism of your friend's writing, more often than not his mind interferes, bringing up its own selections. This is how you got Radha now. (ET, 115-116)

Susila Watches over her husband and child

Krishna asked how this difficulty was to be surmounted, and whether there was any hope of this being done. The band of spirits replied:

Yes, yes, by and by. Even now your may remember we could got through your name and address the other day and he was able to send for you. But it was an exception: he was ideally unselfconscious and his mind was very passive. It will all depend on our friend's ability to remain passive, and keep his own thoughts out of the field. That's why we have asked him to stop in half an hour, which is the maximum time he can hold his ideas in the background.

The lady wants to say that she is as deeply devoted to her husband and child and the family as ever. She watches over them and prays for their welfare. She is able to see things far more clearly than when she was on Earth, though you are not aware of her presence at times. God's blessings be upon you and the child. (ET, 116)

Krishna's destruction of Susila's letters

Next week, Krishana and his friend sat at the same place and the same hour, with the dusk following around them. The helper-spirits wrote:

We are here. Conditions are favourable. But remember our instructions are to go slowly. Susila, wife of Krishna, is here and will now go by herself. (ET, 116)
Krishan said to Susila: "You wrote beautiful letters". She replied:

And yet you have destroyed every one of them.
You found it possible to destroy them.

Krishna was startled. No one knew about it. In these secrecy of night on the day her condition was found to be hopeless. Krishna sat in his room, bolted the door, took out of his drawer several bundles of letters she had written to him, tore them up into minute bits and burnt them, and he also did the same with a few diary pages he had kept in the first year of their married life.

Krishna asked Susila how she came to know of it. She replied:

By watching your mind. I saw you yesterday as you pulled out your table drawer and reflected. I might not have known it at all, if your hadn't reflected on it every day. For on the occasion you were performing the deed, I was, you remember, passing over, and in that transition stage one is not aware of things. It takes some time before we are able to know things. You have destroyed not only all that I wrote but also all the letters you wrote to me. Was that the reason why you demanded them back from me every time I came back to you from my parents? (ET, 117)

It was an unwritten law existing between them: whenever they parted, they wrote to each other on alternate days and, when they met again, he took back from her all the letters, bundled them up, and offered to destroy them, but she always protested and he just kept them with him.

**Krishna's regrets**

Susila demanded to know why Krishna had destroyed her letters.
He said apologetically that he thought that her memory would torment him. Susia said:
That's how it may appear at first sight. But later, let me tell you, you will be surrounded by everything belonging to the departed. (ET, 118)

Krishna confessed that he felt so vacant the previous day, when he had a longing to see her handwriting and could not find a single letter anywhere.

**Fourteen letters still extant**

Susila reminded Krishna:

You used to be so considerate on the first tow days whenever we met after a visit to my parents. You would not contradict anything I said. Here is a piece of news for you. There are about fourteen letters which have been spared. I don't remember whether they were yours or mine, but I remember tying them in a bundle. You will find them either in my trunk or in one of the boxes at my father's place... Will you please make a thorough search once again? - and if you find them, please don't repeat your previous act. (ET, 118)

**The sandalwood basket : a keepsake**

Susila also wanted Krishna to keep for her sake a sandalwood basket. She had put into it all her knick-knacks. Krishna said he did not think she ever had such a box. She replied:

It is not a very big box - about eight or ten inches long and about four inches wide. The lid of the box is not flat but slightly elevated. I kept my knick-knacks in it. It was given to me by my mother-in-law. Box of ivory and sandlawood. Please find it and keep it. I was fond of it. You may throw away all my other things. They are of no particular value to me.

Krishna said he could not throw the tiniest speck that belonged to her. He would keep everything including that box if he found it. But he was not sure there was such a box.

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**Fretting too much about the child**

At the next meeting, Susia remarked:

You fret too much about the child. Have no kind of worry about her. When you are away at college, you hardly do your work with a free mind, all the time saying to yourself, "What is Leela doing? What is she doing?" Remember that she is perfectly happy all the afternoon, playing with that friend of hers in the next house, and listening to the stories of the old lady. Just about the time you return, she stands at the door and looks down the street for you. And when you see her, you think that she has been there the whole day and feel miserable about it. How you can help it, you never pause to consider.

Do you know that she sometimes insists upon being taken to the little children's school, which is nearby? And the old lady, whenever she is free, takes her there and she has become quite a favourite there? Why don't you put her in that school? She will be quite happy there. She'll find it interesting, and it is not regular study. She can go and see other children and come home when she likes. (ET, 119)

**Susila's direct access to Lila's heart**

Krishna asked Susila how much of the child she saw. Susila said she had direct access to her daughter's heart. She was always watching her. Krishna inquired whether Leela saw her. Susila replied:

Perhaps she does. Children are keener sighted by nature. She sees me, and perhaps takes it naturally, 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. (ET, 120)
Embracing an experience as a whole

A week later, Susila was asked to relate the incidents on the last day she and Krishna went out together, which she did. All details were correct, but Krishna could not recollect his slipping down in the backyard of the vacant house they had visited. It was his friend who explained to him that the spirits'

Visions of things embraces an experience as a whole rather than events in an order. All memories merge and telescope when the time element between them is removed. I think this is the reason for the apparent confusion. Add to this the possibility of their memory being finer and more selective. There may be a natural law operating by which unpleasant memories are filtered and left behind with the physical body. (ET, 127)

The box with small bottles of scent

At every sitting Susila urged Krishna to look for her sandalwood basket and the fourteen letters. On a holiday afternoon, Krishna opened Susila's yellow trunk, in which she kept all kinds of toilet sets she had acquired in her lifetime. There was a box of small bottles of scent. Krishna opened their corks one by one and smelt them:

