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**THE DEPICTION OF KARMA
PHILOSOPHY IN THE NOVELS
OF R. K. NARAYAN**

THESIS

submitted to

SAURASHTRA UNIVERSITY

For the award of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

ENGLISH

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2010

STATEMENTE UNDER UNI. O. PH. D. 7

I hereby declare that the work embodied in my thesis on The Depiction of Karma Philosophy in the Novels of R. K. Narayan prepared for Ph. D. degree has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university on any previous occasion and to the best of my knowledge, no work has been reported on the above subject.

The work presented in this thesis is original and whenever references have been made to the work of others, they have been clearly indicated as such and the source of information is included in the bibliography.

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THE DEPICTION OF *KARMA* PHILOSOPHY

IN THE NOVELS OF R. K. NARAYAN

For the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan (1906 – 2001), one of the founding pillars of Indian Writing in English is an institution in himself. Born and brought up in a traditional South Indian family, Narayan is a true Indian both in spirit and thought. Much has been said about Narayan as an outstanding and unassailable story-teller. Volumes of research have been published on his eye-catching narrative style and his art of characterization. If Raja Rao is termed as a novelist of metaphysics, Narayan is often applauded as a painter of vivid Malgudi, a microcosm of Indian social milieu. He has always been claimed as a novelist par excellence in matters of social criticism of India. But little has been written on how Narayan incorporates the profoundest Indian thoughts, philosophies and spiritualism in general and theory of *Karma* in particular in his novels.

“To be a good writer anywhere, you must have roots - both in religion and family. I have these things.”⁽¹⁾

Born in a South Indian family of “the purest Brahmin stock” Narayan’s roots in religion and family were strengthened by his maternal grandmother who was instrumental in introducing him during his childhood to classical Indian and Tamil cultures, languages and literature, defining the traditional Brahmin values and ways of life. Every evening she made him recite the Tamil alphabet followed by Avvaiyar’s saying as well as a few Sanskrit *Slokas* praising Sarasvati, the Goddess of Learning. Narayan’s traditional family and

social background thus initiated him in early stage of his life in the knowledge of Hindu philosophy, religion and culture. In one of his interviews with Susan E. Craft, Narayan remarks, “There are so many stories, so much symbolism, so much imagery. That’s where we should start.”⁽²⁾

R. K. Narayan has translated and published shortened prose versions of the two great Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and a few Hindu mythical tales in Gods, Demons and Others.

A traditional South Indian Brahmin, Narayan used to start his day with meditation, a little bit of reading of the *Puranas* and recitation of *Gayatri Mantra*. His knowledge of Indian classical literature, philosophy, religion and ethics permeates his writing, but a simple man that he was, he does not unnecessarily burden his readers with discourses on abstract philosophy and metaphysics. He does not employ the genre of novel as a vehicle for propaganda for any social or political cause, nor does he pour too much philosophy and theory in his writing like his peers. Jayant K. Biswal opines:

“R. K. Narayan views life’s lapses not with any missionary benevolence or zeal but with the understanding and wisdom of an artist who acknowledges various compulsions, complexities of life behind his chimeric narrative modes. Thus, his comic mode shields his philosophy. Behind the narrative façade of his novels, Narayan attempts at a vision of life ... a life of opposing dualities, of appearance and reality, beliefs and betrayals.”⁽³⁾

Narayan’s fiction includes a series of books about people and their interactions in an imagined town in South India. He is one of four leading

figures of early Indian literature in English, along with Mulk Raj Anand, Ahmed Ali and Raja Rao. Narayan is credited with bringing Indian literature in English to the rest of the world, and is regarded as one of India's greatest English language novelists. Narayan broke through with the help of his mentor and friend, Graham Greene, who was instrumental in getting publishers for Narayan's first four books, including the semi-autobiographical trilogy of Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts and The English Teacher. Narayan's works also include The Financial Expert, hailed as one of the most original works of 1951, and Sahitya Akademi Award winner The Guide, which was adapted for films in Hindi and English languages.

Narayan wrote his first novel, Swami and Friends, in 1935, after short, uninspiring stints as a teacher, an editorial assistant, and a newspaperman. In it, he invented the small south Indian city of Malgudi, a literary microcosm that critics later compared to William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County. More than a dozen novels and many short stories that followed were set in Malgudi. His writing style has been compared to that of Guy de Maupassant as they both have an ability to compress the narrative without losing out on elements of the story.

Narayan's second novel, Bachelor of Arts (1939), marked the beginning of his reputation in England, where the novelist Graham Greene was largely responsible for getting it published. Greene has called Narayan "the novelist I most admire in the English language."⁽⁴⁾ His fourth novel, The English Teacher, published in 1945, was partly autobiographical, concerning a teacher's struggle to cope with the death of his wife. In 1953, Michigan State

University published it under the title Grateful to Life and Death, along with his novel The Financial Expert; they were Narayan's first books published in the United States.

Subsequent publications of his novels, especially Mr. Sampath, *Waiting for the Mahatma*, The Guide, The Man-eater of Malgudi, and The Vendor of Sweets, established Narayan's reputation in the West. Many critics consider The Guide (1958) to be Narayan's masterpiece. Told in a complex series of flashbacks, it concerns a tourist guide who seduces the wife of a client, prospers, and ends up in jail. The novel won India's highest literary honor, and it was adapted for the off-Broadway stage in 1968.

At least two of Narayan's novels, Mr. Sampath (1949) and The Guide (1958), were adapted for the movies. Narayan usually wrote for an hour or two a day, composing fast, often writing as many as 2,000 words and seldom correcting or rewriting.

Narayan's stories begin with realistic settings and everyday happenings in the lives of a cross-section of Indian society, with characters of all classes. Gradually fate or chance, oversight or blunder, transforms mundane events to preposterous happenings. Unexpected disasters befall the hero as easily as unforeseen good fortune. The characters accept their fates with an equanimity that suggests the faith that things will somehow turn out happily, whatever their own motivations or actions. Progress, in the form of Western-imported goods and attitudes, combined with bureaucratic institutions, meets in Malgudi with long-held conventions, beliefs, and ways of doing things. The modern

world can never win a clear-cut victory because Malgudi accepts only what it wants, according to its own private logic.

Reviewing Narayan's 1976 novel The Painter of Signs, Anthony Thwaite of the *New York Times* said Narayan created "a world as richly human and volatile as that of Dickens."⁽⁵⁾ His next novel, A Tiger for Malgudi (1983), is narrated by a tiger whose holy master is trying to lead him to enlightenment. It and his fourteenth novel Talkative Man (1987) received mixed reviews.

In his 80s, Narayan continued to have books published. He returned to his original inspiration, his grandmother, with the 1994 book Grandmother's Tale and Other Stories, which *Publishers Weekly* called "an exemplary collection from one of India's most distinguished men of letters."⁽⁶⁾ Donna Seaman of *Booklist* hailed the collection of short stories that spanned over 50 years of Narayan's writing as "an excellent sampling of his short fiction, generally considered his best work" from "one of the world's finest storytellers."⁽⁷⁾ Narayan once noted: "Novels may bore me, but never people."⁽⁸⁾

In a writing career that spanned over sixty years, Narayan received many awards and honours. These include the A. C. Benson Medal from the Royal Society of Literature and the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian award. He was also nominated to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian parliament.

Narayan's fictional characters have their mooring in Malgudi. This town of Malgudi is a traditional one visited by Lord Rama, Laxmana, Sita, Hanuman and Goddess Parvati – the mythical Gods and Goddesses to Buddha, Sankara and Gandhi – from the mythical to the real. These Malgudians invite parallels with Chaucer's Canterbury characters, Shakespeare's fools and Hardy's rustics. Narayan's rustics and fools are controlled and governed by a value system that is enshrined in their culture, tradition, religion and philosophy though their understanding of these systems varies from person to person that accrues a high degree of complexity to these characters. According to P. S. Ramana, Narayan has studied a character first on the test of social order i.e. in the context of his community, set up and social environment, secondly, he studies a character in relation to himself. ⁽⁹⁾ These parallels in character analysis form the basis of Indian philosophy. The Malgudians achieve the equilibrium between their profession and philosophy and synthesize the concepts of *Purusharthas* and *Ashrama Dharma* ⁽¹⁰⁾ in their life. An analysis of their life reiterates the claims of their foregrounding in Indian moral and social value system.

Narayan's comic vision illuminates numerous weighty themes – the place of woman in a traditional society, the moral limitations of a materialistic way of life and the consequences of flouting accepted codes. His fiction also incorporates the psychological and ethical implications of some Hindu concepts as ascetic purification, *Yoga*, renunciation, non-attachment, *Maya* and the cyclic progressions of life and death. Most importantly, Narayan projects the great Indian theory of *Karma* and he minutely represents various paths of achieving *Moksha* or self-realization in his novels. His fiction

combines different facets of life and experience. K. R. S. Iyenger rightly remarks:

“Narayan’s is the art of resolved and conscientious exploration ... he would, if he could, explore the inner countries of the mind, heart and soul, catch the uniqueness in the ordinary, the tragic in the prosaic.”⁽¹¹⁾

Narayan believes in all rituals, ethos and abstract philosophies. No wonder his fiction reflects his inherent knowledge of Indian philosophy, classical literature, religion and ethics. Except for the use of English language, his novels are Indo-centric as opposed to Eurocentric that imbibes the quintessence of Indian philosophy. Shanta Krishnaswamy regards Narayan a great collector of old concepts, a sammler of order, and of tradition.⁽¹²⁾ R. M. Verma also points out that the author’s commonplace creations seek a righteous path in the travails of their existence which is pinpointed in the totality of Indian living – an amalgam of past and present, tradition and modernity.⁽¹³⁾ V. S. Naipaul also holds the similar view and remarks:

“Narayan’s novels are less purely social comedies I had once taken them to be than religious books, at times religious fables, and intensively Hindu.”⁽¹⁴⁾

Being an unassuming and unpretentious artist, Narayan does not unnecessarily burden his readers with pedantic discourses on abstract philosophy or metaphysics. Novel for Narayan is not a means of social or political propaganda, nor does he treat it as a vehicle for filtering in philosophy into the text like Raja Rao, but his fictional works are simplistic but realistic projection of life.

Narayan's presentation of characters and their relationships with one another achieve a philosophic overtone. He presents the characters in the light of the most contemplated universal theory of *Karma* as devised by The Bhagwad Gita, a Hindu epic. Almost all Narayan's characters demonstrate the growing pains arising from the dissatisfaction with their mundane lives. De facto, this dissatisfaction comes in their process of achieving self-realization. Narayan's characters achieve a synthesis of flesh and spirit through the philosophic interpretation of their own mundane activities. Kantak rightly observes:

“These Malgudi men and women within their circumscribed lives, yet manage to express, the irrepressible Joie-de-vivre which distinguishes them. They think and live differently, once they attain their synthesis of flesh and spirit.”⁽¹⁵⁾

Almost all Narayan's principle characters experience loneliness and alienation. This loneliness and alienation comes in their lives because they are dissatisfied with their lives. However, the period which they spend in loneliness and alienation is fruitful. The long weary nights which Swami spends in the forest enables him to appreciate and understand the love and affection of his parents. In the same way, Marco and Rosie in The Guide and Krishnan and Sushila in The English Teacher suffer from separation and loneliness which teach them to face the bitter truths of life. Raju, the guide denounces the material life and turns spiritual and introspective during his lonely hours in the jail. Raja, the tiger too turns out a *Sanyasi* as he is tamed and separated from his wild manners of living and thinking. Thus, Narayan has projected the theme of separation in his novels in order to incorporate the

philosophic vision of India. This vision has been preached by most of the Indian scriptures through the theory of self-realization.

Moreover, Narayan strongly believes in the life which is lived in correlation with tradition and philosophy and deviation from it brings suffering and dissatisfaction. The human relationships presented by Narayan in his novels have originated from Indian tradition and philosophy. The relationship between the father and the son – for example, Chandran and his father in The Bachelor of Arts, Swami and his father in Swami and Friends, Margayya and Balu in The Financial Expert, Gagan and Mali in The Vendor of Sweets and Gopu and Tim in The World of Nagaraj do not have harmony and peace because the son in these relationships do not show any sense of respect and reverence to his tradition.

In the same way, the severing of relationship and emotional trauma is found in husband and wife relationship in Narayan's novels. The relationship between Marco and Rosie in The Guide is not based on traditional philosophic values as devised by Manu in Manu Smriti – devotion, submission, mutual respect and proper understanding. This couple does not share this kind of bond and therefore, their relationship does not become everlasting. On the contrary to this, the relationship between Krishnan and Sushila in The English Teacher touches the height of sublimity because they share a strong bondage of family values. The relationship between Srinivas and Sampath in Mr. Sampath, Margayya and Dr. Pal in The Financial Expert and Nataraj and Vasu in The Man Eater of Malgudi does not run in proper manner and there is upheaval in their lives. Thus, the role of traditional values and philosophical touch to human relationship has been emphasized by Narayan in his novels.

In Narayan's presentation of characters, we find a general pattern as K. R. S. Iyenger observes:

"There is generally a flight, an uprooting, a disturbance of order followed by a return, a renewal, a restoration to normalcy."⁽¹⁶⁾

Narayan presents the characters passing through a period of struggle and transition but towards the end they attain a new vitality which provides them with a new interpretation of ordinary situations. The normalcy in the lives of Vasu, Margayya, Jagan, Raju and Raja comes, only because of their submission to traditional values and self-realization.

Narayan has also presented the great theory of order and disorder in his novels. Arjuna in the Indian epic The Bhagwad Gita encounters a great conflict on the battle field and disorder hovers his life which is brought to normalcy by Lord Krishna through his ever lively preaching of the theory of *Karma*. One finds the 'order-disorder' pattern on a large scale in Narayan's novels. In his presentation of human relationship between two human beings, there is order in the beginning, but this order is not lasting. It gets disordered when his characters come in conflict with other characters under some unexpected situations and circumstances. About this pattern, R. A. Singh rightly remarks:

"The order-disorder pattern in R. K. Narayan's fiction could be understood better in terms of the Hegelian dialectic where order attained at the end is qualitatively different from the initial order which generates discontent in the protagonist."⁽¹⁷⁾

Narayan applies this pattern in almost all his novels. The 'order-disorder' pattern is found the relationship between Swami and his father, between Chandran and his father, between Jagan and Mali, Gopu and Tim

have order and peace in the beginning, but this order does not remain for a long time. Their relationships do not attain any appropriate dimension because their motives clash with each other and their outlooks and attitudes differ from each other. Similarly, there is order in the beginning in the relationship between Srinivas and Mr. Sampath, Margayya and Dr. Pal, Raju and his mother and Vasu and Nataraj. But their relationships are disordered when they realize the transitoriness of human relationship based on selfishness and opposite motives. But at the end they attain the life full of spiritual and mental peace as they learn a lesson that human and the social values preached by the Indian philosophy are mandatory for any human being to achieve salvation and self-realization. It is these values that help one to maintain his/her equilibrium in times of disorder, clash of motives and conflict.

R. K. Narayan's characters with a fore-grounding in the cultural life of their society have deeply absorbed and assumed philosophical ways of life. Although they cherish the ancient values and retain the traditional ways of life, yet they do not hesitate in bringing about a change, adopting and adapting to the modern ways of life. Narayan deals with Indian philosophy, but he does not preach in an aphoristic way, on the contrary, the dull, dry and serious material of Indian thought is made comprehensive and contemporary. In his novels Mr. Sampath, The Man Eater of Malgudi and The World of Nagaraj the philosophy of the protagonists and other characters is largely derived from the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the epics and the Bhagvad Gita. This philosophy is a part of their cultural heritage and ancestry which varies according to the familial or social conditions of these characters.

Narayan's characters have a philosophic outlook towards life. Philosophy for them is not an objective reality but a way of life. Narayan's characters can be categorized into three distinct groups on the basis of their philosophical perspectives and social activities. Firstly there are the chief protagonists with a specific philosophical vision in life. Srinivas in Mr. Sampath and Nataraj in The Man Eater of Malgudi and Nagaraj in The World of Nagaraj are philosophers in their own right who expound, protect and promote the value system that is deeply rooted in Indian philosophical thought. Secondly, there are those like Vasu in The Man Eater of Malgudi and Sampath in Mr. Sampath who offer a resistance to the unity and harmony of the Malgudian world which is a microcosm of the Indian society. Lastly, Narayan introduces in his novels a class of people who offer a critique of Indian philosophy and thought, in their own way. They are ordinary people engaged in the mundane activities and their attitude to life, circumstances and fate bring about the divergent interpretations and analysis of Indian philosophy.

Narayan's characters adhere to or violate the ethical and moral system which is the major component of Indian philosophy and thought. His philosophical characters subscribe to the moral and ethical dictates and codes laid down in Manu Smriti. Srinivas and Nataraj are moralists who adhere to the values of the Indian society. The characters who violate the peace and harmony of the Malgudian world are immoral, unethical and they are eventually punished. Mr. Sampath ends up a forlorn person while Vasu precipitates his end in a mysterious manner. The critiques of philosophy simultaneously pursue their own ethics.

Narayan's fiction reiterates the doctrine of *Karma* (action) in the Indian philosophical systems. The innate trust in life and the capacity of its renewal in the face of a threat of its existence is the central principle of his fiction. The Indian philosophy regards this life which functions in a cyclical order subjected to various ups and downs as medium of true self-realization. Narayan has presented the theory of *Karma* in some of his novels. His novels The English Teacher, The Vendor of Sweets and The Financial Expert discuss the theory of *Karma* and the cyclic vision of R. K. Narayan. It is averred that the occult and esoteric experiences in The English Teacher described by Narayan explores the cycle of life and death besides the loneliness of human existence. The Vendor of Sweets, is also a sojourn into the theme of man's quest for identity and self-renewal. The fifty five year old Jagan, a fervent disciple of Gandhi and a devotee of the Bhagvad Gita explores the meaning, and mystery of life cycle through Indian philosophy. The chain of events in the life of Margayya in The Financial Expert depicts a cyclic order. The novels explore the theory of *Artha* and *Kama* in a truly Indian sense. It is a classic exposition of the Hindu philosophy of equilibrium where man survives the external shocks of adversity positively and peacefully. Narayan's characters reinforce and reassert their faith in Indian culture, history, religion, ethics and philosophy withstanding the shock of an alien culture. Narayan asserts the fact that an individual can transcend the boundaries of *Karma*, fate and the cycle of this life and death if he observes the dictates and dictum of Indian *Shashtras*. Like Narayan, Raja Rao has also asserted these philosophical concepts in his fiction, but his presentation is more metaphysical and abstract.

The influence and impact of Gandhi's ideology in contemporary Indian society in general and on literatures in particular can not be undermined. Gandhian philosophy and ideology has invariably motivated and invigorated the contemporary Indian writers and a huge corpus of contemporary Indian writing is fore-grounded on Gandhism. The works of the leading contemporary Indian writers in English, namely, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya and R. K. Narayan demonstrated the Gandhian impact in their writings. Apart from these luminaries, K. A. Abbas' Inquilab, Nagarajan's The Chronicals of Kedaram, K. R. Venkataramani's Kandan, The Patriot describe at length the influence of Gandhi on the contemporary social and political scene.

Narayan in his characteristic comical and subtle manner prefers to write novels primarily focusing on day-to-day life of an average Malgudian in the imaginary town of Malgudi. The hallmark of his writing is that he has successfully fused his personal philosophy in his literary works. Though apparently simple in content, Narayan's fiction is distinctive for its fusion of the comic with the serious. Unlike the novels of his contemporaries Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao, Narayan does not directly promote the Gandhian philosophy. Narayan's treatment of the Gandhian philosophy in his fiction is distinctly different, his works manifest the multifarious facets of Gandhism. His protagonists and characters rooted and nurtured in the Indian ethics and philosophy are people in quest of truth who embody the greatest virtues of life and they are Gandhians in their own particular manner. When they are disillusioned, they epitomize the disillusionment of the masses who failed to

comprehend and assimilate the teachings of Gandhi to the danger of trivialization of Gandhism.

Narayan has knitted the Gandhian philosophy in the theme and plot of his novels. His protagonists propagate the Gandhian views and advocate Gandhian philosophy as way of life. The Gandhian philosophy is reflected very effectively in Waiting for the Mahatma, The Vendor of Sweets and The English Teacher. Narayan delineates the Gandhian stream of consciousness that awakens the inner sensibility of both the characters and readers. Sriram in Waiting for the Mahatma, Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets and Krishnan in The English Teacher finally evolve as true Gandhians. The class of pseudo-Gandhian is comically caricatured and satirized in Narayan's fiction. Swaminathan and Chandran in Swami and Friends and The Bachelor of Arts respectively share the pre-independence views of an average middle class Indian. Swaminathan, a participant in Gandhian movement, is more aggressive and outspoken in his adherence to Gandhian philosophy, but Chandran's approach, on the contrary, is moderate and reasonable. In The Man Eater of Malgudi, the theme of non-violence is randomly contrasted with the character of Vasu and the same theme is epitomized through the activities of the wild beast, tiger in A Tiger for Malgudi who ultimately subscribes to the Gandhian way of life under the guidance of his master who is again a devotee of Gandhi.

Narayan's fiction corroborates with the eternal view of self – realization and *Moksha* as well as the contents of Indian philosophy. Moreover, his birth and upbringing in a traditional Brahmin family further substantiates this indelible mark of Hinduism on his personality and writing. The Bhagvad Gita

and its *Karma* philosophy regard self – realization or enlightenment as the ultimate goal in a man's life, although the methods for the attainment of this goal may vary from man to man. Soul i.e. *Atman* acquires unanimity with the Supreme Soul or Almighty who is *Paramatma* or God. *Moksha* is a state of moral and intellectual perfection transcending the distinction between good and evil, between doubt and faith, between being and non-being. This goal is attainable in present life as per the teachings, sayings of the Upanishads and *Jivan Mukti* or liberation. In the end, when the individual who has reached this stage, dissociates himself from physical accomplishments, he becomes *Brahman* itself; that is final release or *Videha – Mukti*.

Narayan has very artistically interwoven various thoughts of The Bhagwad Gita in his novels. He has presented the theory of renunciation, and liberation or *Moksha* in his two novels, The Guide and A Tiger for Malgudi. Raju, the tourist guide is initially entrapped in the illusory world when the materialistic *Charvaka* philosophy guides and governs his life. He commits the crime of forging the signature of Rosie and is accordingly punished and sent to the prison. His foul deeds pay him. He receives his ill fate as per his evil *Karma*. But landed into the prison life, he finds time for his moral and social transgression. The prison accrues to him an ideal opportunity to journey into the innermost regions of his soul and shake off his material and social illusions. Thereafter, evolution in the character of Raju is a ceaseless and ongoing process.

If The Guide is the spiritual odyssey of a man, A Tiger for Malgudi on the contrary presents an insight into the animal world. Narayan has experimented here with the popular theme of transformation in a beast. The

novelist's choice for the most powerful animal from the animal kingdom as the chief protagonist in the novel is full of inferences and hidden meaning. Narayan is in fact exploring as well as exposing human weaknesses, follies and foibles in both man and beast. At the lowest level of physical existence Raju and Raja share the *Tamasik Gunas* when the pursuit of *Kama* and *Artha* is their topmost priority in life.

The life of the tiger Raja offers a close parallel to the circle of human engagement in *Sansara*. Both man and beast require the guidance of a worthy *Guru* to attain liberation from *Sansara*. The tiger Raja under the guidance of the Swami attains knowledge. His entry into the *Vanaprastha Ashrama* is devised by Swami. Raja's departure to the zoo is symbolic of a new *janma* or life corresponding to the Indian philosophical concept of *Punarjanma* or reincarnation. Raju, the human attains knowledge by an exploration of the self and achieves sainthood. He too acquires entirely anew attire inwardly and outwardly. Thus, Raju also enters into his new *janma* or life.

