CHAPTER - V

Achievement of R.K. Narayan
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It was from the time of Swami and Friends (1935) that Narayan has been presenting a series of novels. His novels come through the stage of experience and maturity. It is said that the early novels written before independence are regarded as the novels of experimentation and those written after independence are regarded as his matured novels. In these novels varied forms of style and techniques, varieties of characters and the combination of realities and fantasy are presented with care; and each novel coming one after another has its own beauty and distinct characteristics. In fact, Narayan’s achievement lies in his skill of story-telling, his plot craft, his art of characterisation, his humour and irony, his authentic tone, his Indianness and his combination of realism and fantasy.

(1) Narayan’s art of story telling:

Narayan’s art of story telling is praised by many critics. As a novelist he has the power of a good story-teller which may be said the most essential quality of a novelist. As he is one of the most popular Indo-Anglian novelists, his novels bear interesting stories which can arouse suspense to the readers. His novels have the power to make the readers to read from the first page till the last page without any break.
Narayan uses English language as his medium of story telling. Instead of choosing Tamil or Kannada, he chooses English as his medium. In an interview, by Susan E. Croft Narayan gives the reason why he wrote in English in the following words:

“T’ve been reading and writing in English for many years. Our education is in English.”

Using English as his medium, Narayan follows the traditional method of story-telling, the narrative style of Mahabharata and Ramayana. About his narrative technique, Shiv K. Grolra remarks:

“A straight chronological narrative technique with occasional use of the flash-back or retrospection is the usual technique pattern of his story telling.”

Narayan, though he has used traditional narrative technique in some of his novels, changes his narrative technique in some later novels. It clearly shows that Narayan does not adopt the same narrative technique in all his novels. In his first novel, Swami and Friends, Narayan for the first time, succeeded in his story-telling technique. Though it was the first creation of Narayan he could narrate the sequence of incidents without any artistic failure. The story of the novel is narrated in the episodic manner. The story of the novel is narrated in the episodic manner. It is a simple story of a Malgudi boy, with his school life and home-life especially his relation with Granny and his school friends. Through his simple and direct style of narration Narayan can present a portrait of child-life and his deep understanding of child psychology.


Like his first novel, the story of The Bachelor of Arts is also narrated in the episodic manner in the first part. But in the second part of the novel, there is compactness and effectiveness to narrate Chandran’s return to normalcy (from his sanyasihood) and his romantic infatuation with his wife Susila. A mark of improvement in narrative technique as well as language can also be seen in this novel. About this improvement N.N. Sharan remarks:

“This novel is a marked improvement on the previous one so far style and expressions are concerned. Here, the language is vivid, smooth and capable of bearing the burden of the different shades of emotions of the different characters.”

Using the plain and clear language, Narayan presents the story of a conjugal conflict in The Dark Room. In this novel Narayan can combine Savitri’s tragedies with the comic episode of Mari and Ponni. It is the skill of Narayan that he can keep a delicate balance between the tragedy and comedy. In The English Teacher, it is very suitable to narrate the story in the first person as the novel “is autobiographical in content, very little part of it being fiction.” In this novel Narayan can express his personal feelings and emotions in a realistic way. Shiv K. Gilra praises Narayan’s presentation of language and his narrative style in the following remark:

“Narayan’s style is not meretricious, ornate or rhetorical but it is capable of conveying the intensity of an authentic emotion.”

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Though Mr. Sampath marked the maturity of Narayan’s art of story-telling, it is The Guide which is praised by many critics for its narrative technique. The story of The Guide is the combination of the stories of the first and the third person narrators. Narayan uses this technique since it is necessitated by the nature of the story. In this novel Narayan uses traditional style, flash-back, interior monologue and stream of consciousness method. Narayan blends the various stylistic devices and produces a rare artistic finesse in it.