These tiny phials had compressed in them the essence of her personality, the restle of her dress, her footsteps, laughter, her voice, the light in her eyes, the perfume of her presence. The bottles were empty now, but the lingering scent in them covered for a brief moment the gulf between the present and the past. (ET, 129)

There was, however, no trace of the fourteen letters and the sandalwood box.
Susila: very happy in after-life

At the next meeting, Susila asked:

Do you know what a wonderful perfume I have put on! I wish you could smell it... Perhaps it may look like selfishness for me to be so happy here, when there you are so sorrow-filled and unhappy. If I succeed in making you feel that I am quite happy over here and that you must not be sorry for me, I will be satisfied. Your sorrow hurts us. I hope our joy and happiness will please and soothe you. (ET, 130)

Krishna asked Susila what made her mention the perfume. Susila replied:

Just to enable you to have the most complete idea of our state of existence, that is all. Moreover, did you not speculate somewhat on those lines a few days ago? (ET, 130).

Life in the other world

Krishna asked his wife how she spent her time usually. She answered:

Time in your sense does not exist for us. Our life is one of thought and experience. Thought is something which has solidity and power, and as in all existence ours is also a life of aspiration, striving, and joy. A considerable portion of our state is taken up in meditation, and our greatest ecstasy is in feeling the Divine Light flooding us.

We've ample leisure. We are not constrained to spend it in any particular manner. We have no need for exercise as we have no physical bodies. Music is ever here, and it transports her to higher planes.

Things here are far more intense than on earth.
This means our efforts are for more efficient than yours. If by good fortune, we are able to establish a contact with our dear ones who are receptive to our influence, then you can say that person is inspired. And a song or melody can establish a link.
between our minds. For instance, how sad that you should have neglected your veena. If you could take it up once again, our minds could more easily join. Why don't you try it?

(ET, 130-131).

Change in the other world

Ever since these communications began, Krishna felt that Susila showed a greater wisdom than he had known her to possess. Susila said:

Let me tell you that the change that takes place when one comes over here is so great and the vision so clear that even I, your wife, whose nonsense pleased you so much more, am changed. I'm essentially the same person as far as you and my dear ones are concerned, but the only difference is that I'm without the encumbrance of the physical body and everything is finer and quicker than on earth. (ET, 131)

Think of anything, and it is there

Susila went on to explain that, where she was now, there was no interval between thought and fulfilment:

Thought is fulfilment, motion, and everything. That is the main difference between our physical state and yours. In your state, a thought to be realised must always be followed by effort directed towards conquering obstructions and inertia- that is the nature of the material world. But in our condition no such obstruction exists. When I think of you, or you of me, I am at your side. Music directly transports us. When I think of a garment, it is on me. In our world, there is a fine response to thought. When I come to you, I prepare myself as befits the occasion. I come to meet my lord, and I dress myself as befits the occasion. I think of the subtlest perfume, and it already pervades my being. When I think of
the garment that will most please you - the wedding saree, shimmering purple, woven with gold - I have on me at this very moment. You think you saw it in that trunk, how can it be here? What you have seen is its counterpart, the real part of the thing is that which is in thought, and it can never be lost or destroyed or put away. (ET, 131-132)

The colours of the other world

At the close of every evening, Susila mentioned her appearance. Once she said she was sitting besides Krishan and was wearing a pale orange dress with a clasp of brilliant to hold it in position:

If only you saw the colour, you would not say how gorgeous, you would be speechless. Not even the colours of the sunset give you such tints as we have here. To call it pale orange is to give you an inadequate idea... I can see you. What a pity you can't see me! Some day let us hope you will see my form. I am at the moment sitting to your left in the floor. By and by, you will hear my bangles clanking and feast your eyes on my dress and form.

I think I look the same person as on earth. Only free from all ailments. You remember, I used to have a sort of plain at the waist, even that I do not have now.

My dress tonight is shimmering blue interwoven with light and stars. I have done my hair parted on the left. And what a load of jasmine and other rare flowers I've in my hair for your sake! I wish a painter could sense me and do a picture for you.

Rest assured that I shall always sit in the same place whenever I am here. When you lift your arm, you touch me. At the close of this evening when you go home, I will accompany you, stay up with you till you go to bed and fall asleep thinking of me. (ET, 132-133).
**Krishna feels Susila's presence**

On his way home, through the dark night, Krishna's feet felt lighter, because he knew she was accompanying him. Her presence was unmistakably there. He could sense it. The darkness of the night was not felt by him. The distance and the loneliness were nothing to him. Susila was with him.

**Absent sitting**

After many days, a letter arrived from Krishna's friend which said that he had been busy in litigation. His purpose in writing to Krishna was not about his troubled affairs, but a different one. He had a feeling that he and Krishna might attempt an experiment while they are out of each other's reach. He wanted to see if they could manage a sitting in absentia. In matters of spirit, space was of no account, and so there was no reason why they should not succeed.

On Sunday of 4 o'clock in the evening, I propose to try the experiment. So please keep yourself in your room and link up with me mentally with a request to your wife to communicate. As far as possible, keep all other business away from your mind. At precisely 4.30, you may consider it closed. I will send you the result of this sitting by post immediately.

(ET, 152)

On Sunday, Krishna cajoled his daughter into spending her time at school with the old lady, and then shut himself in his room and lay down in his chair and closed his eyes. It was two minutes to four. He stilled himself. He opened his eyes and saw that it was four and said:

Oh, my dear wife, my friend at the other end and I have linked up. Please communicate. (ET, 152)
He visualised his friend sitting in his room, and he fancied himself occupying a chair beside him, and his wife communicating through him. He shut his eyes and remained in a kind of half-sleep till 4.35.