The present study undertakes to examine the novels of R. K. Narayan in the context of Indian philosophy, religion and ethics in general and theory of *Karma*, *Moksha* the theory of cycle of life and death in particular. An attempt has also been made to observe Narayan's characters in the light of four *Ashramas* (*Bramhacharyashrama*, *Grihasthashrama*, *Vanaprasthashrama* and *Sanyasthashrama*) and four ideals (*Artha*, *Kama*, *Dharma* and *Moksha*) as well as duties of *Purusha* or man as devised by Manu in Manu Smriti.

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CHAPTER - II

PHILOSOPHY AS A WAY OF LIFE IN THE NOVELS OF

R. K. NARAYAN

“Philosophy has for its function in the ordering of life and the guidance of action. It sits at the helm and directs our course throughout the changes and chances of the world. When philosophy is alive, it can't be remote from the life of the people.”⁽¹⁾

According to Radhakrishnan, philosophy in the Indian context is not confined to the dissemination of intellectual knowledge and wisdom only. Indian philosophy is both man-centered and life-centered. The homo-centralisms and centrality of man is the perennial theme of Indian philosophy. Max Muller, the renowned thinker and critic of Indian philosophy writes:

“It exhibits a strong instinct for life, a strange vitality and a strong power – all its own. It is deathless in that the values outlined in Indian philosophy are neither old nor new but are eternal.”⁽²⁾

P. Nagaraja Rao also perceives this centrality of man as the constant theme of Indian philosophy and thought. A definite way of life is outlined here for obtaining spiritual experiences aimed at the attainment of final bliss – *Moksha*.

⁽³⁾ Radhakrishnan has rightly said that Indian philosophy is not merely a view of life, but it is also a way of life, “an approach to spiritual realization.”⁽⁴⁾

R. K. Narayan is primarily a novelist, not a philosopher. Though he imports the material from the traditional wisdom and store-house of India, he

makes it contemporary. His subject matter is based on the myths, legends, stories and incidents from the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Upanishads*, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagwad Gita. By and large, Narayan's novels permeate in Indian culture and tradition, ideologies and views that are fore-grounded in Indian philosophy and thought. Though in a different context, Pam Morris has opined:

“This understanding of ‘ideology’ rests on the assumption that as we enter the cultural life of our society – as we acquire language and interact with others – we absorb and assume its ways of seeing. We are drawn imperceptibly into a complex network of values, assumptions and expectations which are always already there prior to us and as seem natural, just the way things are.”⁽⁵⁾

R. K. Narayan's characters with a fore-grounding in the cultural life of their society have deeply absorbed and assumed philosophical ways of life. The characters' position in his novels corroborates T. S. Eliot's views of “historic sense and tradition” as prescribed by him in his essay entitled Tradition and Individual Talent.⁽⁶⁾ His major characters have the “historic sense” of drawing the traditional philosophy and religion into their lives. Although they cherish the ancient values and retain the traditional ways of life yet they do not hesitate in bringing about a change, adopting and adapting to the modern ways of life.

R. K. Narayan does not preach philosophy in an abstract or abstruse way. On the contrary, he has made the serious material of Indian thought comprehensive and contemporary giving a touch of humour. In the three novels namely Mr. Sampath (1949), The Man Eater of Malgudi (1962) and

The World of Nagaraj (1990) the philosophy of the protagonists and other characters is largely derived from the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the epics and the Bhagvad Gita. This philosophy is a part of their cultural heritage and ancestry which varies according to the familial or social conditions of these characters.

Narayan's characters have a philosophic outlook towards life. Philosophy for them is not an objective reality but is a way of their lives. They can be categorized into three distinct groups on the basis of their philosophy, philosophical perspectives and social activities or engagements. Firstly there are the chief protagonists with a specific philosophical vision in life. Srinivas in Mr. Sampath and Nataraj in The Man Eater of Malgudi are philosophers in their own right who expound, protect and promote the value system that is deeply rooted in Indian philosophical thought. Secondly, there are those like Vasu in The Man Eater of Malgudi and Sampath in Mr. Sampath who offer a resistance to the order, unity and harmony of the Malgudian world which is a microcosm of Indian society. Lastly, Narayan introduces in his novels a class of people who offer a critique of Indian philosophy and thought, in their own ways. They are ordinary people engaged in the mundane activities and their interpretations circumstances, consequences and fate bring about the divergent interpretations and analysis of Indian philosophy.

In Mr. Sampath R. K. Narayan is influenced by the Shiv Purana and he endeavors to portray the reality and immortality of Indian thought through The Banner. In The Man Eater of Malgudi the demonic or *Tamasik Gunas* or virtues are symbolized through Vasu. Here Narayan revives the *Puranic* myth of *Bhasmasura* and *Mohini*.

Narayan's characters adhere to or violate the ethical and moral system which is the major component of Indian philosophy and thought. His philosophical characters subscribe to the moral and ethical dictates and codes laid down in Manu Smriti. Srinivas and Nataraj are moralists who adhere to the values of the Indian society. The characters who violate the peace and harmony of the Malgudian world are immoral, unethical and they are eventually punished. Mr. Sampath ends up a forlorn person while Vasu precipitates his end in a mysterious manner. The critiques of philosophy simultaneously pursue their own ethics.

MR. SAMPATH: THE PAPANMIKA AND THE SHUBHA

R. K. Narayan in Mr. Sampath (1949) traces the roots of philosophy and antiquity. Here the novelist has picked up the character of Mr. Sampath, the publisher, a real life character who worked as an editor in the Indian Thought - "a quarterly publication devoted to literature, philosophy and culture." ⁽⁷⁾ Srinivas, the protagonist and writer associates the existence of Malgudi, to the old *Puranic* times. He retraces the departure of Shri Ram through the present Market Road of Malgudi when it was an uninhibited country followed by Laxmana, Hanuman and Sita. The river Saryu was born when "He (Shri Ram) pulled an arrow from his quiver and scratched a line on the sand, and water instantly appeared." ^(p. 206) ⁽⁸⁾ Again when Buddha came this way, preaching his gospel of compassion, centuries later, he passed along the main street of a prosperous village. The great Samkara appeared during the next millennium in Malgudi. "He installed the goddess there and preached his gospel of *Vedanta*: the identity and oneness of God and his creatures." ^(p. 207) The Christian missionaries also preached here. Thus, he reflects mainly upon the culture that existed before the arrival of the imperialistic powers in India.

All the external symbols of the ruined civilization have been washed down by the waters of the Saryu, but one thing which has not been washed out is the historicity and antiquity of the nation and its culture. The people of Malgudi have provided a panacea to the wounds of the past, revived the memories and have rejuvenated the ancient civilization by reflecting upon the preaching of the great national heroes, saints and seers. Srinivas hesitantly desires to immortalize the glorious past of Indian philosophy and Hindu

culture in his quarterly, *The Banner*, thereby revitalizing the greatness of Hinduism and reawakening the insensibilities of the Malgudians.

The Banner, not only attacks ruthlessly the pig-headedness in the society, but also paddles humanity into pursuing an ever-receding perfection. It is more or less a philosophical document invented to satisfy philosophical craving of two dedicated inhabitants of Malgudi i.e. Srinivas, the editor and Mr. Sampath, the publisher who anticipate the World War in 1938. Mr. Sampath writes in the novel:

"The Banner has nothing special to note about any war, past or future. It is only concerned with the war that is always going on - between inside and outside. Till the forces are equalized, the struggle will always go on." (p. 6)

The protagonist Srinivas is always preoccupied with the problems of human existence rather than the mundane problems of the Malgudians. His questioning mind is focused on two planes - the personal and philosophical.

In Mr. Sampath, Narayan focuses on the *Vedas*, the eternal issues of life and death and the message of the *Upanishads*. He also reflects upon the relevance and implementation of knowledge in terms of modern living and the recurring changes in modern life. Srinivas contemplates about life and death in the novel. Being a social thinker and Messiah of the Malgudians, he exposes the idiosyncrasies of Hinduism. He is not a blind follower of the orthodox notions and whims of his religion. He challenges casteism and reprimands his wife when she refuses to eat the hotel food, cooked by the people from the lower class. He takes up new challenges in life, fights against conservatism searches for harmony and peaceful existence. The essence of this is transported to the Malgudians through The Banner. When his wife and

child come to stay with him he is confronted with the problem of adjustment between his profession and domesticity. He endeavors to form the equilibrium:

“There is perhaps some technique of existence which I have not understood....Here I am seeking harmony in life, and yet with such a discord.” (pp. 36-37)

In a true sense of a social reformer Srinivas trounces the appalling public opinions. He believes that such type of propaganda stifles the true essence and the growth of the society and civilization. Shanta Krishnaswami compares Srinivas to Camus in pointing out the futility of rebellion. ⁽⁹⁾ “Life and the world and all this is passing – Why bother about anything? The perfect and imperfect are all the same. Why really bother?” (p. 30) This philosophy of quietism of acceptance is a distinct feature of the philosophy of *Karma*. Once when he stays home on a holiday, he contemplates on the value or importance of human existence. He hears the homely sounds of his wife and son in a state of contemplation:

“Mixed sounds reached him – his wife in the kitchen, his son’s voice far off, arguing with a friend, the clamor of assertion and appeals at the water-tap, a peddler woman crying ‘brinjals and greens’ in the street – all these sounds mingled and were woven into each other. Following each one to its root and source, one could trace it to a human aspiration and outlook....” (p. 49)

Srinivas wonders at the multitudinous and vastness of the whole picture of life. He tries to trace each noise to its source between sunset and sunshine, but realizes that the vastness and infinite nature of the universe is too big for

contemplation.

In each of his novels R. K. Narayan categorically introduces the typical Malgudians who represent the average Indians and their philosophy which is based on the sayings of great saints or seers, a surface knowledge of Bhagvad Gita, *Shashtras* and *Puranas*. Srinivas' landlord likewise oscillates between the material and spiritual pursuits. He desires the encroachment of Western products on the daily needs of the Malgudians, yet prefers Margosa to tooth brush made of "pig-tails....They (Aryans) knew more science than any of us today – you see my teeth." (p. 51) Although a self titled *Sanyasi*, the landlord causes great inconvenience and discomfort to his tenants, is disowned by his family for his miserliness yet he feels himself capable of appeasing the metaphysical doubts of Mr. Sampath on the basis of the Bhagvad Gita and *Upanishads*. He is a victim of dual standards which conveniently shield the oddities of his life behind the garb of spiritualism. Quoting from the Bhagvad Gita or *Upanishads* is a matter of habit with him. Succumbing to the passions of anger and desires, he fails to encapsulate the essential ideals of Indian philosophy. Narayan's comic satire exposes the class of such pseudo-philosophers. When Srinivas tells the old man that it is not alcohol, but coffee, he says, "What if it were alcohol? Does a man's salvation depend upon what he drinks? No, no – it depends upon..." (p. 120) Suddenly, he pauses in reflective mood and Srinivas is curious to know what it really depended on. But the old man seems confused. Narayan's artistic genius lies in the comic treatment of such hypocritical characters and realistic situations.

'Kama' or desire or lust is another significant aspect of Indian

philosophy highlighted in this novel, Mr. Sampath and Ravi are the victims of this passion. Srinivas' script about the '*Burning of Kama*' from the Shiv Purana is selected to be picturized by the board of directors of Sunrise Film Industry comprising of Srinivas, the script writer, De Mello, the technician, Somu, the promoter and Sohan Lal, the financier. Through the film 'The Burning of Kama' Narayan explores the mythical aspect of *Kama*. "The secularization of the myth consists in transforming lust into love." ⁽¹¹⁾ Ravi, the amateur painter and the portage of Srinivas is obsessed with Shanti who plays the role of Parvati in the film. Srinivas tells Ravi to burn up lust and search for true love. Ravi, Mr. Sampath in the role of Shiva and Shanti in the role of Parvati are all victims of *Kama* with varied degrees of lust. *Artha* is involved in the perpetuation of *Kama*. The whole set catches fire because of short circuit which symbolizes the burning of *Kama*. Narayan has used fire as the symbol of purity to integrate life and Indian philosophy in the novel. *Kama* is ultimately destroyed in the end - Srinivas overcomes his ego and his lust slowly but surely burns away.

In this novel Narayan has fully exploited his experience of movie making in the Gemini Studios in Madras. His portrayal of Srinivas' brief encounter with the tinsel world is hilariously accurate and real. The Board of Directors' preference of *Kama* as the subject for the film, to other subjects like Gandhi, Ramayana or Bhagawad Gita reflects the decaying, degenerating moral values of the contemporary society and the impact of Western civilization on modern Indians. Sampath in his role swayed by the wave of *Kama* forgets his duties towards his wife and children and expresses his repressed wicked intensions:

“Some people say that every sane man needs two wives – a perfect one for the house and a perfect one outside for social life... I have the one. Why not the other? I have confidence that I will keep both of them happy and if necessary in separate houses. Is a man’s heart so narrow that it can not accommodate more than one? I have married according to *Vedic* rites: let me have one according to the civil marriage law.” (p. 179)

This concept of *Kama* or lust is found in ancient Indian literature. Ravan in the great Indian epic The Ramayana is a symbol of lust or *Kama*. He too attempts to seduce Sita, the symbol of purity and innocence after having kidnapped her. The same idea is also displayed in The Mahabharata wherein Duryodhana casts his malicious sight on Draupadi. Indian philosophers have always condemned the idea of monogamy and accordingly both Ravan and Duryodhan suffer at the end. Mr. Sampath, the victim of *Kama* too meets his tragic end in the novel.

While writing the script Srinivas is aware of the moral and spiritual significance of the myth of *Kamadev*, the God of Love. When Rati, *Kama*’s wife wails and prays to Lord Shiva to revive her dead husband, Lord Shiva tells her, “He is not lost, he is bodiless, that is all; his grossness has been burnt up, but he lives in essence.”⁽¹²⁾ The novel thus upholds the philosophical truth that it is only the body that dies or perishes. The soul is immortal.

Srinivas advises Ravi, the main victim of *Kama* to refrain from lust and search for true love:

“Like Shiva open your third eye and burn up love, so that all its grossness and contrary elements are cleared away and only

its essence remains: that is the way to attain peace, my boy.” (p.

185)

Vatsayana has classified *Pravritti* or will as *Papatmika* and *Shubha* i.e. wicked or impious and pious or auspicious. ⁽¹³⁾ The latter leads to *Dharma* or righteousness. The will (*Pravritti*) of Sampath and Ravi is *Papatmika* – wicked and impious which leads them into undue indulgence in carnal activities, obscene speech and mental distraction. Consequently, Sampath is forced to leave Malgudi in despair and Ravi ends up in the police custody. The whole staff of Sunrise Film Limited is disarrayed. All the film equipments are ironically burnt like *Kama* by the opening of the third eye of Lord Shiva.

Srinivas the only survivor comprehends the mystic, spiritual and religious significance of his script. R. K. Narayan has dramatically epitomized the eternity of Hindu philosophy, religious myths and legends which are vividly upheld by his characters.

THE MAN EATER OF MALGUDI:

THE SURA AND THE ASURA

The Man Eater of Malgudi (1961), one of the greatest novels of R. K. Narayan, is a hilarious comedy with the undercurrent of serious intensions. Prof. K. R. S. Iyenger aptly remarks:

“The Man Eater of Malgudi jumbles the ingredients of comedy to excellent purpose and provides ample entertainment, but the undercurrent of serious intension can not be missed.”⁽¹⁴⁾

The Man Eater of Malgudi as Naik⁽¹⁵⁾ and Meenakshi Mukherjee⁽²⁴⁾ have pointed out recreates the ancient *Puranic* myth of Mohini and Bhasmasura in a modern form. The novel has deep philosophical and moral significance. It concentrates on the universal theme of conflict between the good and the evil, represented by Nataraj, the painter and Vasu, the taxidermist respectively. Although evil seems indomitable, yet carries within itself a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goodness seemingly weak is ultimately victorious.

The polarization between the *Sura* and *Asura*, the gods and demons is a recurrent motif in Hindu mythology and religion. As V. V. N. Rajendra Prasad observes that Narayan has juxtaposed the painter Nataraj, the *Sura* symbolizing his namesake, Lord of Dances with the taxi driver, Vasu, representing the mythic ‘*rakshasha*’ Bhasmasura in the realistic context knitting them with the lives of the Malgudians.⁽¹⁷⁾

In *Sankhya* system of Indian philosophy, *Prakriti* or nature is said to be the root cause of all physical happenings in this universe and this nature or *Prakriti* is enveloped in three forms of *Gun*as or qualities i.e. *Sattva* (Purity),

Rajas (Passion) and *Tamas* (Ignorance). This is substantiated in the Bhagwad Gita also:

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसम्भवाः ।
निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥ (XIV/5) ⁽¹⁸⁾

(Purity, Passion and Ignorance are the qualities which the law of nature bringeth forth. They fetter the free spirit of all beings.)

Vasu is attributed with *Asuri* or demonic inclinations and *tamasic* qualities. He is the epitome of ignorance, the product of darkness which stupefies the senses and binds one to the chain of folly, indolence, infatuation and lethargy. Vasu, a science graduate and the taxidermist by profession wants to overpower *Shrishti*, the creation of God which is the prerogative of the Supreme Being or God as per Hindu philosophy. Vasu, by killing the innocent animals boasts, “Science conquers nature in a new way each day; why not in creation also?” ^{(p.17) (19)} This encroachment on nature is repulsed and duly punished by nature in due course. Vasu represents the *Asuri Shakti* or demonic powers surrogating the creator through a blatant act of *Hinsa*.

Malgudi, a traditional town upholds the Hindu way of life. Every Malgudian believes in order and stability for which they have definite ethical patterns or framework. But Vasu, a man of liberal ways and an experimenter does not subscribe to these indigenous institutions set by the Malgudians – a microcosm of Hindu society. He has already left his parents, kith and kin and has settled in Malgudi. Here he cheats his friends like Nataraj and ridicules the institutions of marriage saying, “Only fools marry and they deserve all the trouble they get.” ^(p. 29)

Vasu symbolizes the mythical Bhasmasura, being a bachelor he does

not believe in the sanctity of marriage and indulges in illicit sexual relations with many women in Malgudi. His mistress Rangi, a *devadasi* – a temple woman, symbolizes Mohini, the seducer and killer of Bhasmasura. She is an archetype of the pretty mythical damsel, Mohini. This temple woman or *devdasi* is known as “a perfect female animal”, “black as cinders” who is the principal mistress of Vasu. A poor temple dancer and woman of easy virtues, she confesses her religion before Vasu. Defending her profession of a prostitute she tells Vasu:

“Sir, I am only a public woman, following what is my *dharma*. I may be a sinner to you, but I do nothing worse than what some of the so-called family women are doing.” (p. 33)

Her sensual activities do not restrain her from her devotion or worship of God. She abhors Vasu’s plan of killing the temple elephant and passes on all the requisite information to Nataraj about the evil intentions of Vasu. She fans and lulls Vasu to sleep, keeping a strict vigil on him. Although she herself goes to sleep to find Vasu dead by his own fatal blow while attempting to swat the mosquito.

Rangi is the catalyst in the act of final retribution. Her faith and devotion to God and goodness transcends her profession. She pursues *dharma* in her own right. It is the intentions of a person that virtually matters. Hindu epics, scriptures and *Puranas* refer to many sages, holy men and women of low origin or caste, like Shabri, Jatayu, Bali and Sugriva in the Ramayana and saints such as Ravidas and Kabir and even Hanuman who command great respect in Hindu religious order in spite of their low origin and birth. David Scott rightly remarks that Rangi’s elevated position further corroborates with the ancient Indian ethical code that accords great respect to women of

substance rather than caste or birth. He states, “She (Rangi) can not tolerate the idea of killing an elephant that does service to God.” (p. 123) Rangi, like Mohini, the destroyer of evil reveals to Nataraj Vasu’s secret plan of killing the elephant during the procession.

Vasu personifies the title The Man Eater of Malgudi as he is the embodiment of a *Rakshasa* in the modern context. He is immersed in all the *Tamasik* qualities or *Gunās* as found in the Bhagvad Gita and the *Vedantic* doctrines. He is a self righteous person overpowered with *Ahankara* or arrogance, the foremost symptom of a *Tamasik* or *Asuri* person. Like a demon, he possesses enormous strength and will power. Vasu does not believe in any system, institution or religion and disapproves of people talking sentimentally like old widows and considers the temple festival a sheer waste of energy. He has an epicurean, *Carvaka* approach towards life; he takes non-vegetarian food, indulges in illegitimate sex, kills innocent animals, threatens people and enjoys at the cost of simple people like Nataraj.

Vasu has also violated the *Vedic* tradition of the *Guru – Shishya* relationship. In Indian philosophy a special emphasis is laid on the teacher-disciple relationship. *Guru* is considered an illuminated soul who dispels the darkness and ignorance of his disciple and guides him in his spiritual journey.

gurub/Hma guruivR*`u gurudeRvo mheXvr: a

gurusaR9at\ prb/Hm tSmE &lgurve nm: aa ⁽²⁰⁾

(*Guru* is *Brahma*, *Guru* is *Vishnu*, *Guru* is Lord Maheshwara, *Guru* is the Almighty *Brahma*. Such a *Guru* is to be bowed, venerated.)

Vasu however violates this Indian tradition of utmost veneration to the *Guru*. He reveals his ingratitude towards his *Guru* saying:

“I knew his (*Guru's*) weak spot. I hit him there with the edge of my palm with a chopping movement...and he fell down and squirmed on the floor...I left him there and walked out and gave up the strong man's life once for all.” (p. 21)

Vasu symbolizes the demonic qualities of pride, envy, disorder and immorality. The peace loving people of Malgudi pray for his end.

Vasu's murderous intentions to assassinate the most sacred of Indian beasts, the elephant God Ganesha, results in his own death. He traps a couple of mosquitoes which settle on his forehead when he brings the flat of his palm with all his might on top of them and he smashes his own skull. Although every demon believes that he has a special boon of indestructibility, through the character of Vasu Narayan conveys that the universe has survived all the *Rakshasas* and that the life of every demon ends up in self destruction and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment.

The death of Vasu is an example of poetic justice. It also reiterates the age old Hindu philosophical claim of the annihilation of all the *Asuras* or demons. Unlike Vasu, the altruistic and gentle Nataraj is the focal point of activity in Malgudi and his press forms the epicenter. He the counterpart of the mythical Lord Nataraj (Lord of Dance) who maintains the stability of the universe. Like his counterpart Nataraj also upholds the Indian ethical and moral code of conduct and social institutions. His magnetic personality draws people from all walks of life to his press. People like the businessman K. J., Idle, adjournment lawyer, Sen, the monosyllabic poet, children, Muthu from Memy and various other officials of Malgudi are among the coterie of his friends. Nataraj states:

“I could never be a successful enemy to anyone. Any enmity

worried me night and day... It bothered me like tooth-ache... I was longing for a word with Vasu... He was a terrible specimen of human being no doubt, but I wanted to be on talking terms with him.” (p. 199)

Although he is aware that Vasu is evil incarnate, yet he can not hate him. He perhaps believes in the philosophy that preaches to ‘deplore evil but not the man.’ Nataraj devises ways and means to reform Vasu in his own way but these traits of acceptance and tolerance are satirized by Vasu. Nataraj upholds the Indian philosophical ideal of faith in God’s will. When Vasu decides to kill the temple elephant, Kumar, Nataraj is in a dilemma. Being non-violent and tolerant by nature he only obtains temporary mental relief in the mystic tale of the elephant Gajendra whom Lord Vishnu had protected.