The story of a prosperous sweet-vendor is narrated straight in The Vendor of Sweets. There is a lengthy flash-back towards the end of the novel. Narayan also uses the stream of consciousness technique in this novel. In The Painter of Signs, there is no sign of decline in Narayan’s art of story-telling. It is narrated in the episodic manner and chain of incidents follow one after another (without any break). In this novel also, Narayan employs the stream of consciousness technique to project the inner mind of the character. The inner mind of Raman is exposed hereunder:

"Why will she not be my wife? Time enough, time enough, he told himself. She may throw me out if I speak of it now. I can’t say she is the gentlest person I have known. She looks frail, but not gentle. In any case when she becomes a wife and proves tough and argumentative and red in the face, repulses my companions at The Boardless and that bookseller, and flings out my rare editions....... I don’t know." 6

In fact, Narayan’s achievement lies in his art of story—telling. He employs simple, lucid and limpid language. There is naturalness, suggestiveness and effectiveness in his art of narration. It may be said that it is the skill of Narayan to handle the traditional mode of narration combined with the modern fictional techniques.

(II) Plot—Construction:

Narayan has a great skill in plotcraft. His plotcraft is not constant. There is development in his plot construction. Narayan began to narrate the story in the episodic manner in Swami and Friends. But it developed in his later novels like The Bachelor of Arts and The Dark Room. Narayan constructs plots to suit his interesting story about the (lower) middle class citizen of Malgudi.

The relationship between plot and characters is inseparable. Narayan’s plot technically develops towards the characteristic pattern. Writer like C. Paul Verghese is of the opinion that Narayan’s plot and character go together where characters determine the action. So he remarks:

“There is no hiatus between character and plot; both are inseparably knit together. The qualities the novelist attributes to these characters determine the action, and the action in turn progressively changes the characters and thus the story is carried forward to the end. In other words, as a good story teller, Narayan sees to it that his story has a beginning, a middle and an end.”

It is because of this character-based action that Narayan does not follow any standardized formula in his art of plot construction. The action of the stories comes logically from the varied type of the character.

In his first novel *Swami and Friends*, the story revolves round the central character of Swaminathan and the adult world is provided by Swami’s teachers and his parents. Though the chapters do not have any integral connection, it can be enjoyed in the actions of Swami, Rajam and Mani. Though the plot construction of *The Bachelor of Arts* is based on the classical rule — with beginning, middle and end, it has a definite framework. It is the story of Chandran, a last year student of his graduation at the Albert Mission College, his unfulfilled love for a girl that causes him to exile from Malgudi for sometime and return to normal life. Some incidents are almost very little digressions to the main plot such as flower-chief-episode but Narayan has skilfully interwoven it with the main plot.

*The Dark Room* has a well-organised plot around the characters of Ramani, Savitri and Shanta Bai. The framework is quite compact and clearly defined. The plot construction of *The English Teacher* is compact in the first half of the novel. It reveals the happy marital life of Krishna and his wife Susila. But in the second half of the novel Narayan uses unusual technique, the psychic experiment. There is lack of cohesiveness between the two parts. The two episodes of the schoolmaster and the psychic experiment are brought skilfully to the main plot. It is the skill of Narayan to merge the digressions and sub-plots to the main plot.

The plot of *Mr. Sampath* is loosely constructed on with a number of characters — Srinivas, Sampath, Ravi and the old landowner who has a story of his own. His mixed up characters and varied plot are on a balance at the end. The plot of *The Guide* is said to be Narayan’s most complex
plot. There is a growth of Raju's career from railway-stall owner to a
tourist guide. The coming of Rosie in Raju's life gives a turn to Raju's life.
The climax of the plot is Raju's landing in the prison and it is the end of his
relationship with Rosie. The novel comes to an end with the final collapse
of Raju which arouses a pathetic feeling to the reader. In *The Vendor of
Sweets*, a strained relationship between an orthodox father and a spoiled
son is developed. The plot of the novel is psychological conflict between
the father and the son along with the gap of class and generations. The
infatuated love of a young man is presented in *The Painter of Signs*. The
characters and incidents have a proper placing in the scheme of the plot of
this novel.