**Establishing communications direct**

Two days later, the postman brought a long envelope. Krishna pulled out two long sheets of paper covered with pencil writing, Susila's message read:

The most important thing I wish to warn you about is not to allow your mind to be disturbed by anything. For some days now, you have allowed your mind to be gloomy and unsettled. You are not keeping very strong either. You must keep yourself in better frame.

We must thank your friend who had yielded to our suggestion to try these absent settings. I'm sure you will benefit by them. Please think yourself as being able to prepare yourself for it. There will be a change in your state. Moreover, you should not expect your friend to be troubled by you all your life. You must make yourself fit for it, and this communication will restore to you health and better nerves because of the greater harmony that comes into your life, but you must also do your bit to utilise this harmony. You must keep your body and mind in perfect condition, before your aspire to become sensitive and receptive. I have learnt a great deal after coming here. Believe me, if it is peace of mind you want, you cannot have it better than from us. (ET, 151-152)

**Striving here, achievement there**

The following Sunday, Krishna and his friend linked again. On Monday morning, Krishna got the message:

Don't feel sorry. It hurts me more than you can imagine. So please keep your mind free from choking thoughts. I wish to give you a picture in words.
A weary and thirsty traveller was returning home from a long day's march. The setting sun had touched all the objects around him with a rosy magic. The birds were returning to their nests. A rumbling brook rolled along. He sat down and quenched his thirst with water. He saw a black bird sit on a thorn and whistle. A batch of white cranes flew across, tinted by the sunset. Their rhythm and their colour filled the traveller's heart with indescribable joy. He said to himself: "Worshipping and wondering, how much life's journey is made easier for one who can see Nature and God every moment: "He returned home fatigued in body, but his soul was in the rapture of a song.

I don't know what you are going to make of this. Somehow, this picture has been haunting my soul all along, and a great inexplicable satisfaction reigns in my heart because I have communicated it to you. I have set a song to sing this to me. When I sit down and sing it, a most heavenly sunset, birds of wonderful colours, and the serenity of the brook, everything comes up palpably, and we can converse with the traveller. The melody is just created out of thought, in a manner which you cannot grasp. The responses of our world are immediate and fine. You have a glimpse of it only in your striving. Your deeper mind impels you. There it is a striving: here it is achievement. Your striving itself is proof of its reality here, to be realised when the obstructions of your state are cleared.

(ET, 154)

Susila: becoming a poet

Susila continues:
I don't know if you think I'm becoming a poet as well. I have given you many thoughts lately for writing by impressing them on your mind. You might have caught them if you had continued your old habit of occasionally writing verse. Some day I hope we shall together produce a great epic. I'm
not jokeing. I;m in earnest. Nobody may think much of these efforts. They may appear, just as the picture of the weary traveller does, obvious or obscure to others, but certainly you will like them because they are your dear wife’s efforts.(ET, 154)

Psychic development

In about ten days, Krishna and his friend were able to have a joint sitting as before. After the preliminary remarks, Susila asked when Krishna was starting an attempt at his own psychic development. When Krishna said he would look to her for guidance, Susila replied:

Why not make a start tomorrow? Tomorrow is a day that never comes. Why not begin today as soon as you go home? Just ten minutes will be sufficient. Keep your mind free for impressions for just ten minutes. Just ten minus of communion and relaxation. Please make the attempt and do not postpone it. You think of me by fits and starts. Sometimes for long periods you do not let your mind do anything else. I can only tell you that I am very happy here. I shall be very happy to meet you when you come ever here, but it is not right for you to think of passing over before the appointed time. So do not let your thoughts go in that direction. It is to prevent it that I want you regularly to bring me to your side at a stated time.

For the purpose of your complete communion with me or with anyone, a degree of concentration is necessary, and this can be done only with some order and plan. All other moments - when you are despondent, woe-begone, and hopelessly in grief and think of me - I can hardly come to you, because the grief creates a barrier, and this should be avoided for both our sakes.

Just as I am thinking of you, I know you will also be thinking of me. But I want this thought to be couples with the
desire to commune with me. It is This aspect That I want to impress upon you as necessary for psychic development and free communion. At stated hours, sit for psychic development, that is, to enable me to get into touch with you directly without the intervention of the medium. I will make this possible. 

(ME, 154-155)

**Mind : ready and receptive**

Krishna asked Susila whether he should sit down with pencil and paper. Susila said that paper and pencil was a secondary matter. The most important thing was to get the mind ready and receptive. The actual form would follow automatically. Krishna should prepare his mind for this adventure. He would then know and feel her real absence:

You now keep looking round to get a glimpse of me.
Then, by and by, you will feel that I'm by your side, and it will bring real peace to your heart. Relax, be passive, and think of me, and be receptive. Just ten minutes. Try.(ET, 155)

"Postpone your attempts for some time"

Krishna looked at the clock. It was ten to eleven. He called, "My wife". His mind seethed with ideas - irrelevant things came rushing in, college, work, evening friends, his wife's voice. In the midst of it all, he struggled to keep the mind receptive. It was a desperate fight. He tried to improve matters by picking up a pencil and poising it over the paper. There was no result. He looked at the clock. It was nearly eleven-thirty. He felt exhausted. He lay down to sleep, and slept badly.

When Krishna went to his friend next time, he was all anxiety for further guidance. Susila's guidance was:

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I think you ought to postpone your attempts for some time, until you are less agitated than you are now. As it is, it does not serve the purpose. I thought it would. So please do not bother now. Am I clear?