Nataraj’s dependence on divine intervention is a typical example of people who use religion or philosophy as a scapegoat to escape from their responsibilities and duties. Narayan delineates such cowardly creatures with his usual comical insight and humour. Initially, Nataraj can not believe that anybody would want to kill the temple elephant, and later on he depends on Lord Vishnu, he prays to Him to protect Kumar during the *Janmashtami* procession.

“Oh Vishnu, saviour of elephant, save all the innocent men and women who are going to pull the chariot.” (p. 175)

Nataraj is a deeply religious person gifted with godly qualities of tolerance, altruism and generosity. His belief in Hindu tradition is portrayed in the opening lines of the novel. He says:

“I hung up a framed picture of Goddess Laxmi poised on her lotus, holding aloft the boundaries of earth in her four hands

and through her grace I did, not too badly.” (p. 7)

In The Man Eater of Malgudi the character of Nataraj symbolizes Lord Rama of a great Hindu epic, the Ramayana. Lord Rama is an incarnation of Vishnu who spreads the message of brotherhood, equanimity and unselfishness for the betterment of the universe. His relations - with Ahalya the wife of a *rishi*, Kevat, a low caste sailor, Shabari, a low caste poor tribal old woman, Vibhishan, the brother of his enemy, Sugriv, a monkey - project Him as the preacher of peace and brotherhood. However, Rama is often criticized for his passivity and too much patience. Rama could not protest against a washer man’s objection. The washerman objected against Sita’s coming back to Ayodhya as she had lived with the Ravan, the demon. He raised a question against Sita’s purity and demanded her exile from the state. Even in spite of knowing that Sita is pure and pious in character, he ordered her to leave Ayodhya. Nataraj also possesses these qualities. This kind of passivity is hinted in his own confession:

“The trouble with me was that I was not able to say ‘no’ to any one and that got me into complications with everyone.” (p. 199)

Nataraj like Lord Rama is a peace-loving and tolerant person. When neighbours complain of a foul stench, he does not even think that Vasu’s room upstairs could be the fountain head of this stench. Although a strict vegetarian with a reputation for peace and *Ahimsa*, Nataraj has no option but to tolerate the company of a drunkard, non-vegetarian and a potent killer, Vasu who is his alter-ego. In this way the Buddhist and the Jain philosophy of submission and acceptance of all oddities are also found in the character of Nataraj.

Like Nataraj, Narayan presents Sastri, a balancing factor between the

polarities of good represented by Nataraj and evil by Vasu. Sastri is an innocent person, a commentator on Hindu philosophical thought. It is Sastri who reveals the mystery of Vasu's death and thus exonerates Nataraj from suspicion. His strong faith in the divine retribution or dispensation allows evil to flourish for a time, yet destroys completely in the end. The truth of Vasu's death is envisaged by Sastri on the testimony of a parallel mythical ending of *Bhasmasura*. Sastri states:

“God Vishnu was incarnated as a dancer of beauty, named Mohini, with whom the *Asura* became infatuated. She promised to yield to him only if he imitated all the gestures and movements of her own dancing. At one point of dance, Mohini places her palm on her 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.” (p. 96)

This is a Hindu belief promulgated by the *Puranas* and the epics where the evil doers, be it Ravana, Kansa, Duryodhana or Bhasmasura – they all have been annihilated in the end. Like Bhasmasura, Vasu brings about his own death. Sastri rightly sums up the Hindu philosophy in the end or destruction of evil. Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility, yet, the universe has survived all the *Rakshasas*. An inflated ego temporarily engenders a feeling of invincibility in a *Rakshasa* but sooner or later evil is destroyed. Every *Rakshasa* gets swollen with his ego. He thinks, he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later goodness and truth is victorious.

Sastri and his family believe in ancient rituals or *Pujas* such as fasting

etc. In the end when Vasu dies, he wishes to invoke the Almighty to thank Him for restoring peace and prays for the *Sadgati* of the departed soul. He tells Nataraj:

“I’d not trouble you but for the fact that this *Satyanarayan puja* must be performed today in my house; my children and wife will be waiting for me at the door...” (p. 16)

Like Sastri, Muthu, the tea-shop owner is also a religious person acquainted with Nataraj. Vasu forcibly abducts him to the forest of Mempi-Hill and abandons him there. Muthu apprises Nataraj about the temple and elephant:

“Because the Goddess protects us, I rebuilt a temple with my own funds. I have regular *pujas* performed there. You know we also have a temple elephant... His name is Kumar and children and elders alike adore him and feed him with coconut and sugar-cane and rice all day.” (p. 46)

The religious festivals, fairs and gatherings are an inseparable part of life in Malgudi. Narayan has artistically interwoven the festivals of *Shivaratri*, *Janmashtami*, *Holy*, *Diwali* and spiritual fairs like *Kumbha* and religious pilgrimages which are a part and parcel of a Hindu way of life. One such festival described in this novel is *Janmashtami* – the celebration of the birthday of Lord Krishna. This is artistically interwoven by R. K. Narayan into the fabric of the text. Vasu is ready to test the climax of his art of shooting. Nataraj is pre-occupied with the arrangements of the procession and the elephant’s safety while the ordinary Malgudians are preparing enthusiastically to celebrate this festival.

The death of Vasu epitomizes the victory of good which reinstates the pre-Vasuvian amity and harmony in the Malgudian society. Vasu’s position as

an outsider in the peaceful town of Malgudi is analogous to the alien forces of modernity that disturb the peaceful equilibrium of traditional life. Ron Shepherd remarks in this regard:

“Nowhere is the personification of modernity more perfectly exemplified than in the figure of Vasu in The Man Eater of Malgudi.”⁽²¹⁾

R. K. Narayan does not debate upon the evil in the abstract manner, but upholds the value of what is good. He portrays the Malgudians who are deeply rooted in the culture and tradition of India in a realistic manner.

The Man Eater of Malgudi contains within its framework of a comedy the cardinal truths of Hindu philosophy that strongly supports the victory of good over evil. H. M. Williams perceives a comic banality at the end of the novel with Nataraj and Sastri's return to printing bottle labels for a water company.⁽²²⁾ The comic banality of this return to normality ironically suggests the loss Malgudi has suffered by Vasu's demise! This normalcy suggests the Indian ideology of peace. By presenting the death of Vasu and the return of peace and harmony in Malgudi, Narayan stresses on the idea of the victory of the good over the evil. Despite its comic vision, Narayan has artistically interwoven in of The Man Eater of Malgudi the hidden layers of philosophy of the *Sura* and the *Asura* imbedded in human nature which emerges in man's behavior.

THE WORLD OF NAGARAJ (1990)

SATVAH, RAJAS AND TAMAS

In The World of Nagaraj (1990) R. K. Narayan has assimilated his experiences of life and triple vision of man in relation to himself, his environment and his gods. Such deep philosophy of life has been presented with a deepening sense of comedy. The surface of this hilarious comedy leads the reader to the profoundest thoughts of Indian philosophy. This novel is an artistic and mature presentation of Narayan who offers a perfect blending of tradition and modernity. David Scott Philips refers to the ancient Indian society as “a world of thinkers, a nation of philosophers”.⁽²³⁾ This is true in the context of Malgudian society which is vividly portrayed in Narayan’s novels.

In The World of Nagaraj, Narayan presents the characters from different walks of life who reiterate their belief in Indian philosophical thought and moral values through their actions. The novel presents a critique of the Indian values. According to David Scott Philips, Narayan was in his critical and transitional phase while writing this novel “... realizing the material if not the spiritual inferiority of his culture, he seeks to modernize and in the process of adapting ... he realizes that willy – nilly, he will or must adopt certain of its values also.”⁽²⁴⁾

Though mostly acclaimed as a writer of social and comic novels, Narayan has encapsulated philosophical perspectives in his novels which also win him the status of a serious novelist. He has presented a kaleidoscope of characters in The World of Nagaraj to correlate the Indian philosophy and life in India. Nagaraj, the middle aged protagonist of The World of Nagaraj is deeply engrossed in the prospect of writing down his *magnum opus* on Saint Narada, the ‘*manasputra*’ – the earthly son of Lord Brahma, his wife Sita, like

her mythical counterpart is devoted to her husband and her gods and Gopu his elder brother is a worldly wise busy agriculturalist. The Townhall Sanyasi advocates and preaches Vedantic philosophy. Bari, a businessman is also still devotional. Most significantly, the young people, Tim and his wife Saroja who initially reject the traditional Malgudian mode of life for the glittering world of Kismet-inn finally return back to Kabir street, the center of Malgudi. The reflection of Kismet-inn resounding with loud music and loud gossips in favour of Kabir street which is diametrically opposed to Kismet-inn culture is a reiteration of Malgudian culture and its social, moral or ethical value system.

In The World of Nagaraj Narayan presents a reversal of the great Indian epic Ramayana. Nagaraj in his subordination to his brother Gopu offers a parallel to Laxmana in the Ramayana:

“You are like Laxmana in the Ramayana, who stood behind Rama, his elder brother, all the time without a murmur or doubt’, remarked his father sometimes”. (p. 27) (25)

Nagaraj like Lakshmana adores his elder brother Gopu. Nagaraj is extremely generous, even during the separation of the ancestral property he maintains his poise and calm. However, Gopu can not be called the archetypal of Rama, the protagonist of the great epic. Unlike Rama, he is an egoist.

Nagaraj, though childless, proves himself to be a lovable, generous, and uncomplaining spouse to his wife Sita. Nagaraj bestows his parental love on his brother’s son Tim, yet he is detached in performing the *Karma* and does not contemplate the consequences. Tim’s erratic, unpredictable actions

are perceived by him in a stoic manner and therefore he suffers less than his wife who is devoted and attached to Tim as a worldly woman.

The relationship of Nagaraj and his wife Sita to their semi-adopted son Tim projects two facets of Hindu philosophy – the ideal and the illusory. The Bhagvad Gita compliments one who is detached and performs the *Karma* – his duties in a detached, indifferent manner like the lotus flower that blooms in the midst of mud and mire.

यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन ।
कर्मैन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगमसक्तः स विशिष्यते ॥ (III / 7) ⁽²⁶⁾

(On the other hand, he who controls the senses by the mind and engages his active organs in works of devotion, without attachment, is by far superior.)

The relationship of Sita and Tim is juxtaposed to the relationship of Nagaraj and Tim. Nagaraj presents the ideal kind of relationship in accordance with the principles and doctrines of Indian philosophy and therefore suffers less from the oscillating nature of Tim. In his relation with Tim, Nagaraj transforms from the illusory to the ideal world whereas in her relation with Tim, Sita struggles more within her illusory world of attachment. She can not detach herself from the material aspects of family relations.

The Vedantic tradition of *Guru-Shishya* is focused in the novel in the relationship between Nagaraj and the Townhall Sanyasi. The term “Upanishad” means “to stay near God devotedly”, to attain the knowledge of *Brahman* in order to annihilate ignorance. This knowledge about the Supreme Reality is imparted by the *Guru* – the teacher to his *Shishya* – the disciple. This Vedantic conception of *Guru-Shishya*, the learned one and the seeker is

pre-requisite in the process of the seeker's spiritual journey. Nagaraj fulfills his necessary pre-requisite for the pursuit and subsequent attainment of spiritual knowledge. The Town hall Sanyasi, his *Guru* advises him:

“Your thoughts must be away from all sensual matters, free from *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha* and *moha*. ... Don't look at your wife except as a mother, and don't let your mind dwell on your night life.” (p. 12)

Nagaraj replies, “For over ten years we have been living like brother and sister.” (p. 12) He follows the advice of his *Guru* and detaches himself from all the preoccupations of family and money.

Unlike Krishnan in The English Teacher, Srinivas in Mr. Sampath, Margayya in The Financial Expert and Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets who finally learn the lesson of renunciation and quit *Grihastha Ashrama* to attain spiritual aspirations, Nagaraj though religious and staunch follower of the *Vedas*, is not mentally prepared for such a renouncement of worldly life. He leads a harmonious life in his huge ancestral house situated in the aristocratic Kabir Lane. Nagaraj is visibly in no mood to renounce his home like his predecessors. On the contrary, he pursues the ritualistic mode of worship in an archer-dress in the sanctuary of his home experiencing, “The fragrance of incense and flowers which gave him a feeling of sitting in heaven of peace, silence, (and) isolation.” (pp. 12-13)

R. K. Narayan seems to be offering a viable mode and model in Nagaraj, the philosopher and moralist in the modern context. All the schools of Vedanta propagate the *Varna Ashrama Dharma* i.e. common duties. The relative duties classified as *Varna Ashrama Dharma* are the specific duties relating to one's status or position in life. A person's status in life is

determined by one's caste and one's *Ashrama* or particular stage of life. Under the class of *Sadharana Dharma* or common duties, Manu ⁽²⁷⁾ enumerates ten duties – steadfastness (*dhairya*), forgiveness (*kshama*), application (*dama*), non-appropriation (*chouryabhava*), cleanliness (*shoucha*), sensuous appetites (*indriya-nigraha*), wisdom (*dhi*) learning (*vidya*), veracity (*satya*) and restraint of anger (*akrodha*). All these duties prescribed by Manu are significantly relevant for the attainment of an individual's own perfection. Hindu moral ethics primarily aim at self reliance of an individual, free from all external bonds – physical as well as social. Prasastapada also classified the duties of man like Manu into common or *Samanya Dharma* and specific or *Vishesha Dharma*. Nagaraj follows the relative duties of *Varna Ashrama Dharma* as classified both by Manu and Prasaspada ⁽²⁸⁾ in his life.

Narayan presents the ideal and the real world of Nagaraj who symbolizes the virtues of *Samkhya Dharma*. The classical systems of Indian philosophy called *Darshanas* are categorically classified into three broad groups – the orthodox (*astika*), the heterodox (*nastika*) and the Indian materialist (*charvaka*) school. The greatest contribution of *Sankhya* system to human thought is its conception of *Prakriti* or nature which is the root cause of all physical entities in the universe. The entire system of *Prakriti* is woven out of three gunas – *Sattvah*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Purusa* or man is the other important category in *Sankhya* system.

Narayan has encapsulated the virtue of *Satvah* in the character of Nagaraj who is an epitome of steadfastness or *dhairya* in the face of all upheavals or crises in his life. Despite the adverse situations like the death of his beloved father, separation of two dear brothers, death of his mother, his childlessness and

foolhardiness of Tim and his wife Saroja and even amidst the rebuffs of his brother, Gopu, he remains calm and poised without any grudges against his loved ones. All personal tragedies are borne heroically by Nagaraj in a mood of equanimity. Narayan has presented in him the quality of *dhairya* or steadfastness. He performs his duties in an unselfish manner whether it is to extend financial help to Coomar, or to forgive the follies and stupidities of Tim or to bear with the eccentricities of his brother Gopu. He is the best example of *dama* or application and *kshama* or forgiveness.

Through Nagaraj, Narayan reflects *chouryabhava* or non-appropriation and *akrodha* or restraint of anger. Nagaraj, a lovable soul is miles away from the evils of theft and anger. He disapproves of Coomar's theft of income-tax. During the division of ancestral property he maintains his poise even when Gopu indulges in altercation with a jutkawala, he is an example of his calm and poised temperament. "Life is too short for teaching lesson...." (p. 39) These instances reflect the specificity of *chouryabhava* or non-appropriation and *akrodha* or restraint of anger in Nagaraj.

Narayan has presented the philosophical ideas of Hindu culture exhaustively in The World of Nagaraj. Most Indian ethos including Shrimad Bhagvad Geeta have advised men to practice *Indriya-nigraha* or control of senses.

नास्ति बुद्धिरयुक्तस्य न चायुक्तस्य भावना ।
न चाभावयतः शान्तिरशान्तस्य कुतः सुखम् ॥ (II/66) ⁽²⁹⁾

(One who is not in transcendental consciousness can have neither a controlled mind nor steady intelligence, without which

there is no possibility of peace. And how can there be any happiness without peace?)

Shrimad Bhagvad Gita upholds the belief that the devotee who controls his senses and meditates the Almighty achieves the equilibrium of mind. This *Indriya-nigraha* or control of senses is experimented by Nagaraj in the novel. He restrains himself from sensual pleasures such as indulgence in the sense of touch, smell and vision. He abstains from alcohol and stands in binary opposition to the dancing and ditching of Tim and others in Kismet-Inn.

Gopu rightly compares Nagaraj to the ideal Saint Narada who is incidentally the ideal saint of Nagaraj who desires to write a book on Saint Narada who is a source of *dhi* or wisdom and *vidya* or learning for Nagaraj.

The virtues of *shoucha* and *satya* i.e. cleanliness and veracity are deeply entrenched in the character of Nagaraj. The protagonist practices and preaches these cardinal duties as devised by Manu and Prasadapada. The means and actions of Nagaraj are also in accordance to these moral duties. Nagaraj's mission in his life is to sketch the character of Narada – one of the seven saints, the progenitors of mankind. He seeks guidance from various sources to complete his work. The mythical character of Narada is highly venerated by all the gods and demons – as a promoter of goodness and truthfulness in the universe. Narada is also known for his wisdom, manipulative tactics and cleanliness. All these qualities are gradually incorporated in the personality of Nagaraj – his devotee. Thus, the devotee becomes one with the devoted one which is the prerequisite of attaining salvation.

Through Nagaraj, Narayan explores the various facets of human behaviour and temperament and the progress of man from the real to the ideal world. The qualities of *chauryabhava* or non-appropriation, *akrodha* or restraint of anger, *dhairya* or steadfastness, forgiveness or *kshama*, cleanliness or *shoucha*, control of senses or *indriya-nigraha*, wisdom or *dhi* and learning or *vidya* and above all oneness with the Almighty reflect an ideal person trying to face the crudities and oddities of real life. According to the Upanishads the person having all these qualities and having strong faith in *Dharma* is able to achieve the Supreme. Nagaraj holds these virtues and has faith in the Almighty.

Dharma and belief in God is the underlying theme of The World of Nagaraj. All the characters, major and minor attach great significance to religious and moral concepts of Hinduism. Nagaraj's wife Sita, Gopu - the Townhall Sanyasi, Bari, Kavu Pandit, even the owner of Boeing Sari Company – all lead a religious but pseudo-philosophical life. They embody all Rajasik qualities in them. Gopu, a very arrogant, self-centered person is deep within orthodox Hindu traditions who carries with himself a rosary of sandalwood beads, the book of morning prayers, a little brass box of sacred ash and a packet of incense sticks. So this is Gopu's "... secret channel of communication with God, a private arrangement with eternity." (p. 175)

The idea of detachment from all powers including money has been propounded by number of Indian philosophers. Shankaracharya avers:

A4Rmn4R> Waavy inTy> naiSt tt: suQalex: sTym\ a

pu5adip 6nWaaaja> Walit: sveR5E8a ivihta nlit: aa ⁽³⁰⁾

(There is not least amount of happiness in richness. Know it as the gateway of calamities. Rich people have fear of even their son. This is applicable to all.)

Narayan has epitomized this idea in the character of Nagaraj in the novel who lives a *Sattvik* life. When Coomar, a hard-working person and a childhood friend of Nagaraj offers him the monetary help in lieu of his services in his shop, he declines the proposal. This is a fine example of *chouryabhava* or non- appropriation. This detachment from money, the fountainhead of all evils clearly differentiates Nagaraj from Narayan's earlier protagonists, Margayya, Jagan and Raju who for the large part of their lives remain enslaved to monetary matters. Nagaraj recollects:

“Did not some philosopher declare: all money is evil?
Somehow I am not attached to it.” (p. 100)

R. K. Narayan has presented the ideal and the real world in juxtaposition in the novel. On the one hand through the characters like Nagaraj and Townhall Sanyasi he tries to explore the ideal world as discussed and advised by Indian philosophical schools and on the other hand he unfolds the real world of oddities and menace through the characters like Coomar, Bari and Kavu Pandit. Narayan believes in the concept of transformation from the real to the ideal in the process of his life. This transformation leads one to achieve peace and happiness.

Narayan presents the parallels of life in his novels. The ideas of good vs. evil, spiritualism vs. materialism and religious worship vs. hypocrisy are artistically juxtaposed in The World of Nagaraj. He presents the character of Coomar in the novel to project the idea of materialism. Coomar is identifiably associated with the evils of money. He adopts an ostentatious life style

wearing a lace turban and buttoned-up silk coat over a lace *dhoti* riding in motorcar with a chauffeur to open the door of his car. He is an income-tax evader and a secretive drunkard who has no time to interact with his friends at night. Narayan also unfolds the idea of evil through the character of Kavu Pandit who is addicted to playing cards. He represents the orthodox class of Malgudians, his dilly-dallying attitude and whimsicalities of character are highlighted by the author. Narayan in his fiction has caricatured this class of self-titled pseudo-ascetics and pedants who fail to comprehend quintessence of religion, ethics and philosophy. Bari, a businessman by profession is a philosopher by his temperament and commands great respect in the eyes of the protagonist. But his philosophy of life is to acquire richness and fame. Nagaraj quite often shares his philosophical thoughts and doubts with him. Bari summarizes philosophy in his own way:

“My philosophy is to give complete satisfaction to my customers. Do you mind? I can’t make it up for you – that’s my philosophy in business.” (p. 119)

On another occasion Nagaraj shares his philosophical doubts with Bari. When he asks Bari if he believes in the saying, “God helps those who help themselves” he replies without a moment’s pause, “That’s my philosophy, otherwise do you think I could have developed this business?” (p. 146)

But on the other hand Narayan juxtaposes these materialistic people of Malgudi to the spiritualistic people like the Townhall Sanyasi and the protagonist Nagaraj. The Townhall Sanyasi who is introduced in the beginning of the novel presents a meaningful discourse on the outward, inward physical properties of a Sanyasi. He firmly believes that one does not become a Sanyasi by simply wearing an ochre robe. Meditation, *indriya-nigraha* or

control of senses, contemplation of God, suppression of sensual pleasures and desires are a few essential qualities to be comprehended by a Sanyasi.

He speaks:

“Your thoughts must be away from all sensual matters, free from *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha* and *moha*. You must observe silence.... It’s good to experience death a little each day.” (pp. 11-12)

There is one very important aspect of personality to be marked in the characters of Bari and Kavu Pandit that though they seem to be living for material pleasures, yet it is evident that they aspire to get them through right means. They all have certain ideals in their lives to which they would never compromise. Indian philosophy emphasizes on the attainment of material pleasure through right means. This attitude projects the *Rajas Guna* in man’s life. Hence, the wholesome representation of Nagaraj and Townhall Sanyasi on the one hand and Bari and Kavu Pandit on the other hand strikes the ideal balance between ideal and the real, philosophy and life.

The main philosophical centers in The World of Nagaraj are the abode of Townhall Sanyasi and Kavu Pandit’s house in Ellaman Lane, the pyol of Nagaraj’s house in Kabir Street, the shop of Coomar and Bari. It is at these places that Narayan’s characters discuss Indian philosophy. These places correlate philosophy to daily life. Philosophy has been related to a domestic man in his home, a businessman in his commercial center and a Sanyasi in Townhall. Philosophy for Narayan is not an intellectual activity, an activity or practice apart from life pattern, but it is a way of life. Thus, his Malgudi projects the Indian philosophical systems and ways of life. Raja Rao rightly avers in this respect:

“India is the kingdom of God and is within one Malgudi, a microcosm of India is not only a political, social or economic entity but also a spiritual entity. India makes everything and everywhere as India.”⁽³²⁾

William Walsh hails Malgudi as “a metaphor for India.”⁽³³⁾ It is the epitome of the novelist’s vision that is enshrined in Indian philosophy, religion and ethics. The Malgudians and the town of Malgudi portrayed in Mr. Sampath, The Man Eater of Malgudi and The World of Nagaraj are not only a political, social or economic entity but also a spiritual entity. This is an inside view of India. Anthony Thwaite rightly says, “Unlike E. M. Forster’s India (Narayan’s) is seen from the inside.”⁽³⁴⁾ The foregrounding of Narayan’s characters in philosophy, religion and ethics in these novels impart Indianness to his works. According to Driesen, “His books have the ring of the true India in them.”⁽³⁵⁾ This true India is what Scott means when he says, “the India of Narayan’s novels is not the India the visitors see.”⁽³⁶⁾ Narayan has his roots in Indian philosophy, religion and ethics which accrue to him the distinction as a writer who in the words of Gerow “...is not a foreigner at home.”⁽³⁷⁾

Srinivas, Nataraj and Nagaraj – the protagonists in the above discussed novels support and expand some aspects of Indian philosophy. Their vision of life is by and large philosophical and they sustain themselves in crises on their knowledge of philosophy and religion. Srinivas, Nataraj and Nagaraj belong to traditional families. Each one of them suffers resistance from hostile alien forces. Srinivas’s dedicated devotion to The Banner is disturbed by Mr. Sampath’s grandiose plan of film-making. The Banner, a vehicle for spearheading philosophical, metaphysical debates is pitted against The Burning of Kama. Nataraj’s faithful engagement with his Truth Painting

Works is disturbed by Vasu, the taxidermist and Nagaraj's life mission of writing a book on Saint Narada can not be completed by the disruptions in the family caused by his semi-adopted son Tim.