Narayan uses realism and fantasy as the main ingredients of the plot.
Writers like Uma Parameswaran point out the realistic and the fantastic
elements which dominate the plot of Narayan's novels in the following
words:

".... the realistic vein carried alongside the fantastic and then
dropped altogether."

In *The Bachelor of Arts*, the story cannot escape from the touch of fantasy
as seen in the case of Chandran and Malathi. It is very realistic in portraying
the life of Krisnan as a college lecturer and his happy marital bliss but the
psychic communion and the automatic handwriting strike an unusual note.
In *The Vendor of Sweets*, the first part is realistic revealing the relationship
between father and son but it turns into fantastic when Mali plans to
manufacture the story writing machine. The elements of fantasy and realism
jostle in the plot of Narayan's novels.

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8. Uma Parameswaran, *A Study of Representative Indo-English Novelists* (New Delhi:
In all his novels, Narayan employs the theme of human relationship. In an interview Narayan says:

"I value human relationship very much, very intensely. It makes one's existence worthwhile—human relationship in any and every form, whether at home or outside. I think I have expressed this philosophy in my work successfully."

In *Swami and Friends*, Swami's relationship with his friends as well as his family member especially with Granny is presented realistically. Husband-wife relationship, father-son relationship, grandparent-grandchild relationship, father-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship and the relationship between two friends are presented in his novels like *The Dark Room*, *The English Teacher*, *Mr. Sampath*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, etc.

In all his novels, there is a well-organized plot with little room for sub-plot or underplot. In his (art of ) plot-construction, characters and incidents are kept in proper places. Unwanted incidents are avoided in his plot. Narayan's skill in plotcraft is, perhaps, unparalleled among the Indo-Anglian novelists.

(III) Characterisation:

Narayan gives his particular attention to his characters. His focus on his characters in shown by the following remarks:

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“My focus is all on character. If his personality comes alive, the rest is easy for me.” 10

All his characters are the middle and lower class citizens of Malgudi. The characters presented mostly in his novels are students, teachers, printers, journalists, shopkeepers, moneylenders, guides, astrologers, painters, long – suffering Hindu wife, traditional Hindu wife, etc. These characters are full of life. Narayan has portrayed them realistically. In an interview by Susan E. Croft, Narayan said that his “characters usually grew out of real people but never in totality.” 11 It is very true that his characters are the portraits of real life. They are all human in their likes and dislikes. In Swami and Friends Swami’s likes and dislikes represent the world of every child of his age. R.K. Narayan beautifully differentiates it from the adult world. Krishna’s life with Susila is the symbol of happy marital bliss quite contrasted with Raman’s, whose happiness lies in a mistress, not in his wife Savitri. The character of Savitri is the symbol of every oppressed Hindu wife, quite different from Rosie, independent minded woman. Jagan’s love and care for his son Mali is very realistic and felt by every father for his son. The character of Raman, and his grand-mother are also portrayed very realistically.

Narayan also presents the complex characters like Raju, Mr. Sampath, etc. One cannot regard them as selfish and greedy. They may cheat people but at the same time they have also done for the welfare of the people. Mr. Sampath can perform everything to control a situation. Raju also can handle every problem and bring into solution.

Narayan’s heroes are non-heroic heroes. They are involved in one crisis or the other. Chandran, Krishna and Sampath face one problem or the other. Chandran cannot marry the girl whom he loves because of the unmatching of the horoscopes. Krishna cannot live long with his wife as fate intervenes between them. This forces him to seek peace in the world of spirits. Mr. Sampath is forced to leave Malgudi by circumstances. Here Narayan’s characters cannot control situations. Writers like P.P. Mehta are also of the opinion that Narayan’s heroes donot control the events and they are helpless creatures in the hands of fate. The truth of the statement is shown by the following remark:

“The heroes of Narayan do not control the events, the events control them. They are helpless creatures torn by desires and tossed this way and that way by the caprice of fortune.” 12

Chandran’s sanyasihood as well as Sampath’s forever exit from Malgudi and Jagan’s seeking peace in the forest are the circumstances where they have no room to escape.