I have seen you every night wanting to contact me and praying for it. You had a few sheets of paper and a green-handled pencil. You put pencil to paper and hardly made a dot. (ET, 156-157)

Making her presence felt

At the next meeting, Susila said that she still felt Krishna had not done well. Krishna asked her how she would make him feel her presence. She replied:

At first, it will be a matter of belief - a belief in the possibility of my presence. Later on, as you progress, you will know I’m there by your side. I have high hopes of making myself heard or seen, but certainly known. I shall be with you very soon. (ET, 159)

Walking out together in the garden

Months rolled on. After a long time, Krishna's friend gave him a sitting beside the lotus pond at dust. Susila started by saying:

Have you observed one effect of your development? I can now say that you are developing quite satisfactorily. Think about four days ago - the small hours of the night. I tried to appear and make my presence felt by you. I purposely wore the garb, which you called on a former occasion "gorgeous" - the blue, shimmering with light interwoven. I appeared, and I tried to make my presence felt. We went out together in the garden. We walked for a while, indeed for a considerable time, and then the experience ended. You returned to bed, and went
to sleep. You turned over and resumed your sleep, thinking you had a slight disturbance. If there is any chance you remember this experience, let me assure you that it was I myself who was there with you; and, if you remember it, it is a sign that you are developing quite well. (ET, 169)

It required no great effort to recollect this. Krishna was overcome with joy. He seized his friend's hand and cried:

It is true, absolutely true. I thought it was a private dream. It wasn’t. I dreamt of her standing before me with some gorgeous dress on. I greeted her, and I held her hand. We went out into the garden. (ET, 169)

**The discovery of the sandalwood casket**

Krishna's mother arrived for some days. She opened her steel trunk and pulled out a little casket which contained a gold chain. Referring to the chain, she said she had it made for Leela at the town shop when Krishna's father went there the last time. Krishna stared at the casket. He examined it, measured it with his finger, and found that it was an ivory-worked sandalwood casket. He read Susila's message again. He came upon a sentence which had nearly escaped him all those days. "The casket is mounted on short ivory legs, resembling tiger-paws." Krishna lifted the casket and examined its legs. The tiger-paws were there.

**The fourteen letters**

The discovery of the sandalwood casket made Krishna write to his father-in-law the next day for the bundle of fourteen letters, which Susila had often mentioned. Four days later, he received a reply:

I have searched every nook and corner in the house and every box, but not a single letter is to be found. Perhaps they were in that lot which I saw her and her brother destroying in the fire one day when she was here last. (ET, 174)
The law of life

Krishna’s mother left for the village, taking Leela with her. Next week-end, Krishna also boarded the bus for the village. When he returned to Malgudi, his house seemed unbearably dull. Krishna often told himself:

There is no escape from loneliness and separation. Wife, child, brothers, parents, friends come together to go apart again. It is one continuous movement. They move away from us as we move away from them. The law of life can’t be avoided. The law comes into operation the moment we detach ourselves from our mother’s womb. All struggle and misery in life is due to our attempt to arrest this law, or get away from it, or in allowing ourselves to be hurt by it. The fact must be recognised. A profound unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life. All else is false. My mother got away from her parents, my sisters from our house, I and my brother away from each other, my wife was torn away from me, my daughter has gone away with my mother, my father has gone away from his father, my earliest friends where are they? They scatter apart like droplets of a water-spray. (ET, 177)

We cannot substantiate that Krishna’s philosophy of life is Narayan’s philosophy of life. But much of what Krishna says is universal truth, applicable to everybody in the world, even to Narayan himself.

Past, present, and future welded into one

Krishna’s mind was made up. He resigned from Albert Mission College. He was walking the lone street late at night, enveloped in the fragrance of jasmine and rose garland, slung on his arm. On reaching home, he hung up the garland on a nail. The few drops of water which he had sprinkled on the flowers seemed to have quickened in them a new life. Their essences came forth into the dark night as he lay, in bed, bringing a new
vigour with them. The atmosphere became surcharged with strange spiritual forces. Their delicate aroma filled every particle of air and, as he let his mind float in the ecstasy, gradually perceptions and senses deepened. Oblivion crept over him like a cloud. The past, present, and the future welded into one.

Susila sits smiling on Krishna's bed

Krishna softly called, "Susila ! Susila, my wife". It sounded as if it were a hypnotic melody. "My wife... my wife, my wife..." His mind trembled with this rhythm. He forgot himself and his own existence. He fell into a drowse. When he opened his eyes, she was sitting on his bed looking at him with an extraordinary smile in her eyes:

"Susila ! Susila : I cried. "You here !"
"Yes, I'm here, have always been here".
I sat up, leaning on my pillow. (ET, 184)

Moment of rare joy

"Why do you disturb yourself ? " she asked.
"I am making a place for you", I said, edging away a little. I looked her up and down and said. "How well you look:"

Her complexion had a golden glow, her eyes sparkled with a new light, her saree shimmered with blue interwoven with "light" as she had termed it.
"How beautiful" I said, looking at it.
"Yes, I always wear this when I come to you. I know you like it very much", she said.

I gazed on her face. There was an overwhelming fragrance of jasmine surrounding her. "Still jasmine scented ! "I commented.
"Oh wait", I said and got up. I picked up the garland from the nail and returned to bed. I held it to her. "For you as ever. I somehow feared you wouldn't take it."

She received it with a smile, cut off a piece of it, and stuck it in a curve on the back of her head and asked, "Is this all right?"

"Wonderful", I said, smelling it.

A cock crow. The first purple of the dawn came through our window, and faintly touched the walls of our room. "Dawn:" she whispered and rose to her feet.

We stood at the window, gazing on a slender, red streak over the eastern rim of the earth. A cool breeze lapped our faces. 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. (ET, 184)

**Philosophy of education**

Krishna has his own ideas of education from the nursery level to the college level based on his first-hand experience in relation to his daughter and his own profession as an English teacher in Albert Mission College. Whether Narayan subscribed to these ideas, it is impossible to say and useless to inquire, Krishna likes the play-way system at the nursery level. The nursery school to which Leela goes is open throughout the week.