Furthermore, the protagonists also manifest similar temperaments and approach to life. The philosophy of *Karma* and of acceptance is uniformly practiced by the protagonists. Modernity disturbs the harmony and tranquility of the society. Srinivas, Nataraj and Nagaraj devise ways and means to fight against the hostile, alien forces in a philosophical way. This is the philosophy of quietism of acceptance. The victory of the protagonists in all three novels and the annihilation of the evil, subversive forces reiterate the novelist's faith in the Indian philosophical thought and system. Srinivas returns to continue his work as the editor of The Banner, Nataraj resumes his work in Truth Painting Works and Nagaraj resolves to concentrate on his *magnum opus* of Saint Narada. Mr. Sampath is defeated, Vasu is vanquished only Tim reforms his ways and rejoins the joint family in Kabir Street. These novels critique the validity and relevance of Indian philosophical, religious and moral concepts such as *Kama*, *Mayic* philosophy, quietism of acceptance, the theory of divine retribution, the conflict between good and evil and the journey into the self – the focus all along is on the internal reality.

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CHAPTER – III

THE THEORY OF KARMA IN THE NOVELS OF

R. K. NARAYAN

The focus in this chapter is mainly on three novels of R. K. Narayan - The English Teacher (1946), The Vendor of Sweets (1967) and The Financial Expert (1952) with a view to discuss the theory of *Karma* and Narayan's cyclic vision of life. The philosophical principles of *Karma*, *Punarjanma* and the cyclic process of human life are incorporated in these novels.

R. K. Narayan's fiction reiterates the doctrine of *Karma* (action) in the Indian philosophical systems. This innate trust in life and the capacity of its renewal in the face of a threat of its existence is the central principle of his fiction. The Indian philosophy regards this life which functions in a cyclic order subjected to various ups and downs as medium of realizing the true self.

"The Law of *Karma* is assumed by Samkara. Individuality is due to *Karma*, which is a product of *Advaita*. The kind of world into which we are born is just the return of the works of the doer. The individual organism is the working machinery intended to produce that requital in the form of actions and it results into suffering and happiness." ⁽¹⁾

The doctrine of *Karma* or action brings out the faith in the moral order of the universe. The universe is not a blind unconscious force, nor is it a chance world, but a moral theatre for the art of soul making. The theist in Hindu philosophy believes that *Dharma* or law is pre-established by the Lord but it does not pre-destine man's fate, for each individual has a free will. No external fate or force determines his fate. Man is the architect of his own

fortune. Man reaps what he sows.

The doctrines of *Karma*, *Punarjanma* or rebirth and *Sansara* or the world are the Indian philosophical attempts to solve the great riddle of the origin of suffering and diversity of human conditions. Man's happiness, suffering, talents, virtues, his birth in the given family with its social status - are all traced to his actions in the previous life. The philosophy of *Punarjanma* goes further and asserts that a man's actions in his past life determine not only his present condition, but also his future life.

According to Hindu philosophy, *Karma* is often described as causal law, operating on the moral and spiritual planes. Just as every effect is said to have a cause in the physical world so is the case in the spiritual and moral world. The law of *Karma* is the law of cause and effect, the succession in which each effect follows its own cause, the result of an action is hidden in its performance. Moreover, the fruits of all actions may not be enjoyed or suffered in one's life but punishment or reward for the action is the eternal truth which makes the world moral or ethical. P. Nagaraja Rao writes:

"The doctrine of *Karma* inculcates in us faith in the absolute justice, that we experience and an attitude of wise, uncomplaining acceptance of the inequalities of life. In the Indian view of life there is the marked absence of bitterness when misfortune befalls them. There is no shouting against injustice, no railing against God. *Karma* induces in us a mood of acceptance and understanding as we know that there is no dark fate that governs us. We move by our deeds." ⁽²⁾

In the Bhagvad Gita, Lord Krishna also holds the individual self responsible for his fate.

बन्धुरात्मात्मनस्तस्य येनात्मैवात्मना जितः ।
अनात्मनस्तु शत्रुत्वे वर्तेतात्मैव शत्रुवत् ॥ (3) (VI/6)

(To him who has conquered his lower nature by its help, the self is a friend, but to him who has not done so, It is an enemy.)

Lord Krishna also portrays the cycle of *Samsara* or *Srishti* in the following words:

सर्वभूतानि कौन्तेय प्रकृतिं यान्ति मामिकाम् ।
कल्पक्षये पुनस्तानि कल्पादौ विसृजाम्यहम् ॥ (IX/7) (4)

(All beings, O Arjuna! return at the close of every cosmic cycle into the realm of nature, which is a part of Me, and the beginning of next I send them forth again.)

So the Indian philosophy upholds the belief in the cyclic vision of the world, individual and the self which are the creations of God. God creates, protects and destroys this world and same is the case with an individual. He is born, grows old and dies. This is the full circle of life, also termed as *Maya*. To break this circle, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna in the Bhagvad Gita that one should devote himself to Him and he will be absolved from this circle of birth - death - birth, sorrow and pain.

मामुपेत्य पुनर्जन्म दुःखालयमशाश्वतम् ।
नाप्नुवन्ति महात्मानः संसिद्धिं परमां गताः ॥ (VIII/15) (5)

(After attaining Me, the great souls, who are yogis in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection.)

So, a unity between the supreme self and the individual self, between individual and the world is the pre-requisite for eternal bliss.

The protagonists of these three texts - The English Teacher, The Vendor of Sweets and The Financial Expert represent the intellectual, domestic and commercial class respectively. Krishnan in The English Teacher is an English teacher who is well acquainted with the Western cultures, values and literature. Jagan, a widower in The Vendor of Sweets is a middle class man who is a sweets vendor. Margayya in The Financial Expert is a financial wizard who knows the intricacies of the mercantile society. All three protagonists are renowned personalities of Malgudi who command respect in the town. They all learn the theory of *Karma* and drift towards the spiritual world of self-realization towards the end of the novels

It is observed that the occult experiences of Krishnan described by Narayan in The English Teacher are an attempt to overcome the traumatic shock of his own wife's death in his personal life. In this novel, the author has tried to explore the cycle of life and death besides the loneliness of human existence. Narayan himself has confessed this in his recollection of his memories in My Days.⁽⁶⁾

According to Bhagvad S. Goyal, The Vendor of Sweets, the tenth novel of R. K. Narayan is a sojourn into the theme of man's quest for identity and self-renewal.⁽⁷⁾ The fifty five year old Jagan, a fervent disciple of Gandhi and a devotee of the Bhagvad Gita explores the meaning, and mystery of life cycle through Indian philosophy. The chain of events in the life of Margayya in The Financial Expert depicts a cyclic order. The novels explore the theory of *Artha* and *Kama* in a truly Indian sense. It is a classic exposition of the Hindu philosophy of equilibrium where man survives the external shocks of adversity positively and peacefully.

Narayan, according to Shiv Gilra, “is more a philosopher than a reformer.”⁽⁸⁾ Through the presentation of his unique cyclic vision, the novelist advocates acceptance of traditional Indian philosophical norms, for the sake of spiritual tranquility and social harmony in this age of multifarious complexities when the entire human race is entangled in the quagmire of materialism manifested in cut-throat competition, rivalries and tensions. The Narayanian cyclic vision of life is deeply rooted in the Indian philosophical ideology which propagates the doctrines of *Karma*, *Punarjanma* and *Sansara* in these novels.

THE ENGLISH TEACHER

THE CYCLE OF BIRTH – LIFE - DEATH

“There is no escape from loneliness and separation...’ I told myself often. ‘Wife, child, brothers, parents, friends.... We come together only to depart again. It is one continuous movement.”⁽⁹⁾

In The English Teacher, one of the most spiritual novels of R. K. Narayan, the protagonist, Krishnan expresses the idea of the temporal world which is a thought invariably discussed in Indian philosophy. Birth, life and death make an inevitable cycle in this *Mayic* world from which no creature escapes. However, salvation attained through devotion and faith in the Lord gets man the spiritual bliss and peace.

The concept of *Ashrama Dharma* is discussed in The English Teacher. (1946) Krishnan teaches English in Albert Mission College and leads a harmonious conjugal life with his wife Sushila and daughter Leela. K. R. S. Iyenger avers, “The story of their wedded life is a prose lyric on which Narayan has lavished his best gift as a writer.”⁽¹⁰⁾

Krishnan’s position in the *Grihastha Ashrama* as an ideal spouse as well as a father in the novel is truly within the framework of an ideal Indian family. In spite of a series of adverse events, temporary phases of doubts and anxieties, the husband-wife relationship stands rock solid. Krishnan tries to identify himself with his deceased wife even after her death. Unlike Nataraj in Mr. Sampath who manifests an attitudinal apathy towards *Grihastha Ashrama*, Krishnan is an ideal *Grihstha*. He consistently and rigorously performs the

domestic duties of a *Grihastha* as ordained by Manu in the pursuit of *Artha* and *Kama* in accordance with *Dharma*, in providing hospitality to guests and in multiplying and nourishing his progeny etc. He presents a contrast to Nataraj in his devotion to his wife Sushila. The woman in *Grihastha Ashrama* enjoys a venerable position. Manu says in this context:

y5 nayRStu pUJyNte rmNte t5 devta: a

y5eta n tu pUJyNte svaRSt5afla ik/ya : aa ⁽¹¹⁾

(Where women are worshipped, gods reside, where women are not worshipped, all actions turn fruitless there.)

Narayan embodies all the prescribed virtues of a *Grihastha* in Krishnan. He maintains throughout his life a harmonious and dedicated relationship with his wife and worships her as *Griha Laxmi*, the goddess of his house. His devotion and loyalty to his wife is not confined to one life-time but is extended to life after death. Bhagwad S. Goyal relates it to the personal experience of the author. ⁽¹²⁾ Krishnan, thus cherishes belief in *Atman* which is immortal, it is only the body that decays as has been stated in the Bhagvad Gita.

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा-
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥ (II/22) ⁽¹³⁾

(Just as one puts on new garments discarding the old ones, similarly, *Atman*, the presiding deity within the body, shakes off the old body and enters a new one.)

Krishnan symbolizes and idealizes the fundamental attributes of a *Grihastha* as prescribed in the Indian *Shashtras*. He performs the last rites and post-death rituals of his deceased wife in a traditional Hindu manner.

“I’m an imbecile, incapable of doing anything or answering any questions. I’m incapable of doing anything except what our priest orders me to do. Presently I go over, plunge in the river, return, and perform a great many rites and mutter a lot of things which the priest asks me to repeat.” (p. 96)

The protagonist in The English Teacher is one of the most educated and sensible characters of Narayan. By virtue of his profession too, his mental level manifested in his capacity of reasoning and the pursuit of intellectual activities is apparently above any average Malgudian. Krishnan can be treated as the representative of the elitist, educated class of Malgudi. Ironically, he teaches English, the language of the imperialists. However, Krishnan teaches English to his disciples with a missionary zeal fulfilling his professional obligations and duties to the maximum satisfaction of his students contributing to the mental development of his students. In ancient India, the *Gurukuls* situated in the vicinity of forests strictly adhered to a disciplined routine with the *Guru* at the helm of affairs who was venerated as God:

gurub/Hma guruivR*`u gurudeRvo mheXvr: a

gurusaR9at\ prb/Hm tSmE &lgurve nm: aa ⁽¹⁴⁾

(*Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is Maheshwara, Guru is Parabrahma incarnate. We bow to such a Guru.*)

Thus, according to the Indian philosophy, the trinity of gods, *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva* are unified in a *Guru*. Krishnan fulfills his obligations in the

tradition of a venerated Guru. He performs his professional duty which is his *Karma* with steadfast devotion to the complete satisfaction of his students. He devotes extra duty hours to teach a foreign language to his students; and dutifully carries on the instructions and orders of his superiors, co-operates with his colleagues – a fine specimen of work ethics. Work ethics in the post-colonial period has come to be associated with the imperialists, but Krishnan who embodies in his personality such oriental virtues is a fine example of Indian work ethics.

The novel delineates the gradual evolution of the protagonist who graduates from the *Grihastha Ashrama* to the state of liberation, a *Moksha* in the modern context. However, Krishnan realizes the futility of his profession which only promotes Western value system:

“Don’t worry so much about these things – they are trash, we are obliged to go through and pretend that we like them, but all the time the problem of living and dieing is crushing us....”

(p.149)

Krishnan experiences a kind of a void in his life which is further deepened by the nature of his profession. Michel Pousse refers to the social illusion in Krishnan, which is related to his professional status and bondages. (15) Krishnan has a speculative nature which is rudimentary to the seekers of spiritual knowledge that ultimately leads to the final bliss i.e. *Moksha* when the internal reality transcends the external reality. The Hindu *Vedantic* philosophy designates all illusions as *Maya* which shrouds the self. Therefore, it becomes imperative for a spiritual seeker to dispel these illusions. The binaries of Being and Non-Being point out the dualistic concept of life. *Samkara*, in his theory of causation or *Vivarta Vada* explains Brahman as reality. The visual objects as

explained by P. Nagaraja Rao ⁽¹⁶⁾ are not real. They are the *Vivarta* of Brahman, the Supreme Reality.

Krishnan, an introvert, is in quest of his self, he has an inborn urge for self realization:

“The urge had been upon me for some days past to take myself in hand. What was wrong with me? I couldn’t say, some sort of vague disaffection, a self-rebellion I might call it.....- all done to perfection, I was sure, but always leaving behind a sense of something missing.” ^(p. 5)

This innermost thirst for self realization, the discovery of one’s self has been one of the chief motives of a seeker in all schools of the Indian philosophical thought. This self is a spiritual kernel of some kind as *Brahman* is the ultimate reality. When a seeker conquers ignorance i.e. *Avidya*, he realizes the truth that there exists a unity between the self and *Brahman* that both are unified one. The seeker then attains the state of a “liberated soul.” ⁽¹⁷⁾

The social illusion of Krishnan is puffed up in the due course of the novel. The death of his beloved wife is one such blow that drives him inward. The grim reality of the transitory nature of life in this *Mayaic Sansara* appears to him as a threatening reality, engendering in him an overwhelming feeling of fear, anxiety and emptiness. Neither his social status nor his esteemed position as an English teacher at college is important to him at this point of life, he is now ready to channelize his energies inward in the manner of a true seeker. He tells:

“My mind was made up. I was in search of a harmonious existence and everything that disturbed that harmony was to be rigorously excluded, even my college work.” ^(p.178)

In his quest for peace and harmonious existence, Krishnan forsakes Albert Mission College, his friends, students and other social associations; but this renunciation in search of truth is a partial renunciation. The social illusion of the protagonist distances him to a fairly large extent from the company of his worldly associations and associates.

Krishnan's attitude reflects the existent vacuum in the life of a Malgudian vis-à-vis an Indian in the modern context. This missing element in Krishnan's life can be reinstated by reviving the ancient values which have their origin in the Indian philosophical thought.

Krishnan retires from the college, bids good bye to Western education and value system and joins a kindergarten school as a teacher. He joins hands with the head master of this school who shares Krishnan's views and ideology. The protagonist's rejection of Western educational system and acceptance of a comparatively lower position as a teacher in kindergarten school is an affirmation of the Indian philosophical ideals that had taken a backseat during the times of imperialistic rule in India. Thus, his gradual movement from Western education system to the Indian education and value system is the first step towards his self-realization. Krishnan ultimately succeeds in setting himself free from worldly attachments. He succeeds in detaching himself from his worldly associations and moves towards the spiritual attainment. He understands the cycle of birth, life and death as explained in Indian philosophy. His knowledge or self-realization is visible in his own words:

“There is no escape from loneliness and separation....” I told myself often. “Wife, child, brothers, parents, friends.... We

come together only to apart again. It is one continuous movement.... A profound unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life.” (p. 177)

Krishnan traverses through the four *Varna Ashramas* in a sequential order. The novel initially presents him well established in the *Grihastha Ashrama*, the second of the four *Ashramas*. He leads a happy married life with his wife Sushila and earns his livelihood as a teacher in a college. In this stage of *Grihastha Ashrama*, he is in pursuit of ‘*Kama*’ or love for his wife and ‘*Artha*’ or money which are the duties of an ideal ‘*Grihasha*’ as advised by Manu. Though his life in the stage of *Brahmacharya Ashrama* is not depicted by Narayan in the novel, it can safely be inferred that he has passed through this stage as he works as a teacher when the novel opens. The period of life when he forsakes his profession, his social associations and associates is a step into the *Vanaprastha Ashrama* though literally he does not retire into a forest, but rejects the social life which amounts to a solitary existence in a forest and hence this period in his life can be considered a period of *Vanaprastha*. The final aim of life according to all Indian philosophical systems is to realize the ultimate bliss – *Moksha* or *Kevalya Nirvana*. Narayan presents a new dimension to the concept of *Moksha* in the modern context.

Moksha in the modern context is self-centered. One realizes *Moksha* for one’s own self. Krishnan’s acceptance of a job as a teacher in kindergarten school is an attempt to re-define the concept of *Moksha* in the contemporary social context. In The English Teacher he incorporates the conceptualization of *Moksha* in *Samsara*, the world. According to V. V. N.

Rajendra Prasad, “The self does not withdraw from the network of socio-familial obligations.”⁽¹⁸⁾

The death of his wife Sushila paves his way for the realization of ultimate truth. Krishnan speaks to himself:

“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.”^(p.184)

The first half of the text is devoted to marital bliss whereas the latter part explores death and spiritualism. The latter half of the novel according to P. S. Sunderam attempts to look steadily at death and see if there is anything beyond.⁽¹⁹⁾ K. R. Srinivas Iyenger has also pointed out that Krishnan drifts towards spiritualism,⁽²⁰⁾ after the death of his beloved wife, Krishnan moves into the world of spiritual thoughts and finds his wife back in imagination although lost in life. Thus, the novel is an idyll of married love as well as an account of the resurgence of life from death. The spiritual communion with his wife that Krishnan achieves towards the end of the novel is the mark of his self-realization in the modern context.

The mystery of life and death has been a subject of perpetual enquiry in the Indian philosophy. The Bhagwad Gita and the *Upanishads* contain exhaustive discourses on these metaphysical queries. The philosophical discourse between *Yama*, the God of death and *Nachiketa* in *Ken Upanishad* is an invaluable treatise on the subject of death. Narayan, deeply rooted in religion, consistently refers to religious, philosophical and metaphysical issues. Krishnan’s communion with his deceased wife through a medium is an instance when he writes about life after death. Krishnan comes under the spell of an old man who could establish contact with dead souls. He learns

that technique and starts communicating with the spirit of his wife. Krishnan loses his wife in flesh but not in spirit. She comes back to Krishnan when he is in a despairing mood. The following words express his state of mind:

“The atmosphere became surcharged with strange spiritual forces. Their delicate aroma filled every particle of the air and as I let my mind float in the ecstasy, gradually perceptions and senses deepened. Oblivion crept over me like a cloud. The past, present and the future welded into one.” (p. 183)

The Indian philosophy upholds a belief in the supernatural, transcendental, para-natural, the mystical and so on. Krishnan's communion with his dead wife refers to these para-natural and mystic aspects of the Indian philosophy. The theme of the novel is obviously the death of Sushila in the first half and her resurrection in the second; paradise lost being followed by paradise regained. Initial sense of loss at the death of his wife is reverted in to the feeling of ecstasy in his spiritual communion with her spirit. Krishnan, thus realizes the truth of life and speaks, “The profound unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life. All else is false.” (p.177)

THE VENDOR OF SWEETS

THE CONCEPTS OF MAYA AND KARMA

The Vendor of Sweets ⁽²¹⁾ is one of the most philosophical novels of R. K. Narayan in which the philosophical visions are exemplary of a common man's perception as well as understanding of human values and of pedantic philosophies. B. F. MacDonald pinpoints the conceptualization of *Maya* and *Karma* in the novel. ⁽²²⁾ William Walsh reads the novel in continuity of loneliness as the truth of life ⁽²³⁾, which Krishnan in The English Teacher experiences. A large majority of critics, P. S. Sunderam ⁽²⁴⁾, Rama Jha ⁽²⁵⁾ and Sudarshan Sharma ⁽²⁶⁾ to name a few have read this novel in the context of Gandhian philosophy and ideology. Others like Vasudeva Reddy ⁽²⁷⁾ have attempted to discuss the novel in the context of the binaries of tradition and modernity. G. S. Amur refers to the significance of the Hindu concept of *Purushartha* and *Ashrama Dharma* in The Vendor of Sweets.

“Narayan's characters are controlled by values and ideas originating in their own culture though their actual understanding of these values and ideas and their relationship with them reveal a high degree of complexity and demand for a variety of modes of expression, ranging from comic to serious. The most important of these concepts are the *Purusharthas* (*Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa*), concepts unique in Hindu culture and Hindu way of life.” ⁽²⁸⁾

In The Vendor of Sweets Narayan has artistically interwoven the concept of four *Ashrama Dharmas* and its subsequent four ideals as devised in Manu Smriti. The *Vedantic* philosophy of *Maya*, *Kama* and *Samsara* is also

discussed and debated in the novel. The protagonist Jagan is portrayed as an expounder and follower of the Indian way of life, religion and ethics.

R. K. Narayan presents a realistic picture of the personal forces which make the final stage of retreat a natural part of an Indian's life. The novel has some autobiographical elements as there are some striking similarities between the author and the protagonist. Like Narayan, Jagan's wife dies at a very young age, his children are also very young. The age sixty corresponds to both of them. ⁽²⁹⁾ In this novel, Narayan depicts a hero of his own age who shares some of his ideas, experiences and philosophy of life. Narayan writes in the novel:

“Conquer taste, and you will have conquered the self” said

Jagan to his listener, who asked, “Why conquer the self?”

Jagan said, “I do not know, but all our sages advise us so.”

(p.13)

This statement of Jagan and the question of the listener are typical of an average Indian's philosophical stance. Like Krishnan in The English Teacher and Margayya in The Financial Expert, Jagan goes through an internal transformation from materialism to spiritualism. It is within this transformation that the novelist has tried to explore his cyclic vision as depicted in the Indian scriptures. Jagan, the sweets vendor, is the representative of the class of Malgudians whose philosophy of life has been picked up randomly during the course of his life. His philosophy is an amalgam of all kinds of ideas and maxims, picked up from the *Vedas*, the *Epics*, the Bhagvad Gita and Gandhism. Jagan comments with authority that all the *Vedas* emanated from the feet of God (not God's mouth as is a popular belief).