Narayan gives the title of his novel by the name of his protagonist or his profession. Swami and Friends and Mr. Sampath are the novels bearing the names of the protagonists. The English Teacher, The Vendor of Sweets, The Guide and The Painter of Signs are the titles bearing the professions of the protagonists.

There is autobiographical element in the characters of his early novels. Swami is the image of the boyhood stage of the novelist. Swami has grown up as Chandran in The Bachelor of Arts. Everything he has set down in The English Teacher is the experience of his life.

Narayan’s characters are individuals as well as types. Raju, the guide is an individual, not the representative of guides in general. That is why Narayan puts ‘the’ before ‘guide’. But Savitri in *The Dark Room* represents any Hindu wife suffering in the hands of her husband, the oppressor and she is also the victim of social conventions. Savitri symbolises the miserable and lonely Hindu wife.

In his novels, Narayan also presents eccentric characters like the Headmaster, the old landlord, Raju, Jagan, Chandran, Sampath, Chinna Dorai, etc. These characters have played vital roles in the growth of the plot.

Narayan’s minor flat characters play very important role in his novels. These minor characters are amusing and they help in colouring the story. Some memorable minor characters are Mari, Ponni, temple-priest, Principal Brown, Krishna’s colleagues in the college, Dr. Shankar, Sringaram, Srinivas’ wife, Kamala, Sampath’s wife, Velan, Gaffur, Joseph, etc.

Narayan’s art of characterisation is a mixed one. He also successfully sketches the child characters such as: Swami, Leela, Babu, Kamala, Sumati, etc. The actions of the minor characters as well as the child characters give a new shape to the novels.

Narayan is experimenting the various phases of life through his varied characters. They are the slight images of life. Indeed, Narayan’s characterisation is a distinctive feature of his art.

(IV) Irony and Humour:

Irony is one of the techniques employed by R.K. Narayan in his novels. Specially in his early novels, he employs irony as the chief instrument for arousing expectations in the mind of his readers and disappointing them at
the end. Narayan uses irony in different ways like title, dialogue, situation, etc. The title of his first novel Swami and Friends is quite ironic because he draws a contrast between the expected appearance of the character called Swami and his friends, and the real appearance of these characters. His readers expect ‘Swami’ to be a bearded old man full of wisdom and learning. Yet, Swami turns out to be a simple school boy of about ten years. Thus the title provides humour which is an important aspect of Narayan’s art. The same type of ironic humour can be seen in his next novel The Bachelor of Arts. In this novel, Narayan chooses the theme of romantic illusions of a youth and his persistance in spite of the lessons he learnt from his experience. Pathetic humour is provided when he tries to win Malathi as his wife through an arranged marriage. The irony of fate is that their horoscopes do not agree and Chandran’s heart is broken. There is a lot of humour when one reads how Chandran becomes a Sanyasi for about eight months and leads a happy life after an arranged marriage with Susila.

R.K. Narayan’s humour becomes outstanding when Raju the guide turned saint who has planned to fast for fourteen days collapses on the twelfth day. There is double irony in The Guide especially in this part of the novel. Raju’s becoming a saint is not by choice but under ironical circumstances enforced by Velan and his villagers. The irony becomes out of hand when crowds of people come to see the saint as if they were attending a mela. All people are busy – the American taking snaps for movies, press reporters rushing in, people eating at stalls, drinking and laughing when Raju “the Swami” is dying by inches. In such a scene where tragedy and irony blend there is bitter humour.
We find irony in Mr. Sampath’s financial venture taken up from time to time out of necessity. For example, when the labourers are on strike he has to abandon his press and look for new economic enterprises like joining in a film company. He is compelled to do such things. Because of irony of the situations, he has left Malgudi forever.