When Leela insisted on going to school on Sunday, Krishna took her there. There was not sign at the school to show that it was Sunday. It was alive with the shouts of children. About twenty of them had already gathered and were running about and playing. The swing and see-saw were all in full use. The headmaster was with them. The children just came in, played, threw the sand about, and went away. To differentiate Sunday from other days, they do not do sums but just sing, hear stories, and play.
Trophies of the School

The school consisted of a single thatch-roofed room. Its floor was covered with clay, and the walls were of bamboo splinters filled in with mud. The floor was uneven and cool, and the whole place smelt of Mother Earth. It was a pleasing smell, and seemed to take one back to some primeval simplicity, intimately bound up with earth and mud and dust. Along the wall was a kind of running ledge covered with a crazy variety of objects—cardboard houses, paper flowers, clumsy drawings, and bead work. The headmaster said:

These are the work of children who have studied here. They are the trophies of the school. I consider them a real source of joy. For instance, the very first work of a child has some peculiar value. You will understand it better if I say look at that green paper boat. Can you guess who has made it? Your daughter on the very first day she came here. She finished it within an hour. (ET, 134)

A school for a poor country

The headmaster had done away with table and chair. In a corner, he had a seat for visitors:

This will do for a school. We are a poor country, and we can do without luxuries. Why do we want anything more than a shed and a few mats and open air? This is not a cold country for all the heavy furniture and elaborate buildings? Much of our time is spent outside, under the tree. (ET, 135)
**Shaping the mind and character**

Krishna said that a school needs a building and furniture. The headmaster replied:

Multiply your expenses, and look to the Government for support, and sell you 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. ([ET, 135](#))

**Stories with makeshift illustrations**

The headmaster pulled out a box and brought out a big bundle of brown paper. It had huge pages covered with letters as well as figures cut out and pasted. This was a new method which the headmaster found fascinating. He invented a story, wrote it down in words, and illustrated it with pictures cut out of illustrated books and papers and pasted them at appropriate places. He stood in the doorway and announced: "Story! Story!" The children, who had been playing about, stopped, looked at him, and came running in, uttering shrieks of joy.

**Beaumont and Fletcher**

The headmaster seemed to feel more at home in Krishna’s house than in his. He reclined in the easy chair, pulled out a book, and was soon lost in study. The book was a criticism of the Elizabethan dramatists, Beaumont and Fletcher. He considered it the dullest work he had read in the English language. He wondered how it interested Krishna so much. A little while later, he contradicts himself, saying:

Not a line in the whole book to distract your thought - an ideal book for a contemplative turn of mind. ([ET, 146](#))
When Krishna handed over his letter of resignation, Principal Brown asked him why he was resigning. Krishna replied:

What I am doing in the college hardly seems to me work. I mug up and repeat, and they mug up and repeat in examination. This hardly seems to me work, Mr. Brown. It is a fraud I am practising for the consideration of a hundred rupees a month. It doesn't please my innermost self.

(ET, 179-180)

Krishna was beginning a new experiment in education with his friend, the headmaster, for which he would get about twenty-five rupees a month:

I have no use for money. I have no family. My child is being looked after by others, and they have provided for her future too. I have a few savings. I have not use for a hundred rupees a month. I can afford to do what seems to me work, something that satisfies my innermost aspiration. I will write poetry and live and work with children and watch their minds unfold. (ET, 180)

Krishna's resignation was accepted, and he was given a warm farewell. In his speech Brown said:

I remember the day he came to my room with application for a seat in English Honours. I've seen him grow under my eyes. He has shown himself an able teacher. The boys loved him. Everywhere, under every condition, he has
proved himself to be an uncompromising idealist. His constant anxiety has been to find the world good enough for his own principles of life and letters. Few men would have the courage to throw up a lucrative income and adopt one very much lower. But he has done it. (FT, 182)

**Sense of history, mythology, and society**

One's philosophy of life includes one's sense of history, in which Narayan is an adept. He gives a close view of Malgudi society and its problems. The tenants living with their large families in old and dilapidated houses with hardly any water facilities and nagging the landlord with their legitimate demands, the conscientious journalist, the busy printer, the busier magistrates and judges, bankers, clerks, artists, shopkeepers, traders, merchants, and entrepreneurs who, though their interaction, offer Narayan the opportunity of bringing them under his observation and revealing a society in its essence. The novel Mr. Sampath demonstrates that sex and money are the two magnetic forces that motivate all human action:

The present Market Road was an avenue of wild trees. Presently appeared on this path Shri Rama, the hero of Ramayana. He was a perfect man, this incarnation of Vishnu. Over his shoulder was slung his famous bow which none could even lift. He was followed by his devoted brother Laxman and Hanuman, the monkey-god. Rama was on his way to a holy war, which would wipe out wrong and establish on earth truth, beauty, and goodness. He rested on a sandy stretch in a grove, and looked about for a little water for a paste for his forehead-marking. There was no water. He pulled an arrow from his quiver and scratched a line on the sand, and water instantly appeared. Thus was born the river Sarayu.

When the Buddha came this way, preaching his gospel of compassion, centuries later, he passed along the main street of a prosperous village... A little crumbling masonry and a
couple of stone pillars, beyond Lowley extension, now marked the spot where the Buddha had held his congregation.

The great Shankara appeared during the next millennium. He saw on the river-bank cobra spreading its hood and shielding a spawning frog from the rigour of the midday sun. He remarked: "This is where I must build my temple." He installed the goddess there and preached his gospel of the Vedanta - the identity and oneness of God and His creatures.

And then came the Christian missionary with his Bible and, in his wake, the merchant and the soldier...