Narayan has artistically presented the transformation from the comic stance of Jagan to the serious one in the novel. The first half of the novel draws him as a comic figure who pretends to be an ideal follower of the Indian ethics, at the same time concerned more about the familial and material aspects of life. Jagan is a hybrid of a *Yogi* and *Bhogi*. He reads the Bhagvad Gita in his sweet shop, has given up salt and rice. He has never possessed more than two sets of clothes spun with his own hands and leads an austere life. But he replaces sugar by honey. He has a maternal obsession about his son's food and is exceedingly devoted to his him. Similarly, his attitude towards money is also ambiguous. Money has no personal use for him. He calls money an evil but at the same time justifies its accumulation. When his cousin asks him, "...why you go on working and earning, taking all this trouble?" (p. 10), he replies in a typical philosophical tone, "I work because it is one's duty to work." (p. 30) He is prone to flattery. He lies about his academic failure and says in a heroic manner, "I had to leave the college when Gandhi ordered us to non-cooperate. I spent the best of my student years in prison." (p. 33) But while telling this lie his face slurs over the fact that he had failed several times in B.A., ceased to attend the college and began to take his examination as a private candidate long before Gandhi's clarion call.

Jagan, the philosopher, who freely distributes ideals to all the people around him can not advise his young son Mali. He surrenders to his son's whimsicalities and is incapable of exercising parental authority in disciplining him. There is a communication gap between them and all the communication is carried through the cousin. Jagan complies with his son's willful demands right from the time of his abandonment of studies till the launching of his plan

for the import and installation of the writing machine. Reading of the Bhagvad Gita is replaced by the blue airmail from America as Mali goes to America. On his return from America, Jagan accepts Grace, an American Korean girl, as his daughter in law. Later, when the real nature of Mali's relationship with Grace is known to him, he fails to register a protest.

Thus, till the launching of Mali's plan for the import and installation of a writing machine for the sum of \$ 51000, Jagan is presented more or less as a comic creature who manifests in his words and actions a duality of standards. Through Jagan's character Narayan has portrayed the middle class milieu, but the complexity in the novel, especially in the character of Jagan can easily be recognized. In the latter half of the novel, Jagan's character is no longer a simple comical caricature.

The first symptoms of his transformation are perceived when he distributes sweets to small children free of cost, which is an unprecedented action that signals an inner evolution in Jagan. He speaks:

“Sit down, all of you (his staff). I (Jagan) will read to you from the Bhagvad Gita every day for an hour. You will benefit by it. Call in the captain also, if he likes to join us.” He commanded them to be seated again, looked on them with benign pity from his throne, took out his Bhagvad Gita, opened it on the first page and began...” (p. 102)

Reduction in the cost of sweets and profits signifies a Gandhian mode of protest which could also be interpreted as an effort on the part of the protagonist to liberate himself from filial bondage. Narayan writes in the novel:

“Watching him in this setting, it was difficult to Jagan, as he mutely followed him, to believe that he was in the twentieth

century. Sweetmeat vending, money and his son's problems seemed remote and unrelated to him." (p.118)

Once Jagan liberates himself from filial bondage, liberation from materialistic world is rendered easy and Jagan transfers his shop, the center of his materialistic world in a calm and cool manner to his cousin. The transformation of Jagan from *Bhogi* to *Yogi* is true and sincere.

To some extent, Jagan could be described as a *Karma Yogi* though there are some flaws in his actions. He is a self-made and self-reliant man. His cousin rightly compliments Jagan for abandoning salt and conquering the taste in food. To prepare sweets and sell them is Jagan's *Karma* which he performs with a deep sense of responsibility, devotion and determination. He provides unadulterated sweets to Malgudians at reasonable prices. Jagan is well aware of the concept of duty. He says:

"Whatever it is, one can only do one's duty up to a point. Even in the Gita you find it mentioned...." (p. 66)

Lord Krishna classifies *Karma* in the Bhagvad Gita into two categories. One is the work prescribed in the *Sashatras*, which the Lord said, emanated from God. That is why it has been said that the universal Brahman is ever-present in sacrificial performance (Chapter III/15)⁽³⁰⁾. The other type of *Karma* ordains ordinary work, the duties of a house-holder. Such efforts have the effect of binding the individual in strings of attachment. To be free from such attachment, work has to be performed without selfishness.

प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः ।
अहङ्कारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते ॥ (III/27)⁽³¹⁾

(Action is the product of the qualities inherent in nature. It is only the ignorant man who, misled by personal egotism, says: I am the doer.)

Jagan is engaged in ordinary duties of a house-holder which has the effect of binding him in chains of worldly attachment. The text presents the sequential stages of growth and evolution in the character of Jagan when he transcends from materialism to spiritualism to attain self realization, which is the goal of a seeker in Indian philosophy. Bhagwad S. Goyal defines this search for self realization in the novel as the theme of man's quest for identity and self-renewal. ⁽³²⁾

The ideas of God for Jagan corroborates with the idea of God in the *Vedantic* philosophy. In the *Vedantic* school of Indian philosophy, God is manifested as omnipotent and omnipresent in the form of Soul or *Atman*. Jagan also announces, "Every soul is God." ^(p.54) and this is also endorsed by his cousin. This *Vedantic* conception of God is further emphasized when Jagan is unhappy with the activities of Mali.

"Jagan was reminded of the concept of *Vishvarupa* that he had read about in the Bhagvad Gita. When the warrior Arjuna hesitated to perform his duty on the battle-field, God came to him in the guise of his charioteer and revealed Himself in all His immensity. On one side he was thousand faced. 'I beheld you, infinite in forms on all sides, with countless arms, stomachs, mouths and eyes, neither your end nor middle nor beginning do I see...' ^(p.153)

Jagan's responses to worldly relationships imbibe a philosophical undertone. He expresses his thoughts in a philosophical manner. He says that

man is blinded by his attachments and that every attachment creates a delusion which carries him away from the ultimate reality. ^(p.144) His acceptance of the ancient myths, ideals and values is limited but the sincerity of his beliefs and conviction can not be doubted.

Jagan epitomizes in his character the Indian ethical values as prescribed by Manu. Jagan, by his calm and quiet behavior, maintains cordial and harmonious relations with his workers in the shop. He tries his utmost to bear the eccentricities of Mali with patience. This steadfastness or *Dhairya* is a characteristic virtue of Jagan, he pardons Mali when he abandons his studies and plans to be a fiction writer, and later when he leaves for America, and returns back with a foreign woman, Jagan forgives the follies of his son which could be treated as a fine specimen of forgiveness, *Kshama*. He offers to the Malgudians new tastes and flavours of sweets. This application or *Dama* makes his shop the best sweet shop of Malgudi. He prefers cleanliness or *Shoucha* both in his shop and home. He always prepares pure sweets without any adulteration, he prepares food for his son Mali with his own hands. His ethical values receive a jolt when the nature of Mali's relationship with Grace is known to him. He feels that his ancestral home has been tainted and polluted by the unlawful, impious relationship of this unwed couple in his house.

Critics like Ron Shepherd have strongly criticized Jagan for his monetary pursuits. ⁽³³⁾ But he accumulates money by the dint of hard work. Jagan earns money in the manner of *Chouryabhava*, i.e. non-appropriation. He never cheats his customers, never adulterates his products for quick profit and never underpays his workers.

Jagan who has become a widower in his early forties, displays a superb example of *Indriya-Nigraha*. There is not a single instance when Jagan is found indulging in the pursuit of wild fancies or sensual desires. His control of the five senses as prescribed by the *Sashtras* is emblematic of a strict subservience to the Indian ethical code. Jagan's constant reading of the Bhagvad Gita is an example of *Swadhyaya*, self-learning and his book on Nature Care and Nature Diet under publication further substantiates the fact that the protagonist has an inherent thirst for learning (*Vidya*) that blesses him with wisdom or *Dhi* – a quality which is applauded by the cousin, the staff of his shop as well as the Malgudians.

Jagan is a person who is fully acquainted with the rules, regulations and the subsequent significance of the *Ashrama Dharmas*. He explains it in his own words:

“It would be the most accredited procedure according to our scriptures – husband and wife must vanish into the forest at some stage in their lives, leaving the affairs of the world to younger people.” (p. 126)

Jagan in his conviction in the *Ashrama Dharma* and the Indian traditional values emerges in the novel as the mouthpiece of Narayanian concept of Hinduism. Although rigidity and metaphysical explorations as found in Raja Rao's fiction are absent in Narayan, yet an undercurrent of Hindu thought is evident. Jagan fully acknowledges and expands the values, beliefs and principles of Indian ethics.

The Indian ethical ideal comprehensively described as *Dharma* orders the desires of man around four principles called the *Purusharthas* (aspirations).⁽³⁴⁾ The first two of these are desire for wealth and possessions

(*Artha*) and gratification of desires (*Kama*). Jagan can be identified with these two *Purusharthas*. He has enjoyed a loving relationship with his wife Zambia and after her demise he devotes his time and energies to the pursuit of *Artha*. Jagan is one of the richest men in Malgudi who commands respect from all quarters - the cousin, policemen and his staff. The remaining two principles of *Purusharthas*, namely *Dharma* or righteousness and *Moksha* or liberation are spiritual in nature. *Dharma* regulates the desire of wealth and sexual gratification and provides a limit and framework to these two principles. Jagan adopts a religious life and implements *Dharma* in his routine life. The act of paying tax is an example of regulating *Artha* with money earned after 6.00 p.m. Similarly his life of celibacy after the death of his wife is another example of regulating *Kama* with *Dharma*. Jagan's actions like the reading of the Bhagvad Gita, implementation of Gandhian philosophy in real life and seeking guidance from Dora Swami are attempts aimed at the attainment of final *Purushartha*, the *Moksha*.

The novel projects Jagan as the spiritual hero and the conqueror of senses. At the later stage of his life, he renounces the steady encircling routine of the community of Malgudi, retires from the daily routine at the shop and hands it over to his cousin. Finally, his renunciation of the family attachments is more serious and pushes him into the *Sanyasthashrama* and *Moksha*, the final stage of man's life. When Jagan retires from life, he does so practically. He seems to be doing so for comparatively external reasons because of the hell which his son Mali has made of his life at home or perhaps because he can no longer face Mali's behaviour. This is explicit from the following lines of the novel:

“Puzzling over things was enervating. Reading a sense into Mali’s actions was fatiguing like the attempt to spell out a message in a half-familiar script.”

But according to William Walsh, the real reason is inward.⁽³⁵⁾ Jagan realizes towards the end that his life is attaining the completeness. Enlightenment means realizing that one has to come to the point at which struggle and all comedy of friction are irrelevant. Thus, realizing the truth and accepting all bitter consequences as done by Jagan in the novel leads one to the inward world where man renounces the material world and strives to achieve oneness with God. Jagan does this with confidence and satisfaction. He says, “I will go away somewhere else. I am a free man. I’ve never felt more determined in my life.” (p. 203)

Moreover, Narayan has very interestingly woven the Hindu philosophy of *Kama* and *Maya* in the novel.⁽³⁶⁾ Jagan confronts this illusion, *Avidya* from the beginning of the novel, when he advises the cousin to conquer self. But his knowledge of *Avidya* and the method of self realization at this preliminary stage is illusory. Narayan systematically confronts the protagonist with various reversals and pitfalls in his life to make him gradually abandon his worldly attachments and illusions. After undergoing this cycle of ups and downs, Jagan finally realizes that “his identity was undergoing a change” (p. 127) and that he is being pushed “across the threshold of a new personality.” (p.130)

After the initial stage of parental attachment to his son, Jagan endeavors to detach himself from his familial attachments and materialistic pursuits. However, he finally succeeds in distancing himself from his son, his stoic acceptance of Mali’s fate is a living example of the philosophy of *Karma* according to which a person has to individually bear the consequences of

one's actions.

R. K. Narayan offers another paradigm of *Guru-Shishya* i.e. seeker and a teacher, the relationship between Chinna Dorai and Jagan. Chinna Dorai, the *Guru* assists Jagan in the process of self realization, his philosophy is related to the concepts of self, illusion, body and God. Chinna Dorai advises Jagan in an abstract manner and asks him to acknowledge his true self. He says, "True, true, you must not lose sight of your real being, which is not mere bone or meat." (p.120) The scene of the river side when Jagan looks for the stone out of which the Goddess Gayatri was to be craved is memorable. Jagan behaves as though this world was an illusion, where the so-called realities merge into dream.

The antics of Mali and other mundane affairs of the world finally dissipate and Jagan has a new *Janma* or birth in this life.

"Am I on the verge of a new *Janma*?" he wondered. Nothing seemed really to matter. "Such things are common in ordinary existence and always passing" he said aloud." (p.120)

Thus, it can be concluded that the "*new Janma*" signifies a good bye to the illusory world. Jagan enters the *Vanaprastha Ashrama* by renouncing the familial bondages. Narayan offers a realistic and convincing picture of the sort of personal forces that make the final stage of retreat for the protagonist a natural part of his life. Jagan accepts the doctrine of *Karma* as preached in Hindu way of life. He accepts the death of his wife in the manner of a stoic. Similarly, he overlooks the foolhardiness of Mali and acknowledges these reversals of life as part and parcel of life. His deep-rootedness in the Indian ethics, religion and philosophy paves the way for his entry into the *Vanaprastha Ashrama*, turning into a virtual reality. This philosophy of

acceptance grants a moral and spiritual strength to Jagan. The doctrine of *Karma* inculcates in him a reiteration of faith in the absolute justice to accept life with equanimity and fortitude. Normalcy is restored in his life. K. R. Srinivas Iyenger rightly observes:

“There is generally a fight, an uprooting, a disturbance of order followed by a return, a restoration to normalcy.”⁽³⁷⁾

B. F. MacDonald considers The Vendor of Sweets as a piece of fiction devoted to the study of self.⁽³⁸⁾ In the study of self, the “I” is one of the chief concerns of Indian philosophy. The novel begins with the debate and a consequent discussion on the self as it progresses along with the experiments of the protagonist to master his self by different ways, like abstemious diet, reading of the Bhagvad Gita to a simple and ascetic living style and maintaining a purity of thought and action. The protagonist gradually realizes the obstacles and illusions which hamper this process of self which are mainly his attachments to his only son and his shop. In the end the protagonist succeeds in giving up his twin attachments of *Kama* and *Artha* to realize the truth that “his identity is undergoing change” that leads him towards a “new *Janma*” which is the symbol of pure consciousness of God, self realization and identification with the Supreme. Once his spirit reaches the threshold of spirituality, he does not feel crushed by the weight of the world.⁽³⁹⁾

THE FINANCIAL EXPERT

ARTHA AND KAMA

The Financial Expert (1952) ⁽⁴⁰⁾ presents insights into two cardinal principles of Indian philosophy, namely the principle of *Artha*, i.e. money represented in the character of Margayya and the principle of *Kama*, i.e. pleasure and erotic love presented in the character of Dr. Pal. Recognizing the evil influence, crumbling consequences of wealth, R. K. Narayan aptly remarked in My Dateless Diary:

“Money should always be a round about hinted subject between friends, only then it is possible to maintain the dignity of human relations.” ⁽⁴¹⁾

Artha or money is one of the important aspects of Hindu philosophy and ethics. All philosophers, scriptures, Vedas, epics and the Upanishads have analyzed and commented upon the recurrent need of *Artha* in their own ways. “*sveR gu`a: ka`cn ma&yNte a*” (All virtues reside in gold) is a well known saying in Sanskrit. In Indian epics and scriptures there are references to various forms of *yagnas*, *tapas*, rituals and different sorts of worships to please the gods so as to be gifted with *Artha*. Bhartrihari, the ancient Indian scholar, saint and poet realized the importance of wealth in the first century B.C.:

“Who hath on earth wealth that possessed;
Considered he be as one of lineage good;
Noble, versatile, venerable and intelligent;
As a lot of merit find a place in gold.” ⁽⁴²⁾

Manusmriti has also advocated the concept of *Artha* with specific limitations and restraints. Kautilya's Arthashastra is a well acclaimed text which has extensively elaborated the importance of money in human life. Entirely practical in purpose and approach the Arthashastra does not present any overt philosophy but it deals with skeptic human nature and its corruptibility. The Arthashastra upholds the view that sanction for *Artha* rests on the assumption that - with the exclusion of the exceptional few persons who can proceed directly to the final aim of *Moksha* or spiritual release from life – material well being is the basic necessity of man.

Narayan has presented the concept of *Artha* in The Financial Expert. The protagonist of the novel, Margayya tirelessly works on his job which is to guide innocent and needy people to obtain loans from the Central Co-Operative Land Mortgage Bank of Malgudi. He is paid for his guidance in this complex transaction by his clients. Margayya, an expert in this business of financial transaction can keep in his storehouse of memory, the parallel accounts of at least fifty employees of the bank. All his clients, mostly from far off villages around Malgudi have deep faith and trust in his ability. They call him “the financial wizard” and a “saviour” (p. 8). Initially the secretary of the bank is suspicious and Margayya's manipulative techniques annoy him. Deeply hurt at these insults, Margayya contemplates and endeavors to improve his life style. He realizes the significance of money in social discourse, he starts wearing a new “good *dhoti*” (p. 23) to improve his outer appearance and he “talked like a man who just arrived from a far off land, he spoke with such detachment and superiority.” (p. 24)

Margayya is obsessed with the desire to earn *Artha* and his means to

achieve this end is by propitiating Goddess Lakshmi, a typical Indian attitude. He seeks the guidance of a Pundit, who prescribes him a tough procedure of forty days for propitiating Goddess Lakshmi. Narayan describes his determined efforts:

“Each day it took him eight hours of repetition to complete the thousand. In this process his jaws ached, his tongue had become dry and he felt faint with hunger, since he had to fast completely while praying.” (p.71)

Margayya’s approach towards *Artha* at this stage of his life is wayward and this approach makes him carefree. He speaks, “A man whom the goddess of wealth favours need not worry much. He can buy all the knowledge he requires.” (p.51) Acquisition of *Artha* or wealth for Margayya is associated more with enhancing social status rather than pursuing sensuous or materialistic life.

Propitiation of Goddess Lakshmi reiterates Margayya’s belief and devotion in the Hindu religion and rituals. He trusts the power of *Mantra* and *Tantra*. This reflects a comical stereotypical blending of religion and philosophy in the life of an Indian. Indian philosophy upholds the superiority of spiritual life and tends to demean the materialistic life. The material gains of this world are belittled as *Maya* or illusion. (43) The image of Lakshmi in Hindu *shashtras* and scriptures is one who is mobile or flexible – “I(m)Stoy tr#w#cpla a”. But Margayya is not ready to spend his earned money; he travels with a third class railway ticket. On one hand he performs the holy rituals to propitiate the Goddess but on the other refuses to use the money. He says, “I’m a *Sanyasi*; I have no use for it...” (p. 56) Here is a comical interpretation of a *sanyasi*. Here, like Raju in The Guide and Chandran in The Bachelor of Arts

Margayya's position is an analogue to the class of pseudo-*sanyasis*.

The skeptical mind-set of Margayya is verily an example of a typical Indian pseudo-philosopher who sails in two boats and due to his half baked knowledge of the Indian philosophy is destined to live a dual existence. Margayya's mind-set is representative of an Indian mind-set that upholds the superiority of spirituality to materialism leading to duality in the personality of an individual. Thus, the material gains of this world are deplored as *Maya* or illusion. Therefore, the ancient Indian philosophers and thinkers have suggested the ways to earn, accumulate and spend money in a judicious and disinterested manner. Excess of love for *Artha* leads one to suffering. The portrayal of Lakshmi in Hindu scriptures uniformly conforms to the image of an unstable and unpredictable woman. Margayya, Raju and Jagan finally learn this lesson the hard way.

Dr. Pal, a journalist, correspondent and author of The Bed Life – Domestic Harmony in the novel represents another aspect of Indian philosophy that is *Kama* or sexual pleasures and lustful passions. In Hindu mythology Kamadev is presented as the Hindu God of love who with his flower bow and five flower arrows shoots the common men and women and arouses in them the feeling of love in their hearts. The concept of *Kama* is expounded by Vatsyayana in Kamasutra. According to Vatyayana, human passions and desires have their root in *Moha* or delusion. ⁽⁴⁴⁾ He considers the failure of reason to be the cause of such passions.

The school of Charvaka also held this philosophy of *Moha* as the ultimate end of life. They believed that man's only motto is to enjoy the thrill of the passions of love. According to them, life is an amalgam of pleasure and

sorrow and man should keep on squeezing out of life as much pleasure as he can, no matter through whatever means the pleasure is achieved.

yavTjlveTsuQa> jlved<`. k<Tva 6<t. ipbet a

WaSmlWaUtSy dehSy punragmn> kut: aa ⁽⁴⁵⁾

(So long as you live, live with joy. Drink ghee even if you have to borrow.

Once this body is burnt to ashes, who knows when one is reborn.)

Hindu religion adheres to the practice of *Linga* worship which has mythical significance and religious connotations to the science of *Kama*. Quite a few old Indian scriptures and Puranas are devoted to the study of the science of *Kama*. George Ryley Scott holds the opinion:

“In no country in the world did phallicism become so universal and permeate so thoroughly the religious beliefs of the people as in India.” ⁽⁴⁶⁾

The paintings and sculptures of Khajuraho, Ajanta and Ellora testify that in ancient India the science of *Kama* has been studied and taught seriously in the educational and religious institutions. But in today’s times a large number of scholars and thinkers who lack the fundamental understanding of Indian religion and philosophy equate *Kama* with eroticism. Dr. Pal in the novel represents this class of pseudo-social scientists who relegates Kamasutra of Vatsyayana to obscenity and eroticism.

Through the presentation of Malgudian society and its characters Narayan has tried to give an account of the two dimensions – *Artha* and *Kama* – of human life as propounded by Indian philosophers. Indian thinkers have always held ‘*Kama*’ as a means to gratify one’s biological needs. According to Manu, it is merely a means to generate the new generation which is one of the prime Sanskaras or duties of man. Dr. Pal’s publication of his book The Bed

Life – Domestic Harmony is received by the people with great excitement. The ascending fortunes of Margayya from the sale of this book speak volumes for the popularity of the book among the Malgudians. Malgudi is a traditional town where the subject of *Kama* is treated as a taboo in social discourse. It could be said that the Malgudians had forcibly suppressed their feelings or instincts of *Kama* under social norms. The people of Malgudi do not buy the book to acquire the true understanding of the science of *Kama* as advocated by Vatsyayana, but they buy it only to seek some pleasure out of its reading. The reading of the book arouses their instinct of *Kama*. Margayya knew this and consequently decides to write a book on '*Kama*' instead of philosophy. He says, "If I wrote a book of say, poems or philosophy, nobody would touch it – but a book like 'Bed Life' is a thing that everyone would like to read." (p. 87)

Thus, *Kama* which has been enlisted as one of the four aims of life in Indian philosophy is relegated to a perverted pleasure in the contemporary society of Malgudi.

It is interesting to note that Dr. Pal is a self-proclaimed journalist and a sociologist. His so-called sociological findings are based not on quality texts from ancient Indian classics but are an outcome of his ramblings from Western sociological sources. His claims to educate the people who are crumbling due to their ignorance of the science of *Kama* is baseless and false. The people might be suffering due to their ignorance of the art of *Kama* but Dr. Pal is certainly not the competent authority to guide the Malgudians on this subject.

The sub-text The Bed Life – Domestic Harmony draws the attention to the fallacies that exist in the minds of the people. Dr. Pal, a shrewd observer, wishes to exploit and thrive on the people's weaknesses. The novel also

presents the dichotomy of a society that treats the subject of *Kama* as a taboo in public discourse but purchases and reads the book on *Kama* privately. This dichotomy of desire of *Kama* on one hand and the pretension of keeping away from it, is a satire on the Malgudians who epitomize the Indian society.