In *The Vendor of Sweets*, ironical situations provide heart-touching humour to his readers. Jagan is rejoiced when Mali starts sending letters to America. Even though Mali goes away without his permission, he treasures Mali’s letters by even replacing *The Sita* by Mali’s letters containing strong arguments of support for eating beef. The irony is that Jagan is a strict vegetarian and Mali’s letters are written by Grace, the non-vegetarian and the half Korean and half American girl, we have more irony to strengthen the previous irony like Mali’s returning home without achieving anything. How humorous it is to see the poor old man’s wretched situation. He has to barricade his house to save himself from the sin of sleeping in the same house where two unmarried people sleep together. His secret entry into the house through his small gate trying to avoid meeting Grace and Mali is pathetically humourous. Narayan expresses the situation thus:

> “Her gave up the use of the front door, as it took him through a common passage trodden by the feet of the tainters. A whole morning he kept himself busy with these arrangements, dragging the stool hither and thither and shifting the ladder. After locking the back door of his house when he left for his shop, he took the side-lane which led to the main street.”

In *The Painter of Signs* we see another type of humour which is blended with irony. To give him courage while estimating Daisy’s physical beauty Raman wears a dark glass but the irony is that he cannot stop her when Daisy removes his dark glasses. In front of her strong personality Raman melts like wax providing an understanding smile in the face of his readers. In the village also Daisy finds a temple wall which is suitable for displaying family planning messages but it is discovered that barren women pray to the temple goddess and conceive. It is very humourous to seem Raman’s fear before the police station and his running away without knowing the reason why the inspector wanted to see him. J.M.Q Davies opines that “Narayan successfully uses romantic irony in this novel in the characters of Raman, the lover and the unsentimental Daisy”.  

Narayan’s humour or irony is found in his every novel. He is a master in using humour and irony in many of his novels. His use of ironic situations both in comic and tragic novels is highly appreciated. In fact, the secret art of Narayan lies in his humour and irony.

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(V) Indianness:

It is said that only through Indian languages an Indian consciousness can be created, but some Indo-Anglian novelists have attempted to communicate the Indian experience with the outside readers, specially with the English speaking people by their art of fiction. The Indo-Anglian writers like R.K. Narayan have used imagery, idiom and expression of their own country in their writings and transformed the materials into universal literature by applying their personal experience. It would be incredible to compare an Indo-Anglian novelist with a British writer like Charles Dickens, an American writer like John Steinbeck and an Australian writer like Patrick White. All of them use English medium to describe a human experience in their own style and technique. It is also true that Indian English has not yet acquired the distinctiveness like the American English or the Australian English. Yet some novelists like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan have successfully brought up the level of Indian English. By the beginning of the 21st century many Indian writers have proved that their writings are not inferior to the writings from America, England or the commonwealth countries. Writers from India, writers of Indian origin, and some non-resident Indian writers have won several international awards and prizes and distinguished themselves in the field of literature. We may name Arun Dhati Roy who has won the Booker prize, V.S. Nai Paul who has won the Novel Prize and Salman Rushdie who has won numerous prizes in literature. There is also a host of others who had been nominated for such distinguished recognitions. Hence, Indian writers can strongly assert that Indian English has become as distinct as American English and Indian writers have attained the status of world class writers.

In his ‘Forward’ to *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao has heralded the growth of Indian English in the near future in this way:

“We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American.”

Indian life is quite different from the western life. There are certain peculiar characteristics of Indian life, experience and speech that cannot be easily translated into the English language. Indo-Anglian literature of any kind is conditioned by Indian culture, style of life, Indian geography and speech habits in different linguistic areas. In short, a writer like R.K. Narayan may be regarded as an Indian novelist writing in English. His thought is shaped by the social, economic, political and philosophical scenes he has seen and experienced. His landscape is Indian, his characters are mostly Indian and even his settings are all from Indian soil. When a reader of Indo-Anglian literature picks up an Indo-Anglian novel they hope to see an Indian scene of hills, forests, caves, sweet vendors, temples, gutters and the multi-coloured and the multi-lingual people. This Indianess in literature is beautifully reflected in the novels of R.K. Narayan.