Dynasties rose and fell. Palaces and mansions appeared and disappeared. The entire country went down under the fire and sword of the invader, and was washed clean when Sarayu overflowed its bounds. But it always had its rebirth and growth. (Mr Sarnpath, 206-207)

Consequences of switching over from Saraswati to Lakshmi

It appears that Narayan's philosophy of life has a place for redemption if one's decency is unimpaired paired, but it has no place for greed and lust. Margayya is a devout Hindu who practises his profession of making money with pretended innocence. His troubles begin only when he switches over his allegiance from Saraswati, the goddess of learning, to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth.

The process of modernisation, which beings in The Dark Room and wrecks the domestic harmony of Savitri, advances further in The Financial Expert, and is responsible for the alienation of Margayya's family as well as the financial and sexual corruption of his son. In spite of its hilarity, the narrative is more morally serious than that of Mr. Sampath, because it shows the corruption of the innocent by desire for easy wealth. Margayya is redeemable because of his innate distrust of wealth. His essential decency, though tarnished by contact with Dr. Pal, is unimpaired. But no comparable
hope is offered for his son, and who is doomed to follow Dr. Pal into the darkness of greed and lust.

Indian has fascinated many Western writers. Kipling celebrated the white man's burden. E.M. Forster deplored the excesses of imperialism. But they were outsiders and they observed from a distance. Narayan is an insider and in constant touch with Hindu culture and philosophy. His vision of life leaves little room for the salvation of man from his Karma. Narayan seems to say that man must either act rightly or suffer as a result of his own actions.

**Mahatma Gandhi and socio-cultural change**

Narayan's portrayal of Mahatma Gandhi in *Waiting for the Mahatma* and the change he brought about by his presence and teachings won praise in the United States:

> Here you will find not only an engrossing story but also a portrait of Gandhi so rich and real that no biography we have seen can touch it. It is the story of a disciple, his loves and fears, his serene inanity. But, above all, the residue of understanding and truth with respect to India and Gandhi lend substance here of the highest calibre.  

Narayan's philosophy of life, as deduced from what is said and done by Bharati, the girl Sriram loves and wants to marry, is widely different from that of Mulk Raj Anand. Narayan is not an angry reformist. He is concerned with a critical phase of Indian history from 1941 to 30 January 1948 when we lost the Mahatma to an assassin in Delhi. Sometimes the Mahatma appears in the novel in person, but more often we see him mirrored in events and in the lives of his disciples.
Narayan's philosophy of life does not exclude the vision of evil. While lecturing at Columbia University, Narayan said:

At some point in one's writing career, one takes a fresh look at the so-called myths and legends and find a new meaning in them. After writing a number of novels and short stories based on the society around me, some years ago I suddenly came across a theme which struck me as an excellent piece of mythology in modern dress. It was published under the title The Man-Eater of Malgudi. I based this story on a well-known mythological episode, the story of Mohini and Bhasmasura.  

The title is a bit misleading, because the man-eater is not a tiger but a human form with all the characteristic traits of rakshasa (demon). Vasu is the man-eater. He holds to ransom for long not only the altruistic Nataraj but also the entire Malgudi. He is, however, destroyed before he can actually commit the sacrilege he has planned.

In Hindu mythology, the demon Bhasmasura was destroyed by the god Vishnu who appeared as a beautiful girl named Mohini and cunningly led Bhasmasura to self-destruction. Narayan changes the name Bhasmasura to Vasu, who acquired a special boon that everything he touched should be scorched, while nothing could ever destroy him. He made humanity suffer. The god Vishnu was incarnated as a dancer of great beauty named Mohini with whom Vasu became infatuated. Mohini promised to yield to him only if he imitated all the gestures and movements of her own dancing. At one point in the dance, Mohini placed her palms on the head, and the demon followed this gesture in complete forgetfulness and was reduced to ashes that very second, the blighting touch becoming active on his own head. (MEH, 96)
Narayan comments:

Every rakshasa gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something will destroy him. (MEH, 95)

Narayan adds:

Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise, what is to happen to humanity? (MEH, 23)

Narayan's philosophy of life does not deny the existence of evil but, at the same time, it does not tolerate evil for long. This philosophy suggest that all evil has within it seeds of its own destruction, and so evil is somehow wiped out, even thought by superhuman intervention in the guise of the fascinating girl Mohini, in the larger interest of humanity. Such a philosophy is a blend of antiquity and the wisdom of the sages.

The generation gap

Narayan's philosophy of life is more pragmatic than theoretical. Everyone knows about "the generation gap", the eternal conflict between generations and cultures. The conflict becomes more acute when it is between right and right, and not between right and wrong. Jagan, in The Vendor of Sweets, is an orthodox Hindu, and it is his conservatism in matters of marriage and morals which is, more than anything else, responsible for the woes of the generation gap. If Jagan and his son Mali are regarded as symbols of the old and the new order, or the East and the West, Jagan's life seems more successful despite his discontents.
The Hindu way of life

Jagan is a prosperous widower of fifty-five. He is a staunch follower of the Hindu way of life, which is both in his blood and life. He combines handsome profits with highminded Gandhian principles. He believes in simple living and high thinking. He practises what he preaches. He believes in truth and non-violence. He uses only "nonviolent footwear" and wears a loose jibba over his dhoti, both made of material spun with his own hand. He does not like to think that a living creature should have its throat out for the comfort of his feet: This occasionally involves him in excursions to remote villages to secure the hide of a cow or calf reported to be dying a natural death. As an orthodox Hindu, he cooks his own food, He gives up salt, saying that one must eat only natural salt. He drinks only four ounces of boiled water a day, cooled in an earthen Pot. Twigs of the margosa tree make ideal tooth brushed for him, and not the one's made out of pig's hair.