Indian philosophy has welcomed the idea of earning and accumulating wealth for the survival of one's being and family. But as it is explained in the great Indian epic The Mahabharata, wealth must be earned in proper proportion and through right means:

}^vRbahu ivrOMye8 na5 kiXCd\ x<'oit mam\ a

6maRd\4RXc kamXc s 6mR: ik> n seVyte aḡ ⁽⁴⁷⁾

(No fruit is borne even through the most pious actions performed, if the wealth is earned through wrong means.)

Accumulation of money and material comforts without spiritual bent of mind and devotion to the Almighty leads one to grief. Balu, Margayya's wayward son represents this dimension of the concept of *Artha*. He has all worldly possessions – parental love, security and material prosperity, yet happiness eludes him. It is evident from the example of Balu that material comforts devoid of spiritual bliss lead one to unhappiness. Not only does Balu turn wayward and lonely but he also fails to relieve his father's tension. This is clear from the following passage from the novel:

“He (Balu) returned home only often, the whole town has gone to sleep. By this time his father had already come home and was fretting, bothering his wife to tell him where Balu had gone. He had got into the habit of panicking if Balu absented himself too long from home...” (p. 179)

When Margayya asks his son who comes very late at night where he had

been, he replies, “I’ve been here and there – what should I be doing at home?”

(pp. 179-180)

Thus, *Artha* is the governing motif in the novel The Financial Expert. *Artha* and *Kama* are both dealt with simultaneously through the characters of Margayya and Dr. Pal. R. K. Narayan has artistically presented the two aims of human life as advocated by the Indian thinkers and philosophers. Margayya, the protagonist craves for money. He puts all his efforts to please Goddess Lakshmi by performing rituals. At the same time he publishes the book The Bed Life – Domestic Harmony to attain wealth. Thus, he embarks upon the business of books. He urges the people to read and learn. He becomes an interesting amalgam of the devotee of Sarasvati, the Goddess of Learning and Lakshmi, the Goddess of money. He uses the profits earned through the publication of books on the science of *Kama*, and lends it to the peasants and villagers. At the end he attains the position of financial wizard who receives valuable deposits and huge rates of interest. Margayya works day and night to realize his dream of being rich. However, when he becomes rich and gains power and social status, he remains unhappy. Margayya’s richness causes anxiety even in his wife:

“He ate very little – just the quantity that a boy of ten would eat.

It worried her secretly. She tried to improve it by putting more rice and stuff on his plate, but he just pushed it all aside, got up and went back to work by the lamp, for further additions. She never knew when he went to bed, because even after she had finished all her work and gone to bed, she still saw him bent over his registers. She saw him with a drawn look and felt moved to: ‘Shouldn’t you mind your health?’” (p. 199)

Narayan's artistic genius arouses a sense of awe and respect for his protagonists who gradually undergo an internal spiritual transformation. Despite his materialistic pursuits throughout the novel, Margayya develops an attitudinal apathy towards the end which results into conditioning of mind as advocated in the Bhagvad Gita.

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ ।
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥ (II/38) ⁽⁴⁸⁾

(Treat sorrow and joy, loss and profit, victory or defeat in the same way.)

The preaching of the priest also resonates the above verse of the Bhagwad Gita:

“How can I say? It's our duty to perform a *Puja*; the results cannot be our concern. It's *Karma*.” (p. 33)

Although Margayya uses wrong means to acquire money yet money earned by him is not wasted on the luxury of living and eating, instead he devises plans to enrich himself and serve the masses simultaneously. He is to some extent an honest man in his effort to increase and stabilize his financial position. “The only sign of prosperity about him now was the bright handle of the umbrella which was hooked to his right forearm.” (p.144)

As is said in the popular saying - “Ill got – ill spent” – the financial status of Margayya founded on the evil gains is ruined leading him to bankruptcy in the end. But one noteworthy transformation in the protagonist is that he acquires towards the close of the novel the pose of a *Karma Yogi*. The eternal preaching of the Bhagwad Gita on *Nishkam Karmayoga* is inherent here:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ (II/47) ⁽⁴⁹⁾

(Therefore do thy duty perfectly, without care for the result; for
he who does his duty disinterestedly attains the supreme.)

The positive side of Margayya's personality is reflected in the last pages of the novel. He does not suffer from the evil effects of *Artha*. Margayya is working and earning *Artha* because it is his duty, his *Karma*. He performs his assigned task in a gracious manner. He skips his morning food and works for the whole day, no matter his eyes pain and he feels weak and weary late in the evening. He takes his food only at night after closing his cash. He says, "With work ahead, I have no patience for food..." (p. 183)

When Margayya's son Balu advises him to buy a better paperweight and a good table and chair for himself he retorts, "I don't need all those luxuries" (p. 203) Finally, when the loss of all his property, jewelry, furniture etc. is reported to him, he takes it in a calm and stoic manner. He is ready to fight the odds of life and likewise advises his son to do so:

"It was difficult to come out even with our clothes and Brinda's jewellery. They demanded a list. I was expecting it, Balu....have an early meal tomorrow and go to the banyan tree in front of the co-operative bank. I hope the tree is still there. Go there, that is all I can say." (p. 217)

The two important aspects of life - *Artha* and *Kama* - represented by Margayya and Dr. Pal respectively lead to their tragic ends. *Dharma*, the third of the four aims of life, consists of religious and moral duties. Excess of indulgence in *Kama* and accumulation of *Artha* through wrong means by these two characters in the novel results into immorality. Margayya, in the end,

emerges as an enlightened being only after the loss of *Artha*, after his bankruptcy. Dr. Pal, the financial wizard is a loser on both moral as well as spiritual grounds.

Margayya acquires a state of mind wherein the loss of *Artha* does not cause him any pain. His dispossession of all material does not induce in him any pain or remorse. This stoic, poised acceptance of reality does not project a defeatist mood in the protagonist. Bhartruhari has rightly summed up the idea of meaninglessness of '*Artha*' in his Shringar Satak:

n*3o moh: t<`imv jgJlmalokyam: a

n*3o mohSt<`imv jgJlmalokyam: aa (50)

(All my passions for '*Arhta*' are over now. I see this world as a particle, meaningless.)

Margayya maintains an exemplary equilibrium in the face of the financial catastrophe and emerges out as a fine specimen of a *Yogi* when sorrows and joys, profit and loss, defeat and victory are viewed in a similar mood of disinterestedness. On the contrary, his actions and words imbibe the quintessence of Indian philosophy that designates the materialistic world as an illusion or *Maya*. *Moksha* is the spiritual release from this illusory world. Margayya is finally liberated from the quagmire of desires and aspirations. He tries to transmit this knowledge to his son by asking him to go to the banyan tree and start a new life as he did earlier.

But then self-realization is a self-seeking process. Every person has to achieve his own spiritual liberation. It is self-centered. Unlike Krishnan in The English Teacher, *Moksha* for Margayya is self-centered in a truly Indian philosophical sense. His son will have to attain bliss on his own.

Bunyan tree is used as a symbol to present Margayya as achieving self-

realization. The shade of the banyan tree pervades the landscape of the novel from the beginning to the end. Banyan is considered as a sacred tree in ancient Hindu culture. It was under the banyan tree that Lord Buddha attained the knowledge of *Atman* or soul. Margayya leaves the banyan tree in the vain search for accumulating wealth. It is at this stage that his financial empire collapses. And finally he gains an insight into the cool and comfortable shade of the banyan tree where he desires his son to start his business. Margayya, in the end, directs his son to go and start his financial transactions under a banyan tree and thereby start a new life, as he had done in the past. He tells his son that one can attain the spiritual bliss or liberation under the banyan tree. "Go there, that is all I can." (p. 184) This could be interpreted in an altogether philosophical manner. Margayya, the financial wizard who had been in mad pursuit after '*Artha*' or money gets a jolt by his destiny and learns the lesson that money acquired only through right means and intentions is perpetual. This has been the cardinal philosophy expounded by all Indian texts including Manu Smriti, Arthashastra and The Bhagwad Gita.

As it is found in Raja Rao's Kanthapura, the Indian philosophical concepts of time and chronology permeate in The Financial Expert. Indian mythical idea of *Mahayuga* is composed of four periods or ages – *Sattiyuga*, *Tretayuga*, *Dwaparayuga* and *Kaliyuga*. According to Indian ethos a progressive decline of excellence and virtue among men and the degeneration of virtues take place through these four stages or *Yugas*. Narayan has presented the life of Margayya in the novel representing these four stages. The four stages in Margayya's career may be taken to represent the four *Yugas* during which time, "goodness in man progressively diminishes and

greed overtaking him to the organization he creates for himself, thus encasing and finally dehumanizing man.”⁽⁵¹⁾

Margayya passes from four stages in his life and these stages signify the cyclical phenomenon of life itself in the vicious cycle of which Margayya is caught, and vainly struggles to come out of it. In the first stage, Margayya considers the acquisition of wealth as a prerequisite for an individual to attain happiness and social status. The second stage deals with Margayya's attempts to accumulate wealth by propitiating Goddess Laxmi. In the third stage, he emerges as the financial wizard and receives huge deposits and now he is chiefly concerned with the vicissitudes of his son Balu, whom he wants to rise up on his own with sound monetary status. In the last stage, Margayya meets his doom and makes desperate attempts to rise out of his financial wreck. The final stage of Margayya's life can be compared with the final stage in Indian mythology which comes at the end of four *Yugas*.

The wretched condition of Margayya, his son Balu's insistence on granting him his part of property and the psychological tumult which Margayya faces in the times of his grief at the end can be termed as the stage of *Pralaya*. This stage of *Pralaya* is mentioned in Kanthapura when there is neither man nor mosquito left in the village. As there are intimations of the emergence of a new civilization in Kanthapura, so in The Financial Expert, Margayya does not drown himself into Saryu or commit suicide in the face of his tragedy. Since the spirit of life is a cyclical process and the structure of the novel resembles the *Yuga* cycle, Margayya is not destroyed in the end, but suffers a calamity with a newly learnt lesson and enlightenment and is willing to start a new life under the banyan tree. Like Santiago in Hemingway's novel

Old man and the Sea, Margayya, in the end, seems to declare, “Man is not made for defeat; man can be destroyed, but not defeated.”⁽⁵²⁾

Thus, the most serious philosophical principles of *Karma*, *Punarjanma* and the cyclical process of life are artistically dealt with in The English Teacher; The Vendor of Sweets deals with the most commonly debated thought of *Sansara* or the material world as *Maya* or illusion and The Financial Expert expresses the traditional Indian mode of putting restrictions on the acquisition of *Artha* and performing *Kama*. The protagonists – Krishnan, Jagan and Margayya - in these novels in their own ways realize the truth of life in a truly Indian philosophical manner. These novels attempt to solve the great riddles of life and death, suffering and diversity of human condition with the help of philosophy and religion reiterating the doctrine and cardinal principles of Indian philosophical systems at a time when the Indian religion, culture and value system were confronted with an onslaught of Western culture and values in the backdrop of the imperialistic rule. Narayan’s characters reinforce and reassert their faith in Indian culture, history, religion, ethics and philosophy withstanding the shock of an alien culture. Narayan asserts the fact that an individual can transcend the boundaries of *Karma*, fate and the cycle of this life and death if he observes the dictates and dictum of Indian *Shashtras*. Raja Rao too has asserted these philosophical concepts in his fiction but his presentation is more metaphysical and abstract. Narayan is quintessentially a moralizer and his stories are fables drawn out of a moral temperament gently contemplating the incongruities of human action and behaviour. K. R. Rao rightly opines:

“Narayan’s stories don’t overtly deal with morals, nor do they

attempt to philosophize in the abstract; the moralistic note is released behind and between the events.”⁽⁵³⁾

In short, the struggle of Narayanian characters between temporal and eternal, between fascinating but illusory material world and blissful spiritual world enlightens the profoundest philosophy of *Karma* in the novels.

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Chapter IV

GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE NOVELS OF

R. K. NARAYAN

Narayan has incorporated Gandhian ideology and philosophy in the his novels, namely, Waiting for the Mahatma, The Vendor of Sweets, The English Teacher, Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts, The Man Eater of Malgudi and A Tiger for Malgudi. Narayan in his characteristic comical and subtle manner writes novels primarily focusing on day-to-day life of an average Malgudian in the imaginary town of Malgudi. In this domestic surroundings of Malgudi, Narayan has artistically interwoven Gandhian ideology in his above mentioned novels.

“Ideals are like stars: you will not succeed in touching them with your hands. But like the seafaring man on the desert of waters, you choose them as your guides and following them you will reach your destiny.” – Charles Schurz ⁽¹⁾

In India 1930s and 1940s was a period of great social turmoil and political upheaval when the Indians, like Schurz’s seafaring men on the desert of water chose Mahatma Gandhi as their guide to sail through the tumultuous times. With a passage of time Gandhi has become a myth, a cult and a religion. Charles Schurz rightly remarks:

“He has become abstract, a historical, post-modern, no longer a man in and of his time, but a free loading concept, a part of the available stock of culture symbols, an image that can be borrowed, used, distorted, reinvented and to the devil with historicity or truth.” ⁽²⁾

The influence and impact of Gandhi’s ideology in contemporary Indian society in general and on literatures in particular can not be undermined. Gandhian philosophy and ideology has invariably motivated and invigorated

the contemporary Indian writers and a huge corpus of contemporary Indian writing is fore-grounded on Gandhism. The works of the leading contemporary Indian writers in English, namely, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya and R. K. Narayan demonstrated the Gandhian impact in their writings. Apart from these luminaries, K. A. Abbas' Inquilab, Nagarajan's The Chronicals of Kedaram, K. R. Venkataramani's Kandan, The Patriot describe at length the influence of Gandhi on the contemporary social and political scene. M. K. Naik remarks, "Indian Writing in English has also felt the 'plastic stresses' of the Gandhian spirit, in more than one way." ⁽³⁾

The hallmark of Narayan's writing is that he has successfully fused his personal philosophy in his literary works. Though apparently simple in content, Narayan's fiction is distinctive for its fusion of the comic with the serious. Unlike the novels of his contemporaries, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao Narayan does not directly promote the Gandhian philosophy, his treatment of Gandhian philosophy in his fiction is distinctly different. His works manifest the multifarious facets of Gandhism. His protagonists and characters rooted and nurtured in the Indian ethics and philosophy are people in quest of truth who embody the greatest virtues of life and they are Gandhians in their own particular manner. When they are disillusioned, they epitomize the disillusionment of the masses who failed to comprehend and assimilate the teachings of Gandhi to the danger of trivialization of Gandhism.

Gandhi gave the greatest priority to religion. He writes in Young India, "I hold my religion dearer than my country and therefore, I am a Hindu first and a nationalist later." ⁽⁴⁾ Gandhi did not consider Hinduism as sectarian but as a universal religion which incorporates the best of Islam, Christianity,

Buddism and so on. ⁽⁵⁾ Hinduism with its message of *Ahinsa* is most appealing and relevant to Gandhi. Regarding this universal religion, he remarks:

“The chief value of Hinduism lies in holding the actual belief that all life (not only human beings, but all sentient beings) is one i.e. all life coming from the one universal source, call it Allah, God or Parmeshwara.” ⁽⁶⁾

Gandhian religion has no geographical or national limits, and is not bound by the constraints of colour or caste. Gandhian religion is not a prison house but has room for the entire humanity. It is not a formal or customary religion, but a religion which brings us face to face with our Maker. ⁽⁷⁾ His religion is deeply rooted in the traditional set up, scriptures and old values of India. The Vedas for Gandhi are unwritten, divine in nature and they promoted the “purity, truth, innocence, chastity, humility, simplicity, forgiveness, godliness and all that makes a man or woman noble and brave.” ⁽⁸⁾ The influence of the Bhagwad Gita and Ramayana on Gandhi is a well known fact. Apart from these Hindu scriptures, Gandhi firmly believed in the Bible, the Quran and the Zend Avesta. This universal grasping of all religions sublimated Gandhi to a cosmopolitan who could apprehend and empathize with the humanity at large.

Gandhian ethics is correlated to religion. Gandhi firmly believed in *Ashrama Dharma* and *Swa Dharma* but boldly attacked the misconception of *Varnashrama Dharma* that favours castes, colour and creed. Gandhi preached the old Indian values of *Ahinsa* or non-violence, *Satya* or truth, *Astheya* or non-appropriation, *Dhairya* or patience, *Brahmacharya* or celibacy, *Indriya-Nigraha* or control of senses, *Kshama* or forgiveness etc. This belief in the ethical virtues of human beings grants a practical appeal to Gandhian

religion capable of fulfilling the human needs. Gandhi experimented with what he preached synthesizing religion and ethics. He defines religion in the following manner:

“I go further and say that every activity of a man of religion must be derived from his religion, because religion means being bound by God, that is to say, God rules your every breath.”⁽⁹⁾

Gandhi rejected the distinction commonly made between economics and morality. “True *Dharma* always promotes legitimate economic pursuits. For imperfect man, this is the finest test of whether what purports to be *Dharma* is true *Dharma*.”⁽¹⁰⁾ Similarly, he redefined the meaning and application of *Yagna* prescribed in Hindu scriptures in an innovative manner. “*Yagna* means an act directed to the welfare of others, done without desiring any return for it, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature.”⁽¹¹⁾

Ramashray Roy finds a parallel between Gandhi’s position and that of the Upanishads which insists on the oneness of all life. In his study of Gandhian thought, he notes:

“Gandhi’s position is identical with the Upanishadic insistence of the oneness of everything, senate and insenate. The *adhyatma - adhidaivam* system posits a thorough going scheme of correspondence between the subjective and the objective and considers the two as dual aspects of the one sole imperishable entity, known as respectively from the subjective and objective point of view. Gandhi completely subscribes to this doctrine and therefore insists on the oneness of all life.”⁽¹²⁾

Gandhi's belief in the doctrine of *Advaita* is based on the assumption that all men are born equal. He writes:

"I believe in the rock bottom doctrine of *Advaita* and my interpretation of *Advaita* excludes totally any idea of superiority at any stage whatsoever. I believe implicitly that all men are born equal. All have the same soul as any other. And it is because I believe in this inherent equality of all men that I fight the doctrine of superiority which many of our rulers arrogate to themselves." ⁽¹³⁾

Moksha or liberation or supreme bliss can be attained through various approaches and paths. All that is needed is a single-minded devotion to God and a similar respect to His creatures. Gandhi avers:

"I believe it to be possible for every human being to attain to that blessed and indescribable, sinless state in which he feels within himself the presence of God to the exclusion of everything else." ⁽¹⁴⁾

In short, Gandhian philosophy has close relation with the philosophy of *Karma*, theory of submission, *Varnashram Dharma* and so on. R. K. Narayan has knitted these Gandhian principles in the theme and plot of his novels. His protagonists propagate the Gandhian views and advocate Gandhian philosophy as a way of life. This reflection of Gandhian philosophy is visible in great amount in his novels Waiting for the Mahatma and Man Eater of Malqudi, The Vendor of Sweets and The English Teacher.

WAITING FOR THE MAHATMA: A WAY OF LIFE

R. K. Narayan's Waiting for the Mahatma was written in 1955, about seven years after the assassination of Gandhi. The contemporary writings of the period, irrespective of the medium of Hindi, English or any other regional language bear the imprint of Gandhian ideology. Raja Rao's Kanthapura, Bhabani Bhattacharya's A Goddess Named Gold, Mulk Raj Anand's The Sword and the Sickle and Untouchable, K. Nagarajan's The Chronicles of Kedaram, Venu Chittale's In Transit and other works center around Gandhian ideology. R. K. Narayan in Waiting for the Mahatma examines the influence of Gandhi on an average Indian. Sriram, the protagonist in the novel is representative of the mediocre, middle class Indians with his foibles and faults.

Waiting for the Mahatma is the only novel of Narayan which places Gandhi at the center of the text. The novel is not a favourite with a majority of critics. A. N. Kaul regards Waiting for the Mahatma as one of the "weakest" novels of Narayan. ⁽¹⁵⁾ In his opinion, it is neither a political novel nor a good comedy. Uma Parameshwaran ranks this novel below The Guide as it has only weaknesses. She writes, "Unlike The Guide which reveals his strength as well as shortcomings, Waiting for the Mahatma has very little in its flavor." ⁽¹⁶⁾ In My Dateless Dairy an American novelist friend of Narayan named Metro also criticized Waiting for the Mahatma for its "weak motivation". In his opinion, the novel "lacks punch" ⁽¹⁷⁾ and is unable to provide the real gist of the teachings of Gandhi. C. D. Narasimhaiah, one of the most influential critics of Narayan believes that Narayan has "made a muddle of the Gandhian principle" and asks, "Is it a serious story or fantasy?" ⁽¹⁸⁾ He further states that the novel has not enlarged the readers' awareness of Gandhi nor has it

offered new insight into the Gandhian themes. But William Walsh praised Waiting for the Mahatma as “a rare piece of triumph” in which the genius of Mahatma is exquisitely projected. ⁽¹⁹⁾

To Gandhi, truth or *Satya* is the eternal principle of life, the regulating force in the universe. In the Gandhian context, truth is synonymous to God and amounts to sincerity of heart and inner force of soul that implies the discovery of one’s own self. Gandhiji balanced his social, political and spiritual life on the foundation of truth. In his autobiography, he writes:

“The truth is not truthfulness in world, truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is, God.... But I worship God as Truth only.” ⁽²⁰⁾

According to the Gandhian concept of truth, “The instruments of the quest of truth are as simple as they are different.” ⁽²¹⁾ Narayan corroborates this fact in his novels by depicting characters in search of truth and self. There is a mixture of Gandhism and pseudo-Gandhism in his novels. The novelist exposes the class of pseudo-Gandhians like Jagan and Sriram and delineates the process of transformation in the protagonists in their search for truth and self-realization.

When the novel opens, Sriram, the protagonist is preparing to celebrate his 20th birthday with his grandmother. He is an orphan, his mother has died during his birth and his father, a soldier died in Mesopotamia on field duty. Sriram, leads a harmonious and apparently contented life with his grandmother in Kabir Street of Malgudi. He passes his time aimlessly with no worry and hassles of life. Narayan gives an account of his colourless life:

“All day he lounged on this canvas seat and looked at the ceiling or read a tattered novel borrowed from the municipal library.”

“It was an unruffled, quiet existence, which went on without a break for the next four years, the passing of time being hardly noticed in this scheme – except when one or the other of the festivals of the season turned up.” (p. 21) (22)

The journey of Sriram from the mundane life to the Gandhian ways of life begins when he first meets Bharati. When Sriram is planning to celebrate the New Year with his granny, he visits the market to purchase some “jasmine for the *puja*” and other “sweet stuff” (p. 20) for the occasion. His first meeting with Bharati brings new joy and purpose in his life:

“She (Bharati) looked so different from the beauty of Kanni’s shop; his critical faculties were at once alert, and he realized how shallow was the other beauty, the European queen, and wondered that he had ever given her a thought. He wouldn’t look at the picture even if Kanni should give it to him free.” (p. 22)

His curiosity about the fund-collecting girl leads him to the jiggery merchant, he diplomatically asks him about her. The jiggery merchant informs Sriram about the coming of the Mahatma to Malgudi and about the girl’s proximity to him. This information escalates his interest and curiosity in the girl. Sriram suddenly wakes up from an age old somnolence to the fact that Malgudi is about to have the honour of receiving Mahatma Gandhi. (p. 24)

Initially, Bharati is the driving force who inducts Sriram in the Gandhian camp. But once Sriram finds an entry, the romantic relation between him and Bharati transforms into a new relationship. According to K. R. S. Iyenger:

“In Waiting for the Mahatma, the theme is apparently the Bharati-Sriram romance which, however, gains a new dimension in the background of their common allegiance to the Mahatma.”⁽²³⁾

Narayan, the keen and perceptive observer has tried to grasp and simplify the Gandhian philosophy in this novel. Sriram serves a double purpose since the name of the protagonist ‘Sriram’ is also the chanting word of Gandhiji. Gandhi has mass appeal, a huge gathering of Malgudian citizens are waiting on the bank of Saryu to receive their beloved leader. Volunteers clad in white *Khadi* guide the people and maintain law and order at the meeting. Despite severe heat, the crowd sat patiently and uncomplainingly on the hot sand. As the Mahatma reaches the venue and delivers his speech, Sriram listens with great passion and is completely mesmerized:

“No good. Not enough. I like to see more vigour in your arms, more rhythm, more spirit. It must be like the drum beat of the non-violent soldiers marching on to cut the chains that bind Mother India.... I want to see unity in it.”^(p. 26)

Unlike Mulk Raj Anand’s Untouchable, Narayan presents Gandhi as one of the characters in the novel who not only delivers speeches to the multitudes, but also converses and interacts with other characters. Narayan presents an inside view of Gandhi in action from morning till evening as an individual, this enables the readers to understand and correlate the Gandhian ideology and philosophy.