Like other learned Indian scholars, R.K. Narayan also employs mythological tales and characters in his fiction making them distinct with Indianess. In *The Vendor of Sweets* Jagan compares his son to Valmiki and Kalidasa. He also uses the Bhagawat Gita as his source of knowledge.

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and enlightenment, he also reads out lines from the holy scriptures to his staff everyday. Even in the last part of this novel we find him going away to forest saying:

"I am off to a retreat. I'm sixty and in a new janma". 17

His reference to the revertible cycle of Hindu philosophy is typical of an Indian writer's peculiariry and it cannot be found in a novel written by an English man or an American.

The settings of R.K. Narayan's novels are always Indian in character. It may be a small town like Malgudi with a galaxy of common characters like Gaffur, the taxi-driver, Krishna, the doctor, the adjournment lawyer or statues like that of Lawley's statue, etc. It may be in the Mempri Hills or beside the Sarayu River or a small railway station or temple for barren women like the temple at Badri Hill or a temple at Sailam. These are common scenes and places which can be seen in any village or town of India.

The Indianness of R.K. Narayan is clearly seen in the names of his characters who are mostly titular. In Swami and Friends or in The Painter of Signs the major characters are given titles like Swami or Raman. We also have characters with Indian names: Chandran, Raman, Krishna, Jayan, Mali, Raju in the novels like The Bachelor of Arts, The Dark Room, The English Teacher, The Vendor of Sweets and The Guide. Even the major female characters have Indian names like Malathi, Susila, Savitri,

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Ambika, etc. It is only in the novel 'The Painter of Signs' that the heroine is named Daisy; in 'The Guide' the heroine is referred to as Rosie but she is re-christened as 'Nalini' on the eve of her success as a great dancer.

The Indianness of R.K. Narayan's novels can also be seen in his description of culture, creed, rites and ceremonies scattered in different parts of the novels. We see a typical Indian funeral scene when Susila dies \(^{18}\) or a typical Indian marriage-scene when Jagan is married with Ambika \(^{19}\). His Indianness becomes provincial when he describes the way of serving food using plantain leaves.

Most protagonists of R.K. Narayan are sensitive, egoistic and sentimental. Unlike their British counterparts who are practical and self reliant, we see Mali dominated by the character of Grace and unable to take a decisive action. We also have the character of Raju who becomes careless and egocentric in dealing with the matters related to Rosie’s finance. We see Jagan unable to compromise with the western outlook of his son because he is a strict orthodox South Indian Hindu.

In tune with being an Indian novelist, all the novels of R.K. Narayan are studded with the beautiful archaic Indian words like pyol, thali, idli, saris, mantras, dhoti, jibba, jukta, jilebi, shastras, Sadhu, puja, Ahimsa, etc. It is his credit that many of these words have become English words newly entered into the English language.

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R.K. Narayan does not use exact word to word translation from his mothertongue to English language but he cannot hide the Indianess in the speech of his characters or in describing the action and behaviour of his characters. Such type of Indianess makes his novel most interesting and his readers want his Indian characters to speak like Indians but not like Englishmen or An American. A speech like:

"You could as well listen to a promise to turn the horse into a bullock!" he said, and then he made a proposal which appealed to my father's business instinct. "Let me ply it for hire in the market. All gram and grass my charge only let me use your shed. I will hand you two rupees a day and one rupee a month for the use of the shed, and anything I earn over two rupees should be mine." 20

is purely Indian in character in spite of its correctness in grammar and syntactical structure. Such things in R.K. Narayan's fiction make him a distinct Indo-Anglian novelist writing about Indians in English language.

VI. Myth and Reality:

The Indo-Anglian novelists use myth as a familiar technical device and it became a part of their technique of writings. Besides the influence and reference of the classical mythology upon their work, they also use age-old rituals of rain, harvest, and other traditional beliefs and rituals in their works. Among the Indo-Anglian novelists who use myth as a technical device, R.K. Narayan is praised and appreciated from various angles.