For proper care and protection of his retina, Jagan uses only ten-watt bulbs. As a vendor of sweets, he believes in making money, but he is against adulteration. In preparing sweets, he uses the purest cow ghee, because according to Gandhiji the ghee from buffaloes is not good for health. He is a supporter of vegetarianism, because it has been found to increase longevity and keep away a number of diseases including kidney stones and urinary infections. Man is by design neither carnivorous nor omnivorous: he is frugivorous, eating fruits, nuts, shoots, similar to the great apes to which he has anatomical and biological similarities. Jagan plies charkha every day, just as he does his puja of the goddess Lakshmi every morning. He reads the Gita regularly. He does not have a telephone connection. After all, Malgudi is a small town, and everybody is within "shouting distance."
Mali: his birth and upbringing

Jagan and his wife had to undergo humiliations because they had no child. After the pilgrimage to the temple of Santana Krishna, their son Mali was born. Jagan was passionately devoted to him, but he could never really understand him. Born ten years after Jagan's marriage with Ambika, Mali is bereft of his mother at the age of ten. After his wife's death, Jagan spends most of his time looking after the well-being of this son. He even cooks for this son to make sure that he is properly and nutritiously fed.

The communication gap

But the real contact between father and son is so little that there always remains a communication gap between the two, and they fail to ascend to a higher plane of fulfilment. Things come to such a pass that the cousin has to act as a communication channel between the father and the son. They have lived together for twenty years, and yet they know very little about each other's mental make-up. Jagan has to ask the cousin to find out Mali's plans for the future. Such an emotionally strained relationship between the two continues until Jagan receives the shock of his life when Mali coolly announces that he is giving up his studies to go to America to become a writer.

Mali and Grace: not legally married

When Mali returns from America with a half-Korean, half-American girl, Grace, his wife, and grandiose scheme for marketing a novel-writing machine, Jagan is quite bewildered. What is more shocking to him is his discovery that Mali and Grace are not legally married but just living in sin.
Besides this, Mali's completely Westernised outlook, particularly his habit of beef-eating and heavy drinking, hurts his feelings beyond recovery. He can recall receiving from his son nothing but one shock after the other all these years. As a loving father, he still feels strongly about his only son, the everwidening emotional gulf between the two remains unbridged until, at last, unable to reconcile himself when his heart is completely crushed under the burden of unrequited love, he realises that enough is enough and makes up his mind to renounce the world and go into the vanaprastha.

Vanaprastha

Jagan frees himself of his filial love, quits the world, and retires from active life to an ashrama across the Sarayu river not only with his charkha but also his chequebook, perhaps to fulfil his obligations to Ghandji and pray that his son may leave the ways of which he strongly disapproves. Taking the cheque-book with him may make Mali feel the economic pinck some time or the other and, thus accelerate the process of his return, partially if not wholly, to the ways of his father.

Love without marriage

On basis of what Daisy, in The Painter of Signs, says and does, the family planning programme finds a place in Narayan's philosophy of life and, curiously enough, we find references to love without marriage. The family planning programme started, more or less, as mass movement during the 1970s. In this context, Narayan suggests that

the man-woman relationship was not inevitable, and that There were other more important things to do in life than marrying. (PS.45)

In other words, love need not end in marriage.
"Mahabharata" : the love story of King Santhanu

For this purpose, an ancient Hindu legend is modernised. Raman relates to Daisy the love story of King Santhanu in the Mahabharata. He also agrees to "be like the ancient king Santhanu". (PS, 159) There was a girl of vivacious beauty, the holy Ganga assuming a human form. She agrees to marry King Santhanu on condition that he would not interfere with any of her decisions after their marriage, making it absolutely clear that she would desert him the moment he questions her actions. The king marries her on her terms, but ultimately she leaves him when he breaks the agreement between them. Having silently suffered the loss of seven children who are all drowned by his wife one after the other as they are born, he is unable to contain himself any longer and questions her design to drown the eighth. Narayan makes a slight deviation to suit the modern context when the young lovers, Raman and Daisy, are worldly wiser than their ancient counterparts.

Raman : professional but not conventional

Raman is a handsome young man, living in Malgudi with his old aunt who is traditional in outlook. He is a professional, but by no means unconventional, painter of signs. He is proud of his art as calligrapher. When a newly qualified lawyer insists on having the letters of his name slanted to the left, Raman tries to explain his philosophy of calligraphy:

Slanting letters are suitable only for oil merchants
and soap-sellers. The letters on a lawyer's board must always
stand up proudly, and not lie supine. Head erect. You are going
to be lawyer, not a kerosene merchant. (PS, 5)
Popularising family planning

Daisy is a young woman of irresistible beauty like the Legendary one. She runs a Family Planning Centre in Malgudi. She spreads with missionary zeal the new gospel of birth control in and around the town, because in India it is necessary to check the growth of population. The people respond favourably to her ideas. It is natural that the two talented young people should meet and become prospective lovers. Daisy commissions Raman to paint signs advocating two-child families. They travel together around the adjoining villages to popularise family planning activities and conduct a family planning survey. Raman's job is to select suitable sites and paint appealing slogans on them.

She rejects his advances

On their way back to Malgudi in a cart, Daisy talks about the process of conception. She does not realise its effect on young Raman who, she knows, is in love with her. The cart is involved in an accident, and they are left all alone to spend the night together on the road. Raman is as impressed by Daisy's passion for social work as he is enthralled by her beauty and independence of spirit. In his infatuation with Daisy, he cannot resist the temptation of making pass at her when the two are stranded in the cart. He thinks they are made for each other, but she rejects his advances.