Although Bharati is the motivating force behind his meeting with the Mahatma, yet in his very first encounter with Gandhi, Sriram feels the need to change his life style. Bharati arranges this meeting between Sriram and

Gandhi in the early morning at 3.00 a.m. in a hut in Nellappa Grove, a colony of the untouchables. During the walk Gandhi advises Sriram to undertake morning walks.

“Gandhi said: By the time we meet again next, you must give me a very good account of yourself.”

“He laughed in a kindly manner, and Sriram said, ‘Yes Bapuji, I will be a different man.’”

“Why do you say ‘different’? You will be all right if you are fully yourself.” (p. 68)

Sriram stays in Gandhi’s camps and shares the room with Gorpada, a mature volunteer who adds new dimension to his knowledge and highlights the aims and objectives of the Gandhian movement. Travelling with Gorpada in famine stricken areas, Sriram is initiated into the spirit of Gandhian movement and ideology. Kabir Street, Pyol, Granny, Local shop and other things which have enthralled him till yesterday are replaced by the new world dominated by Gandhi, Bharati and Gorpada. Granny for the first time noticing a fiery earnestness in her grandson comments:

“Oh! He is your God, is he?”

“Yes, he is, and I won’t hear anyone speak lightly of him.... He is not a man; he is a Mahatma” (p. 83)

Gandhi prefers to stay in Nellappa Grove in the untouchable quarters instead of the luxurious residence of the chairman, Natesh. He bestows his love on the underdogs and untouchables of Malgudi. Narayan describes the unhygienic condition of these slums of the downtrodden people, the living condition in the colony is deplorable. The life style of these untouchables is a blot on humanity. Gandhi spots the untouchable boy in Neel Bagh residency

of the chairman and offers him oranges asking him to sit beside him. This greatly discomfited the chairman who can not utter a word in the presence of Mahatma Gandhi. Narayan portrays Gandhi's loving and humane heart and his love of the common man. His mode of action is exhibited during his three days stay in Malgudi when he rejects the palatial residency of Natesh, chairman for a Harijan's hut.

Like a true Gandhian, Sriram renounces all luxury and comforts. Just as Gandhi preferred to stay in a Harijan's hut when he visited the villages, Sriram too finds himself more comfortable with the ordinary people and asks them not to worry for his stay. He says to the District Collector:

“For me? Don't trouble yourself. I can sleep in any hut. I can live where others are living. I don't think I shall demand many luxuries. Don't worry, we can look after ourselves. I am not a guest here. I am a host. Why don't you join us, as our guest?”

(p. 90)

Sriram at this stage tries to emulate Gandhi's way of life.

From Malgudi, Mahatma Gandhi leaves for the assessment of the draught hit areas. He visits the villages on foot, consoles the villagers and collects first hand information about the relief measures there. He boards a train at Koppal village, a tiny station at the foot of the Mempi Hills. He advises Sriram:

“Remember that she (Bharati) is your Guru, and think of her with reverence and respect, and you will be all right.” (p. 93)

Initially, Sriram is drawn towards Gandhi for ulterior motives. The main driving force in his life is Bharati, the moment he sees her, he falls in love with her. P. S Ramana opines, “Learning that she is a follower of Gandhiji, he decides to

become his disciple to be able to be close to her - neither understanding nor having any interest in Gandhiji's philosophy." ⁽²⁴⁾ But once Sriram comes in contact with Gandhi, he drifts towards the Gandhian ideology and philosophy of life knowingly or unknowingly.

However, later Sriram undergoes dramatic transformation, he becomes an "accredited member of the group" ^(p. 87) visiting villages with Bharati and Gopad. Whenever the villagers wanted to know anything about the Mahatma, they come and speak to him reverentially. He becomes the representative of Gandhi explaining Gandhian thoughts and values to the villagers. His fascinating imagination of village life is shattered when he comes in touch with the grim, brute, lackluster life of villagers. His romantic illusion of villages is shattered beholding "hungry, parched men and women with skin stretched over their bones, bare earth, dry ponds and miserable tattered thatched roofing over crumbling mud walls, streets full of pits and loose sand, unattractive dry fields." ^(p. 89) Thus, he starts having compassion for his people.

Hence, the transformed hero renounced his aristocratic habits and habitat both. His home now is a deserted shrine on the slop of the Mempi Hills. His possession now is a spinning wheel, a blanket on which to sleep, and the couple of vessels, some food stuff, and a box of matches. ^(p. 95) Sriram passes "through a process of self-tempering" ^(p. 96) to attain purity of thought. He assumes that by praising all the austerities that he had picked up in Gopad's company he will become suddenly different, since Gandhiji has blessed him with the idea of self-development. On the eve of his departure from Malgudi, Gandhiji says to Sriram:

“Spin and read Bhagwad Gita and utter *Ram Nam* continuously, and then you will know what to do in life.” (p. 96)

There is a gradual evolution in Sriram as he spins and reads the Bhagwad Gita and utters *Ram Nam* in a routine manner. When he is assigned the job of painting the message of ‘Quit India’ in the surrounding villages, Sriram performs the task with unforeseen zeal and commitment. He painstakingly endeavors to convey the relevance of the painted messages to the people and to form a public opinion against the British rule. The best instance signifying his Gandhian mode of action is spontaneous *Satyagraha* against the sale of foreign biscuits by the shopkeeper. He succeeds in creating amongst the simple and naive villagers, a partial if not complete awareness of the *Swadeshi* movement and the ongoing freedom movement of Gandhi against the British – the boycott of foreign goods, the repeal of Salt Tax, Gandhi’s three hundred miles march to Dandi Beach in 1930 thereby adopting Gandhian philosophy in his way of life.

Sriram attains the height of a true *Satyagrahi* later in the novel. Besides bringing awareness among the people, he himself turns out a fearless freedom fighter. Overcoming initial hesitation and fear, he writes the message of ‘Quit India’ on the gatepost of Mathieson Estates. Here, too, he confronts the lion in his own den:

“Anyway why was he doing this? The High Command had not instructed him to go and bare his chest before a gun mate. (pp.

110-111)

He is annoyed at his own over enthusiastic actions.

Jagadish, quite contrary to Sriram, epitomizes the class of revolutionaries who believe in violence as opposed to the non-violence of

Gandhi. They adore and adhere to violent activities believing in the power of barrel and bullet. Jagadish installs the radio in the lonely abode situated on the slope of Mempi Hill. There is no fasting or *Satyagraha* but gun to tame the enemy. Jagadish believes that the British will leave India with a *salam* if its administrative backbone is crushed. He tells the people:

“Britain’s backbone must be smashed, and lies in the courts and schools and offices and railways lines, from these she draws the strength for her survival.” (p.168)

On account of Jagdish’s indulgence in violent activities, Sriram sometimes feels conscious and guilty about it. He discusses his doubts with Jagadish. “I wonder what Mahatmaji will say about all this!” (p.143)

This deviation from the Gandhian path puts Sriram on a hard slippery path. The police arrest him. His arrest and imprisonment highlights the futility of the contemporary Maxist movement. The sub-text entails the hidden discourse, the viability of non-violence in the Indian context.

Nevertheless, Sriram’s Gandhism is incipient. He refuses to court arrest and goes to jail on the pretext of his old grandmother. He says:

“I am only thinking of my grandmother. I want to see her before I am finally jailed. That is why I asked you how long we should be in prison. She is very old, you know. I will surrender myself after I have seen her. I must manage to see her.” (p.140)

Sriram’s oscillation from Gandism to extremism reiterates that he has not fully assimilated Gandhism. He starts assisting Jagadish in his extremist activities. Thus, Sriram’s incipient Gandhism has many ups and downs. Gandhism does not correspond to spinning wheels, painting captions on the wall or speaking about Gandhian principles of non-violence, truth, non-

cooperation and so on. Sriram's Gandhism after the initial fervor and zeal fails to withstand and fulfill the daring demands at the next stage. It is unquestionable that the attraction for Bharati ushered Sriram into the Gandhian camp. Once Bharati, the epicenter of his attraction is in prison and out of sight, Sriram deviates from Gandhism. Underneath his new patriotic fervor, Sriram lacks conviction in any cult, ism or philosophy and becomes a toy in the hands of Jagadish, an extremist activist.

Narayan focuses on Gandhian concerns in the novel. Gandhi fought against the evil of religious fanaticism and communalism. After independence when Bengal, Bihar and Delhi are caught in the grip of communal riots, Gandhi personally visits these places and forces people to take the vows of non-violence and protection against the rival group. Bharati tells Sriram that "Bapuji forbade us to refer to anyone in terms of religion as Muslims, Hindu, or Sikh, but just as human beings." (p. 244) Gandhiji hated the names with religious origin or identification. Dr. John Hayness Holmes remarks about this trait of Gandhi:

"Gandhi, in other words has laid hold upon the divine truth that religion is one and universal – and uses, with equal ease and satisfaction, the holy writ of Hinduism, Mohammedanism and Christianity. The Bhagwad Gita, the Sermon on the Mounts the great *Suras* of the Kuran – they are all the same in their deliverance from superstition, and their disclosure of what is fundamental to the soul and its destiny upon earth. So Gandhi has found peace, since he has attained – and like Buddha is the Path and like Jesus is the Way." (25)

For Gandhi, the pith and crux of all religions is non-violence, love, brotherhood and truthfulness. Gandhi never approved of the shortcomings of Hinduism such as casteism, ritualism, superstitions etc. He always backed universal truths that have a lasting and enduring value.

It is in prison that Sriram is accrued the unique opportunity to listen to his inner voice. Gandhi in a note to Sriram writes:

“Your work should be a matter of inner faith. It cannot depend upon what you see or understand. Your conscience should be your guide in every action. Consult it and you won’t go wrong. Don’t guide yourself by what you see. You should do your duty because your inner voice drives you to do it.” (pp. 127-128)

Soon, Sriram becomes introspective and starts talking aloud all his doubts. He asks himself, “Hallo, what are you doing here?” and a reply comes from within, “I am fighting for my country.” (p. 129)

To practice truth, the cardinal principle of Gandhism, one needs exemplary courage. “Say anything, he will not mind it, as long as you speak the truth.” (p.247) Sriram is gripped with anxiety and fear at the prospect of confronting the Mahatma for whom truth is God. Once in the proximity of Gandhi, Sriram gathers courage to speak the truth and his inner voice grants him that strength.

Symbolically, the marriage of Bharati and Sriram denotes the victory of the religion of love and true understanding. There is no loggerhead barrier of casteism, horoscope mismatching or status problem. Their marriage reiterates that religion based on love can change a twenty year old, raw and careless person to a responsible citizen capable of grasping the essence of Gandhism

within a short span of five years. Influenced by Gandhiji and Bharati, Sriram's fancy and fanatic notions are transformed into fair, firm ideas.

Bharati is the true exponent and believer of Gandhism in the novel. An orphan, brought up by Gandhi, she has encapsulated in essence the teachings of Gandhi, be it a call to court arrest, or to look after the orphaned riot-victims, she does her duty with utmost devotion and dedication. Unlike Sriram, she is in absolute control of her emotions and situations. At a young age, she has acquired self-discipline, self-denial and self-control. She marries Sriram only with Bapu's blessings.

"Not yet. I must wait for Bapu's sanction."

"How will you get it?"

"I shall write to him tomorrow."

"If he doesn't sanction it?"

"You will marry someone else." (p.133)

Sriram and Bharati represent two facts of Gandhism. A large majority of characters in R. K. Narayan's fiction belong to the class of Sriram who comprehend and practice Gandhian principles on a superficial plane. But Bharati is an ideal Gandhian in the novel. Narayan presents her as a person who has fully assimilated the essence and spirit of Gandhism. Gandhi truly describes her as Sriram's "*Guru*". However, as an ideal *Guru*, she does not impose her belief or wishes on Sriram. The best way to know the truth is to learn it on one's own. It is through the method of the trial and error that Sriram ultimately knows the truth. His marriage with Bharati, his "*Guru*", portends a plausible shift in his being towards Gandhism.

THE VENDOR OF SWEETS:

FROM GRIHASTHA ASHRAMA TO VANAPRASTHA ASHRAMA

Like Bharati in Waiting for the Mahatma, Jagan, the Malgudian protagonist in the post-independence era in The Vendor of Sweets (1967) is said to be modeled after Gandhi. In the opening of the novel he says to his nephew, “Conquer taste, and you will have conquered the self.”⁽²⁶⁾ He follows the Gandhian way of life to the minute details. He eats natural salt, wears *khadi* and shoes made only of the hide of dead animals, spins *charkha*, reads the Bhagwad Gita, writes a book on natural therapy, renounces caste system – all icons that come to manifest and epitomize Gandhism in the post-independence era.

The Vendor of Sweets derives its strength from the transformation which the protagonist undergoes in the course of time, moving from *Grihastha Ashrama* to *Vanaprastha Ashrama* – from the much hyped state of “conquer taste” to learning the lesson of renunciation. However, critics like Bhagvad S. Goyal perceive Jagan’s renunciation as a mockery of the very concept of renunciation.⁽²⁷⁾ The Vendor of Sweets traces the journey of the protagonist from a semi-pseudo-Gandhian to a stage of a mature Gandhian at least in concept and thought, if not wholly in practice.

T. C. Ghai⁽²⁸⁾ sees the novel as a clash between different value systems where the conflict is between a conservative father and a rebellious son on the one hand and between perennial wisdom of India symbolized through the confused eclecticism which is a curious hybrid of the Bhagwad

Gita, the Upanishads and Gandhism of Jagan and crazy modernity symbolized through Mali's desire to manufacture story writing machine.

Jagan's declaration of the statement "conquer taste, and you will have conquered the self" (p.13) at the outset of the novel is much in the manner of Gandhi who stated, "Control of the palate is the first essential in the observance of the vow (Brahmacharya)." (29) Jagan is presented as a Gandhian in the post-independence times who has no taste for food and has given up salt and sugar. Jagan's adoption of Gandhian dietary system serves dual purpose, firstly it restraints his sensual impulses and sexual desires and secondly, it conveniently identifies him with Gandhi.

Jagan's simplicity, his outlook, appearance and appeal are wholly Gandhian. He wears a loose *jabbha* over his *dhoti* both made of material spun with his own hand. Everyday he spins for an hour and produces enough yarn for his "sartorial needs". (p. 15) He does not wear shoes made of the skin of living animals. A narrow almond-shaped pair of glasses and a *khaddar* shawl on the shoulder are apparently an animation of Gandhi.

Jagan's preference for Ayurvedic system of medicine and natural care and his dislike of nylon-bristled tooth-brushes, aspirins and allopathic medicine, his immense faith in the properties of *morgosa* are an extension of Gandhian philosophy as he says in his manuscript in the press, in which he describes the theories which "he owned from Mahatmaji". (p. 26)

The contradiction in the personality of Jagan soon begins to surface. He has conquered taste but not his love for his son and his shop. He is still a worldly man guided by worldly concerns and passions. Mali's letters from abroad relegate the Bhagwad Gita to the background. His Gandhism is

overshadowed by his doting fatherly role. He is willing to make all kinds of compromises and adjustments for the sake of his only son as well as his American – Korean daughter-in-law. Jagan’s rejection of caste system indicates his love for his son and is not an offshoot of Gandhism. His acceptance of Grace and Mali as an “unwed” couple in his house further reiterates this view.

Nevertheless, following the Gandhian principle of denouncing verbal, mental or physical abuse – the purest form of *Ahinsa*, Jagan puts his best efforts in this direction throughout the novel. There is no indulgence in any verbal dual or skirmish in the part of the protagonist who maintains cordial relations with his son, servants and friends. He tries to be in peace with his estranged brothers and sisters though without success.

Jagan, like his counterpart Sriram in Waiting for the Mahatma, gradually undergoes transformation from a pseudo-Gandhian to a Gandhian in spirit and actions so as to finally overcome his obsession for his only son Mali. He decides not to cooperate in Mali’s project adopting Gandhian peaceful methods. A reduction in the price of sweets is indicative of acquiring a state of non-possession. Similarly, he finds out the truth of his son’s relation with Grace in a manner of an old “*Satyagrahi*”.^(p.138) Unhappy and aghast at the unethical behavior of his son who has declined his father’s advice to marry Grace, Jagan’s subsequent actions to barricade himself, lock the communicating door, shut the ventilator are in the mode of Gandhian *Asahayoga* or non-cooperation. Jagan’s reaction to leave his shop, business, familial and social attachments and take refuge in *Vanaprastha Ashrama* reiterates his faith in Gandhian values and principles. When he hears the

news of the policeman who wants to arrest Mali, he says like a true Gandhian, “If what you say is true, well, truth will win. If it is not true, there is nothing I can do.” (p. 183) He renounces the worldly affairs and like a true *Sanyasi* leaves his house. When he quits the house, his bundle includes his *charkha*. He says:

“I will seek a new interest – different from the set repetitions performed for sixty years. I am going somewhere, not carrying more than what my shoulder can bear.” (p. 183)

Jagan symbolizes the orthodox values of the Hindu society, his championing of the *Swadeshi* is parochial and sentimental. Mali’s plan to abandon college and pursue his business of story writing disturbs Jagan. In his unequivocal praise of indigenous writers, he is a true Gandhian. He tells Mali about the great poet Kalidasa:

“College or no college, I know Kalidasa was a village idiot and a shepherd until the goddess Saraswati made a scratch on his tongue and then he burst into that song, *Syamala-dandakam*, and wrote his Shakuntala.” (p. 32)

The news of Mali’s prospective visit to the United States is equally disturbing to Jagan. He is very upset when he comes to know of Mali’s plan to visit U.S. to obtain diploma in creative writing. “Going there to learn story-telling ! He should rather go to a village granny.” (p. 45) He further asks, “Did Valmiki go to America or Germany in order to write his Ramayana?” (p. 45) Thus, his patriotic sentiments surge and he declines his son’s idea of going abroad.

When Jagan takes pride in his simple vegetarianism, his son’s praise of beef eating after three years’ stay in U.S. is ironical.

“I’ve taken to eating of beef. Steak is something quite tasty and juicy. Now I suggest why not you people start eating beef? It’ll solve the problem of useless cattle in our country.” (p. 56)

Jagan feels quite outrageous to hear this. He is reminded of the *shashtras* which consider the killing of cow as the most heinous of all sins.

While Jagan is cogitating on how to express his feelings on the subject of vegetarianism and collecting quotations from *Shashtras* and Gandhi’s writings on cow-slaughter, Mali’s letter about beef eating presents a typical Narayanian ironic situation. When Mali’s shaking the very foundation of his father’s Gandhian ideology nurtured over the years, Jagan is struggling to reason with his son peacefully hiding these facts from the Malgudians. When mali returns from the U.S., Jagan is shocked to see his son’s outfit of a dark shirt, with an overcoat, carrying an airbag, a camera, an umbrella and so on. Jagan feels that he is meeting a stranger, a few seconds later when Mali introduces Grace, Jagan’s discomfiture is obvious. “This is Grace. We are married. Grace, my dad.” (p. 58)

Mali has been presented in the novel as an antithesis of Jagan who upholds orthodox and conventional values. Spiritualism, simplicity and Gandhism of Jagan is juxtaposed to the materialism, utilitarianism and Westernization of Mali who valorizes Jagan in a totally new value system. Thus, the East and West encounter finds an expression in the novel. Traditional India represented by Jagan is set against the modern India represented by Mali. Narayan is aware of the fact that a good number of young men who go the Western countries return as Westernized beings in behavior, speech and thinking. They believe it a privilege to remain ignorant of their native traditions and customs. Gandhi in his writings has raised his voice

against the Westernization in all forms. This is presented through the character of Mali.

Mali in his attitude and values is the epitome of all that is un-Indian and anti-Gandhian. His living in sin with Grace, a half Korean girl, symbolizes cultural violation, while his over-reaching project of producing a story-writing machine on a mass scale is an illustration of the absurd materialistic ambitions and impersonal mechanization of the West which threatens to capture and control the creative freedom of art. When confronted with an embarrassing situation, the sight of the whirring noise of the wheel and the thread growing out of it between one's thumb and forefinger is very soothing to Jagan's nerves and thoughts. In such moments of anxiety, Jagan derives consolation from Gandhism. His grooming in Gandhism is instrumental for the internal evolution in Jagan. The total rejection of Hindu values and social system by Mali creates a vacuum in Jagan's life. His only communicative link is his cousin, his business and domestic concerns have no relevance and meaning to Jagan at this stage.

Dorai Swami, a bearded man is a "visitation from another planet" (p. 128) to Jagan. In the later part of the novel, Dorai Swami, the ultimate alter-ego of Gandhi, occupies a top position in Jagan's mind to whom Gandhi was "his master". (p. 112) Jagan becomes the true follower of the white bearded man whose attitude, solitary stance and philosophy impresses the widower so as to enter the next stage of *Vanaprastha Ashrama* as devised by Manu.

Undoubtedly, the protagonist's entry into the new life according to Hindu *Sutras* is hastened by the eccentricities and strange notions of Mali. The rejection of Hindu values and social set up by Mali disturbs the core of

Jagan's heart. There is only one option left to Jagan i.e. his retreat to a life of solitude leading towards sainthood. Ultimately, it is Dorai Swami who leads him on the path of renunciation. The teachings of Dorai Swami reinforce Jagan's prior Gandhism which he has assimilated over the years.

Towards the close of the novel, Gandhi is at the core of Jagan's thoughts in his entire internal and external discourse, when his cousin approaches Jagan with the news of Mali's arrest and the possibility of the policeman bearing a grudge against Jagan as the plausible reason for Mali's arrest, Jagan's reaction is characteristically Gandhian, He says:

"But Mahatma Gandhi trained us not to nurse any resentment." (p. 189) Mali's imminent trial does not in the least unnerve Jagan. He remarks, "Truth ought to get him out, if what you say is true." (p. 190)

THE ENGLISH TEACHER: A SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

Unlike Mali in The Vendor of Sweets, Krishnan in The English Teacher rebels against English education and Western ways of living. In The English Teacher ⁽³⁰⁾, Narayan interrogates the relevance or the usability of Western educational system in Indian social and cultural context and the psychological implications that subsequently lead to the alienation of an individual from his cultural roots. Michel Pousse has pointed out that Narayan has stressed three points which stand out in Gandhi's philosophy, namely, life is a never ending quest for truth, secondly, individual peace can only be achieved within a well defined social context and thirdly the reasons for the use of English language by Gandhi as means of communication. ⁽³¹⁾ Michel Pousse opines that Gandhi used the English language as a tool and its perfection lay in its functional skill only but Gandhi's preference for the vernacular is widely known. ⁽³²⁾ R. K. Narayan reiterates this in The English Teacher and also emphasizes it in Waiting for the Mahatma. Narayan states in the novel:

“At the outset Mahtma Gandhi explained that he would speak only in Hindi as a matter of principle. ‘I will not address you in English. It’s the language of our rulers. It has enslaved us.’” ⁽³³⁾

Krishnan, the English teacher interrogates the colonial education system in The English Teacher. At the very outset of the novel, he voices his disagreement with Mr. Brown, the Principal of Albert Mission College about the purity of English language and its uses of the vowels. Krishnan dislikes English language which he states promotes an impersonal education system in contrast to the *Guru-Shishya* relationship, a characteristic feature of an

ancient education system in India. Krishnan is utterly disillusioned, disturbed and demoralized in his role of the English teacher in his college. An introspective kind of a person with a “singular consciousness”, he doubts the use and practicability of English education so much so that he ultimately resigns from his job of an English teacher even though he is a product and promoter of Western education system in India.