As Indians were brought up in the stories of old legends and great epics, the stories of classical mythology become a source of inspiration to the Indo-Anglian novelists. These Indo-Anglian novelists have employed Gods, demons and sages in their stories as types and symbols. Critics like Samares C. Sanyal, also opine that the Indo-Anglian novelists use mythical stories and characters as types and symbols in their works. Giving a justification of this opinion C. Sanyal remarks:

"With the impact of modern literature the Indo-Anglian novelists begin to look at the Gods, demons and sages not as some remote Puranic characters as described in the mythological stories but as types and symbols possessing psychological validity, even when seen against the contemporary background." 21

For the Indo-Anglian novelists classical mythology became a rich source for their writing and they are compulsorily attracted towards this infinite source of material. By using myth in their work they tried to present the realities of life.

Even from the time of his first novel Swami and Friends Narayan began to employ myth. In this novel he employs myth related with Swami imagining with gods and demons. David Scott Philip is of the opinion that Narayan’s use of myth is not unconscious justifying the opinion he remarks:

"Since Narayan is in the line of these earlier Hindu revivalists who consciously refashioned the mythology of Hinduism to make it more palatable to its British detractors his use of myth is not wholly unconscious." 22

The humiliation of Hindu Gods and Goddesses by the English teachers is truly reflected in his two novels *Swami and Friends* and *The Guide* as the writer himself has experienced in his life.

Narayan uses myth in the background of reality and has tried to bring it up in the realities of life. In his Novel *The Bachelor of Arts*, Chandran’s sanyasihood does not last long since he has no intention and desire to become a sanyasi. His sanyasihood is temporary and he no longer does not like to cheat the Koopal villagers. He has soon returned home to lead a normal life. In *The Dark Room* Savitri, is a typical Hindu wife. She is the symbol of Indian woman suffering in the hands of her husband and finding no room to escape from the tyranny of her husband. She is not the legendary Savitri who snatches the soul of her husband from the hands of Yama (The God of Death). The legendary Savitri’s relationship with her husband is quite different from Savitri’s relationship with Ramani. Though she has the qualities of a mother and a wife, she suffers for fifteen years of married life. Since she has nowhere to go she returns ultimately.

Some opine that Savitri’s return to home is a triumph in the mythic tradition that woman should be selfless and have the qualities of sacrifice. Savitri sacrifices her life for the welfare of her children. She lives not for her pleasure and benefit. In fact, Savitri possesses the qualities of a mythical figure but she spends her life without any pleasure and happiness.

Narayan in his later novels also has used myth in the background of reality. In *Mr. Sampath*, Narayan presents the gap between ideal and reality. Shiva is a mythical figure and one of the greatest gods of the Hindus. But Shiva in "*The Burning of Kama*" asks (extra) money for his role. Narayan portrays a contrast between the Lord Shiva and V.L.G. who acted Shiva in the film of the *Sunrise Pictures*. The connection between
myth and reality is clearly presented in this novel. In the mythical theme, Lord Shiva burns the ‘God of Love’, Kama with his third eye in order to prevent himself to fall into the lustful passion but in reality instead of burning Kama, Kama burns both Ravi and Sampath. Ravi goes mad and Sampath is left by Shanti. In *The Painter of Signs*, Narayan uses myth in the modern context. The story of king Santhanu and Ganga is brought in correspondence with Raman’s love relation with Daisy. Santhanu married Ganga on the condition that he would not question on any of her actions. After he married her she drowned her seven children born to them. Santhanu was shocked and it was when the eighth child was born that he could no longer remain speechless and he questioned his wife. Thus, he broke their contract and she revealed herself to be Ganga. Daisy also has kept condition to Raman who was madly in love with her. Like king Santhanu Raman accepts every condition of Daisy to marry her but Daisy, like Ganga, has left Raman. Using mythical figures Narayan tries to blend mythology with the realities of life. Perhaps he also thinks that human conditions are the same regardless of time, place, milieu and even the plane of experience.