Her conditions for marrying

There is a brief spell of lull in Raman-Daisy relationship. They are not even on talking terms. Their relationship is renewed when Daisy calls on Raman. Raman courts her so passionately that he succeeds in winning.
her love. She agrees to marry him on two conditions:

one, that they should have not children, and two, if by mischance one was born she would give the child away and keep herself free to pursue her social work. I have a well-defined purpose from which I will not swerve. If you want to marry me, you must leave me to my own plans even when I am a wife. On any day, you question why or how, I will leave you. It will be an unhappy thing for me, but I will leave you. (PS, 158-159)

**Aunt's disapproval of marriage with a non Hindu girl**

Raman, like King Santhanu, accepts Daisy's conditions. He promises that, whatever Daisy said, he would never question her. When Raman breaks the good news to his old aunt, who is like this mother, she disapproves of the idea of his marriage with a non-Hindu girl. When he insists on it, she renounces him for Benares, for "a visit to Kasi is the end."

**Reversal of the Mahabharata legend**

At this point the story from the Mahabharata is reversed. It is not Raman who breaks the agreement as Santhanu does. It is the strong-minded Daisy who backs out even before the marriage takes place. She leaves Raman for no fault of his. Daisy leaves for a long professional tour in Gafur's old Chevrolet. Raman is left behind, casting a long lingering look at the car carrying an indifferent Daisy. He tries to seek consolation in the hope of meeting her in the next life: "Maybe we will live together in the next janma." (PS, 183) Though the returns to his routine, like water seeking its own level, his sense of loss is appalling.

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Blending animal with the human world

Narayan borrows from Visnu Sarman's *Panchatantra* to tell the story of a tiger from his infancy to his old age. He, however, blends the animal world of the *Panchatantra* with the human world of modern Malgudi. At the end of the Introduction to *A Tiger for Malgudi*, Narayan writes:

Deep within, the core of the personality, in spite of differing appearances and categories, and with the right approach, you could expect the same response from a tiger as from any normal human being. (KM, 10)

The ups and downs of a tiger's life

The tiger, Raja, lives in peace in the jungle. He is blissfully ignorant of the perils of the world. He gloats over his own prowess and the awe in which he is held. In the fullness of his youth, he comes across a tigress. He fights with her and then loves her, and begets four cubs. The tiger and the tigress love the cubs and guard them against possible danger. The tigress inadvertently strays into human habitation in search of prey only to be shot dead with her four cubs, Raja falls a victim to man's greed and cruelty and loses his wife and children.

Tamed for the circus

Raja's own depredations of cattle of nearby villagers bring him very near death, but he escapes narrowly. He ultimately yields to temptation. Before he could be shot dead by hunters, he is captured by the Captain, proprietor of the Grand Malgudi Circus. Raja is made to perform in the circus and on a film set. Holding a long whip in one hand and a chair in the other, the Captain tames and trains him for his circus by inflicting severe
suffering on him. Raja ultimately learns his lessons to the Captain's satisfaction and submits to his master's dictates. One day he realises that enough is enough, roars loudly, and kills the menacing Captain. He calmly walks out of the circus and takes shelter in a school building, from where he is rescued by a Swami who brings him under his hypnotic spell.

The Swami and Raja: "guru" and "chela"

Raju first tries to resist the Swami's presence, but finds himself so helpless before him that he completely surrenders himself to the Swami's occult powers, and follows him like a pet. The Guru and the Chela leave the town of Malgudi and return to the green foliage of Mampi Hills where they pass their days in the Swami's philosophical discourse which largely consists of the Bhagavad Gita, until "the beautiful old age" compels them to part company. Before attaining his samadhi, the Swami entrusts the aged and infirm Raja to the professional care of a zoo where he may die in peace, and hopes to meet him again the next life, for dying is the only way to prove reincarnation.

Suicide reminiscent of "sati"

The Captain's wife, Rita, uses every possible opportunity to nag her husband. At the same time, she loves him so much that she cannot live without him. As the head of the trapeze team, she swings and shuffles in the circus for the sake of her husband. As soon as he is no more, she commits suicide, which is reminiscent of sati in the Hindu social history. She reaches the place immediately after her husband is killed by Raja, looks at his body "without a word or a tear", and wants to be left alone. She goes back to the circus tent, climbs to the top where the swings are clamped, takes a full swing up and down; and, when the swing touches the ceiling, she drops on the ground and dies.
Comments

Narayan's philosophy of life is shaped by certain things happening to him which become part of his experience and leave an impression on his creative mind. Certain people, whom he meets in real life, are vivid in his memory. The places where he has spent the formative years of his life enter into his creativity. Nayayan's philosophy of life, therefore is a perpetual quest for reality. He lives and writes and stands by his convictions. That is why Their is unpretentiousness in himself, in his writings, and in his philosophy of life. He is never preoccupied with 'isms and theories. We do not regard the story or characters separately, but as a totality.

The most interesting philosophy is that which tells us what happens to human beings - not only their external behaviour but also their feelings and thoughts. Narayan's novels are not based on the lives of people he does not know. He intimately knows what he writes about. Yet, in reading what he writes, the finished work transcends the personal. Hence a study of Narayan's philosophy of life must take into account the basic facts and memorable events of Narayan's life, his personal experience, his keen observation of people - their manners and morals.

Narayan's philosophy of life corresponds to the world in which he has grown. There are three worlds involved here - the reader's actual world, Narayan's actual world, and the world he has created for us. Narayan's philosophy of life embraces human relationships, love and marriage, the socio-cultural and political scene of our country between 1933 and 1983, and the Hindu ethos including renunciation as an ideal Hindu way of life in India.

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CHAPTER - V : REFERENCES

1. Swami and his Friends, The Bachelor of Arts, and The English Teacher form an autobiographical trilogy. They largely describe three consecutive phases of Narayan's own life. Swami of the first novel is Chandran, the college student in the second novel, and Chandran is Krishnan, the English teacher, in the third novel. All the three names are fictional substitutes for Narayan himself.