**VII. Style:**

It is very difficult to analyse the style of a versatile writer like R.K. Narayan. In fact, style is the integral part of a writer’s vision and it cannot also be separated from the theme of the novel. The two will go together. Style is varied from a writer to another. Each of the writers has his own style. R.K. Narayan’s style has a peculiar quality that makes him one of the most remarkable fiction writers of India.

Though English is not his mother tongue, Narayan uses it as a medium of his writing. He tries to bring English to Tamil usage. While “Mulk Raj Anand tries to equate the Hindi or Panjabi expression with English words.
R.K. Narayan’s method is to use the spoken English of a small town in the Tamil country. His style is conspicuous first of all by its similarity to Tamil usage and secondly by the spontaneous use he makes of Indian English idioms.  

Narayan’s usage of English in relation to Tamil usage can be obviously seen when he often uses the interrogative ‘have’ without ‘got’ as in the novels like *Mr. Sampath*:

“How many sons and daughters have you,”

(*Mr. Sampath*, p. 55)

Narayan also uses the imperative ‘let’ at the beginning of a sentence:

“Let him demand them immediately if he wants betel leaves also”

(*Mr. Sampath*, p. 55)

New composite words such as ‘nose-led’, ‘line-cleared’ ‘eating-stuff’, etc. are also employed in his novels. And many Indian-English idioms also appear in Narayan’s writing such as ‘it is still paining me,” ‘I never knew that...’, ‘If only he started cross-examining the teachers, the teachers would be nowhere’ (*Swami and Friends*, p.6.), ‘mug up’, ‘behave like a rowdy’.

In his novels, Narayan presents visual descriptions in minute detail. He can vividly describe the scene. When a reader reads the lines he can see the scene as if he sees in a painting:

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"... a small pond with blue lotus, a row of stone step leading down to the water. Tall casuarina trees swayed and murmured over the banks. A crescent moon peeped behind the foliage. On the bank on our side stood a small shrine, its concrete walls green with age, and its little dome showing cracks; it had a small portal, and a flagstaff at the entrance"

(The English Teacher, p. 111)

And,

“They had now reached Market Road. It was deserted, with a few late shops throwing their lights on the road, and municipal road light flickering here and there. The sky was full of stars, a cool breeze was blowing.”

(Mr. Sampath, p. 160)

Narayan also uses a single clear image in his novels. There is suggestiveness in his narrative technique; and action and gesture combine together rather than the emotion.

One of the remarkable features of Narayan’s style is found in the ending of the novels. Indeed, the endings of his novels are excellent and interesting. The series of events that come one after another have a sudden twist at the end of the novel. In Mr. Sampath, Mr Sampath suddenly appears before Srinivas and narrates his past events that he never thought to happen. The event of Shanti’s leaving of him is also another surprising event which Sampath has never imagined. Lastly, he is going to the Railway station without making Srinivas know where he goes and what he will do. In The English Teacher, there is mystical union between Krishna and Susila. The communication between husband and wife takes place directly without the need of a medium. It is in fact the union of two souls and it is
also 'a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death'. In The Painter of Signs also Daisy suddenly leaves Raman without any warning. Raman’s hope is dashing on the ground. The novel ends when Raman and Daisy are going to different ways of life never hoping to meet again.

About R.K. Narayan’s style V.Y. Kantak remarks that Narayan’s style is like a one-stringed instrument. He further “points out how at moments of intensity Narayan’s instrument fails to satisfy the reader because of its lack of amplitude. But no other instrument would have better suited the simple honesty of Narayan’s vision.” 24

Really speaking, Narayan’s stylistic method is to begin with and describe the concrete, the particular and the historic as experienced and observed facts, and to imply at the same time their place in a determined order of events. Unlike Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao, He writes in the spoken Indian English of the Tamil country in an individual way but by retaining the regional characteristics.