Baffled at Brown’s incomprehension because of his “Western mind, classifying, labeling, departmentalizing” (p. 179) approach Krishnan is induced to undertake a new experiment with education. The basic education propagated by Gandhi is invariably an answer to the English education in India. Gandhi writes:

“I have no faith in the so-called system of education, which produces men by learning without the backbone of character. True education is that which helps us to know our true self, our soul, God and truth. Every branch of knowledge should have as its goal, knowledge of the self and exploration of the Truth.”

(34)

Realization of self is a rudimentary feature of Gandhian philosophy of education. Krishnan in his quest for identity could be specified as a Gandhian character who has personal, racial, cultural and national dimensions. He is caught between two worlds - the corporal world where he is engaged as a lecturer of English and the inner spiritual world where he draws strength from the spirit of his dead wife. Krishnan represents the dilemma of an Indian under the imperialistic regime. His resignation from the respectable post of a lecturer from Albert Mission College and his joining the kindergarten school is an attempt to renounce the Western education system.

Krishnan in his search for the inner self and final realization is an autobiographical presentation of Narayan himself. Narayan has confessed this in My Days:

“More than any other book The English Teacher is autobiographical in content, very little part of it being fiction. The English teacher of the novel, Krishnan is a fictional character in the fictional city of Malgudi, but he goes through the same experience, I had gone through and he calls his wife Susila, and the child is Leela instead of Hema. The toll that typhoid took and all the desolation that followed, with a child to look after, and the psychic adjustments, are based on my own experience.”⁽³⁵⁾

Thus, the novel being autobiographical reflects Narayan’s thoughts of his dislike for the Western philosophy of life and promotes the novelist’s staunch belief in the Gandhian philosophy of self realization.

Moreover, Krishnan could be described as a true *Satyagrahi* in a sense that he is fighting an internal battle for truth and self – realization through the rejection of Western system of education. In the gradual process of self-exploration, he learns to renounce the mundane affairs of life which posit obstruction in self-realization.

One of the prominent features of Narayan’s fiction is that he writes with a historic sense and perspective, eulogizing the glorious past of India. He writes in the tradition of anti-imperial cultural nationalism that critiques all Indian literature from the Vedic times to this date. He has thus cultivated a cultural identity in his writing and people who question India’s cultural heritage are reprimanded and rebuffed by him. Ebenezer, a scripture teacher in Swami

and Friends refers to the “dirty, lifeless, woolen idols and stone images”⁽³⁶⁾ of Hindu culture which were unable to protect themselves when Mohammedans attacked them. On this tirade on Hindu culture, Swaminathan, the adolescent protagonist of Narayan and his friends find themselves on war path with the imperialistic attitude towards Indian culture. In literature, as in colonialist politics, one of the most significant aspects of imperialist self-projection was its misrepresentation of the colonized and their culture.

This systematized attack on Indian cultural values is defended in the novel by Narayan on Gandhian principles and ideology. Gandhi wrote in Young India,

“My resistance to Western civilization is really a resistance to its indiscriminate and thoughtless imitation based on the assumption that Asians are fit only to copy everything that comes from the West.”⁽³⁷⁾

On 15th August, 1930, two thousand Malgudians assemble on the bank of Saryu to protest against the arrest of a prominent congress political worker in Bombay. Here a *khaddar* clad leader stirs the lulled emotions and sentiments of Malgudians by highlighting the esteemed past of Indian civilization. He speaks in a resounding voice,

“Have we forgotten the glorious periods of Ramayana and Mahabharata? This is the country that has given the world a Kalidasa, a Buddha, a Sankara. Our ships sailed the high seas and we had reached the height of civilization when the Englishmen ate raw flesh and wandered in the jungles, nude.”

(pp. 94-95)

The same nationalistic feelings are expressed in the text by an eloquent speaker who is a congress worker:

“Just think for a while, we are three hundred and thirty six millions, and our land is as big as Europe minus Russia. England is no bigger than our Madras Presidency and is inhabited by a handful of white rouses and is thousand of miles away.” (p. 95)

“Let every Indian spit on England, and the quantity of saliva will be enough to drown England.” (p. 95)

Swaminathan too is deeply stirred by the speaker’s eloquence and shouts, “Gandhi Ki Jai.” (p. 95)

Other incidents in the novel which can be correlated to the Gandhian ideology are the burning of “foreign cloth” (p. 95) and the friendship of Swaminathan with a Muslim boy Akbar Ali “a nice Mohammedan” (p. 108) which is symptomatic of communal harmony. Gandhi advocated for the use of *Swadeshi* clothes. There was a calculated economics behind Gandhi’s this belief. He wanted the people of India to be self reliant. He dreamt of India where the citizens would adopt and use the things made by their fellow men and women. When Swaminathan wears a foreign cap on his head, somebody remarks, “Young man, do you want our country to remain in eternal slavery?” (p. 97) Hearing this, he feels utterly ashamed, removes the cap and flings it into the fire with a feeling that he has saved his country.

The protagonist’s direct participation in the strike, the atrocities of police on the Malgudians, the harsh treatment of the protagonist by the headmaster of Board High School and his rejection of Western educational

institution – all these incidents directly or indirectly are related to the multifarious economic, cultural, political and social programmes of Gandhi.

Chandran, the protagonist in The Bachelor of Arts ⁽³⁸⁾ is also concerned with the misrepresentation of the Indian history by the imperialists for their own selfish ends. The theme of racial, colonial and cross-cultural conflict presented in Swami and Friends posits very simple but deeply sensitive questions with which every sensible intellectual was confronted during the 1930s and 1940s. The presentation of the imperialistic attitude at the outset of the novel leads to other Gandhian issues of social inequality and economic and social exploitation.

THE MAN EATER OF MALGUDI:
THE SPIRIT OF NON-VIOLENCE

Narayan's novel The Man Eater of Malgudi (1961), regarded as the "greatest work" ⁽³⁹⁾ is the perfect representation of the Gandhian principles of non-violence, and peace. The serious intention of the writer here is to immortalize and reassert the Gandhian views on *Ahinsa* or non-violence. Hilarity and seriousness are yoked together to support the eternal truth of non-violence in the novel. Prof. K. R. S. Iyenger has aptly remarked:

“The Man Eater of Malgudi jumbles the ingredients of comedy to excellent purpose and provides ample entertainment, but the undercurrent of serious intention can not also be missed.” ⁽⁴⁰⁾

The Man Eater of Malgudi ⁽⁴¹⁾ is a close parallel to the mythological story of Mohini and Bhasmasura. The human values and demonic values are represented by Nataraj, the printer, and Vasu, the taxidermist respectively. Nataraj with his meekness and altruistic activities occupies a respectable position in the placid and calm world of Malgudi. Narayan has depicted violence as an evil and vehemently exposed and criticized it on all levels – physical, psychological, mental, racial and cultural. But The Man Eater of Malgudi is exclusively centered around the theme of the conflict between violence and non-violence. Here, violence and non-violence are represented by Vasu and Nataraj respectively.

Everything is peaceful and orderly before the coming of Vasu, who is a symbol of destruction and demonic activities. He is the product of neo-colonial

ills, he represents industrialization, competition and economic modernization on the Western hegemonic pattern to which the calm and peaceful citizens of Malgudi are not ready to subscribe. These Malgudians have their own inherent traditional code of conduct. Consequently, Malgudians are not exclusively motivated by the motif of material prosperity, but on the contrary, they subscribe to the moral values of their ancestors. Social harmony, universal love and brotherhood are greatly treasured in the Malgudian society.

Vasu, the power hungry taxidermist, indulges in poaching and womanizing and has apparently no respect for Gandhian principles. Nataraj also tells Vasu about the value of non-violent speech, as did Gandhi during his life time. He says:

“Aggressive words only generate more aggressive words. Mahatma Gandhi had enjoined on us absolute non-violence in thought and speech, if no better reason than to short-circuit violent speech and prevent it from propagating itself.” (p. 70)

Nataraj, in juxtaposition to the materialistic Vasu, genuinely believes in non-violence and avoids all kinds of confrontation and conflict. He confesses that he could not be a successful enemy to anyone. Any enmity pains him day and night “like a tooth ache”. (p. 94) When neighbours complain to Nataraj, the landlord, about the indecent, illegal and violent activities of his tenant, Vasu, the landlord endeavours to evacuate Vasu on different pretext instead of dictating terms in a straightforward manner, but Vasu does not budge to the pleas of Nataraj and continues with his licentious activities.

The novel reaches the climax when Vasu decides to kill the temple elephant Kumar. This insidious plan is leaked by Rangji, “a woman of the

temple.” This is a question of great concern for Nataraj and he devises different plans to check this nefarious action of Vasu. After considering all kinds of options to this unique problem, Nataraj ultimately surrenders to the non-violent ways of Gandhi. He says to himself:

“Non-violence would be the safest policy with him. Mahatma Gandhi was right in asking people to carry on their fight with the weapon of non-violence; the chances of getting hurt were much less.” (p. 213)

Narayan’s repeated emphasis on the main motto of the novel i.e. “evil flourishes to destroy” is categorically Gandhian. Gandhi also believed that evil actions and wrong means, always lead to disastrous end. Gandhian epithet – as the means, so the ends – is marvelously highlighted and concluded in the novel.

A TIGER FOR MALGUDI:
BEAST TURNING INTO A SANYASI

Contrary to Vasu, the Sanyasi in A Tiger for Malgudi upholds the Gandhian values of non-violence, love, understanding and sympathy. The central theme of A Tiger for Malgudi ⁽⁴²⁾ is no doubt Gandhian in the sense that the novel presents the victory of these Gandhian virtues over violence and rudeness. Narayan presents a unique relationship between Raja, the tiger and the Captain firstly and secondly between Raja and the freedom fighter turned *Sanyasi*.

The relation of the captain and the tiger is like that of the master and the slave – the ruler and the ruled. This binary relation is mechanical, materialistic, momentary and compulsive, monitored through cane and fear. These relations are polarized similar to that of the colonizer and the colonized. But the relationship between the tiger and the Sanyasi is founded on love, mutual understanding and sympathy which is in consequence eternal and enduring. The complete transformation of Raja, the tiger at the end of the novel is suggestive of the victory of good over evil, of non-violence over violence. Raja, a transformed animal at the end says:

“I tried to attain some kind of purification by reducing the frequency of seeking food. Nor did I kill recklessly as I used to in my jungle days.... Nowadays, I went into the jungle and stalked the littlest game, just sufficient enough to satisfy my hunger of the moment and not my gluttony.” (p. 159)

The tiger is uncannily tamed by the Swami. He is moulded, purified and taught the noble truths of the Buddhist doctrine and is ultimately transformed into a creature who is an animal in its exterior form only. But beneath it, there is a soul as pure, innocent and enlightened as his master's. Towards the end of the narrative, we see a tiger, who can understand his master's discourse on God (p. 157), has the feeling of gratefulness (p. 158) willingly suffers hunger for consecutive days and feels nobler (p. 159) and has attained the supreme *Satva* as advocated by Gandhi. By presenting the most brutal animal as the protagonist and by showing a great internal transformation in the character, Narayan succeeds in conveying the message of non-violence. In his Preface to A Tiger for Malgudj, he writes:

“With the right approach you could expect the same response from a tiger as from any normal human being.” (p. 10)

The main theme focused in this novel is that of non-violence which is the cardinal principle of Gandhi. The Swami who ultimately tames the tiger with love and spirituality is a one time activist of Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India Movement. It is noteworthy here that R. K. Narayan has chosen a Gandhian character to impart the message of non-violence and love. Swami in an attempt to tame the violent tiger, Raja, explains the importance of non-violence in life. His words spoken to Raja are the echoes from Gandhi. He says:

“Violence can not be everlasting. Sooner or later it has to go, if not through wisdom, definitely through decrepitude, which comes on with years, whether one wants it or not.” (p. 145)

Thus, R. K. Narayan has presented an encompassing view of Gandhian ideology and philosophy. Theory of *Karma*, spirit of oneness with all, the theme of transformation from materialism to spiritualism, the concept of non-violence are discussed in the above discussed novels, namely, Waiting for the Mahatma, The Vendor of Sweets, The English Teacher, Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts, The Man Eater of Malgudi and A Tiger for Malgudi. Narayan probably has never met the Mahatma and doesn't know him personally but he has superbly grasped and mastered the quintessence of Gandhian philosophy. In an interview with Susan E. Croft, R. K. Narayan avers:

“I liked Mahatma (Gandhi) personally and I wanted to somehow recount this. He was a very impressive person. I did not know him personally but I went to many gatherings he addressed.”⁽⁴³⁾

Sriram, Jagan, Krishnan, Swaminathan, Chandran and tiger Raja – all the protagonists in his novels are true embodiments of Gandhian virtues and voice. They all uphold the Gandhian principles of non-violence or *Ahinsa*, absolute truth or *Satya*, self control or *Indriya-Nigraha*, celibacy or *Brahmacharya* and subscribe to Gandhian ideals of simple living, religious tolerance, love for all, brotherhood, untouchability and are devoted to the eradication of social evils like prostitution, casteism, dislike for Western education system and love for the dignity of labour, patriotism and nationalism. P. S. Sundaram remarks:

“It is absurd to suggest that Narayan has not ‘enlarged’ that awareness in the sense of painting a picture larger than life.

But the picture is all the truer for the restraint and fidelity with which it has been drawn.”⁽⁴⁴⁾

Gandhi envisioned the Indian utopian society free from the evils and stigmas of caste, class and creed and vehemently condemned the orthodox Hinduism that promoted casteism. He considered untouchability the greatest blot on Hinduism and desired to remove this evil by again reincarnating as “an atishudra”.⁽⁴⁵⁾ R. K. Narayan’s heroes like Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets and Krishnan in The English Teacher support the Gandhian ideological stand on these issues. In Waiting for the Mahatma, Gandhi’s love for the downtrodden is widely discussed. Gandhi denounced the prevalent terms of reference for the untouchables and introduced Harijan i.e. ‘People of God’ as the new term of reference for them. “But I have to be born; I should be born an untouchable so that I may share their sorrow, suffering....”⁽⁴⁶⁾ The cosmopolitan view of Gandhi that the world is a family (Vsu6Ev ku3uMbkm) is reiterated by Narayan through assimilating, amalgamating and associating people from different castes, classes, creeds and cross-sections of the society in the imaginary town of Malgudi.

Education was one of the primary concerns of Gandhi. The Macaulayan system of education which served the needs of imperialistic regime in India was decried by Gandhi and he preached on the same lines as Tolstoy and Ruskin, the significance of character, human values and spiritualism. To Gandhi, education meant “an all round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit”.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Character building constitutes a major part of the dynamics of Gandhian ideal of education. He advocated the three dimensional – physical, mental and spiritual – development of a learner. His

plea for national language, vocational training and social service during the course of education was inclusive of his concept of wholesome education. To Gandhi, the goal of education was to produce good individuals who would understand their social responsibilities. Swaminathan in Swami and Friends, Krishnan in The English Teacher and Chandran in The Bachelor of Arts interrogate the imperialistic educational system to ultimately denounce it in conformity with Gandhian ideals of education. Sriram in Waiting for the Mahatma, Tim in The World of Nagaraj and Mali in The Vendor of Sweets are some of the ill-products of the British educational system in India.

1900 onwards Gandhi seriously contemplated to take the vow of celibacy or Brahmacharya and ultimately in 1906 undertook the final resolution to be a celibate. Gandhi's views on celibacy and his subsequent vow of celibacy has been an issue of endless debate. R. K. Narayan in his depiction of celibate protagonists refers to the problems of celibacy or Brahmacharya in his typical comical, non-serious vein, a stylistic device for which he is irrevocably acclaimed. Nagaraj's ceremonious switch over to arche robe in The World of Nagaraj is an instance where celibacy is comically portrayed. In The Painter of Signs Daisy's efforts for the popularization of the family planning programme is contrary to the Gandhian sexual ethics and can be treated as an improvised form of Gandhian principle of celibacy.

Gandhi preached simple dietary system and considered fasting as one of the essential aspects of Brhmacharya. Fasting is believed to curb animal passion and assist in the process of self-control. Alcohol and non-vegetarianism are strictly prohibited in Gandhian dietary system. In the later part of his life, Gandhi abandoned milk, even salt and excessive use of sugar

in accordance with the requirements of body. Gandhi averred that Brahmacharya germinates discipline, morality, and courage in life. Jagan's control in his diet to some extent corresponds to Gandhian dietary ethics.

Gandhi was vehemently opposed to modernity and technology. He was critical of any civilization which undermined human beings and moral values.

He writes:

“I wholeheartedly detest this mad desire to destroy distance and time, to increase animal appetites and go to the ends off the earth in search of their satisfaction. If modern civilization stands for all this, I have understood it to do so, I call it satanic.”⁽⁴⁸⁾

Gandhi was also against the Westernization in all forms. He avers:

“Europe today represents not the spirit of God or Christianity but the spirit of Satan.... In reality, it is worshipping Mammon.”

⁽⁴⁹⁾

He criticized the Europeans for the worship of Mammon as against the gospel and spirit of Christianity. Gandhi considered this contemporary industrial civilization of Europe, a disease and evil for human race. He firmly believed in the ancient spiritual status of India in the world and remarks:

“I would have our leaders teach us to be morally supreme in the world. This land of ours was once, we are told, the abode of gods. It is not possible to conceive gods inhabiting a land which is made hideous by the smoke and the din of mill chimneys and factories.”⁽⁵⁰⁾

Narayan reproduces the same spirit and heritage of ancient India in Swami and Friends.

To countercheck the proliferation of industrialization and technology, Gandhi programmed novel methods and means. He opines:

“I do not believe that industrialization is necessary in any case for any country. It is much less so for India. Indeed, I believe that independent India can only discharge her duty towards a groaning world by adopting a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world.”⁽⁵¹⁾

R. K. Narayan in The Vendor of Sweets and The World of Nagaraj interrogates these concepts of modernity and technology.

Non-violence or *Ahinsa* is another cardinal principle of Gandhian ideology. Subrata Mukherjee writes in this regard, “Gandhi made the technique of non-violence the powerful weapon in his fight against British imperialism.”⁽⁵²⁾ Gandhi acknowledged the principle of non-violence common to all religions. “*Ahinsa* is in Hinduism (Jainism and Buddhism) also it is in Christianity as well as in Islam.”⁽⁵³⁾ Non-violence had found “the highest expression and application in Hinduism.”⁽⁵⁴⁾ A living faith or belief in non-violence is impossible without an unflinching faith in God and Gandhi remarked that “non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute.”⁽⁵⁵⁾ As the creation of the political philosophies of passive resistance and constructive non-violence, Gandhi spent most of his time in political arena entering daily life of people.

Non-violence for Gandhi is not a cover for cowardice, on the contrary, it is the supreme virtue of the brave and its application requires much more courage than violence. He writes in Harijan:

“Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man. Destruction is not the law of the humans.”⁽⁵⁶⁾

“*Ahinsa* is a science”⁽⁵⁷⁾ and its application and results are also scientific. Moreover, Gandhi relates the concept of non-violence with spiritualism. He writes in Harijan:

“The victory of *Ahinsa* has only one fear, the fear of God. He who seeks refuge in God ought to have a glimpse of the *Atman* that transcends the body; and the moment one has a glimpse of the imperishable *Atman* one sheds the love of the perishable body.”⁽⁵⁸⁾

Gandhi applied the principle of non-violence to the society, state and the entire world. “All society is held together by non-violence, even as the earth is held in her position by gravitation.”⁽⁵⁹⁾ He conceptualized *Swaraj* based on *Ahinsa*. “In *Swaraj* based on *Ahinsa*, people need not know their rights, but it is necessary for them to know their duties.”⁽⁶⁰⁾ *Ahinsa* for Gandhi was not the goal but the means to realize Truth. In this respect, he remarks:

“A steadfast pursuit of *Ahinsa* is inevitably bound to truth – not so violence. That is why I swear by *Ahinsa*. Truth came naturally to me. *Ahinsa* I acquired after a struggle.”⁽⁶¹⁾

R. K. Narayan also supports the concepts of *Ahinsa* or non-violence in his two novels Man Eater of Malgudi and A Tiger for Malgudi.

Narayan in Waiting for the Mahatma, The Vendor of Sweets and The English Teacher delineates the Gandhian stream of consciousness that awakens the inner sensibility of both the characters and readers. Sriram in

Waiting for the Mahatma, Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets and Krishnan in The English Teacher finally evolve as true Gandhians. The class of pseudo-Gandhian is comically caricatured and satirized in Narayan's fiction. Swaminathan and Chandran in Swami and Friends and The Bachelor of Arts respectively share the pre-independence views of an average middle class Indian. Swaminathan, a participant in Gandhian movement, is more aggressive and outspoken in his adherence to Gandhian philosophy, but Chandran's approach, on the contrary, is moderate and reasonable. In The Man Eater of Malgudi, the theme of non-violence is randomly contrasted with the character of Vasu and the same theme is epitomized through the activities of the wild beast, tiger in A Tiger for Malgudi who ultimately subscribes to the Gandhian way of life under the guidance of his master who is again a devotee of Gandhi. Considering all these aspects of Narayan's fiction, Shiva M. Pandeya remarks:

“At the level of the broader human issues, of national and international actions of epic dimensions, R. K. Narayan presents Mahatma Gandhi as an idealized hero of almost super human charismatic power.”⁽⁶²⁾

Narayan presents Gandhi as primarily interested in liberating the spirit of India, putting a nation of slaves on the road to liberation, initiating the spiritual revolution and rejuvenating the traditional, everlasting values of Indian culture, religion and philosophy.

Rama Jha holds the view that “the trait of renunciation which is common to Narayan's protagonists is evidently Gandhian, rather than the ancient Brahminical”⁽⁶³⁾ does not apply in the context of his characters. Gandhi called himself “a sanatani Hindu”⁽⁶⁴⁾ and “a staunch Hindu”.⁽⁶⁵⁾ He

believed in the universality of Hinduism and its philosophy. He writes, "For me Hinduism is all-sufficing. Every variety of belief finds protection under its ample-folk." ⁽⁶⁶⁾ Gandhi's own renunciation is totally in accordance with the Vedic and Upanishadic paradigms. He fully observed the restrictions and jurisdiction of the principles of these old scriptures. The protagonists of Narayan also follow the same restrictions in the line of "ancient Brahminical" norms as also prescribed by Gandhi. Narayan's fiction thus highlights the invisible unity between the life of Gandhi in his teachings and the principles and ideology in his fiction.

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CHAPTER V

THE CONCEPT OF *MOKSHA* OR SELF-REALIZATION

IN THE NOVELS OF R. K. NARAYAN

“To discover one’s true nature is self – realization and this is equivalent to true freedom. The process of self – realization entails mastery over one’s ‘lower’ nature.”⁽¹⁾

Bhagvad Gita and its *Karma* philosophy regard self – realization or enlightenment as the ultimate goal in a man’s life, although the methods for the attainment of this goal may vary from man to man. Soul i.e. *Atman* acquires unanimity with the Supreme Soul or Almighty who is *Paramatma* or God. This concept is represented by the well known saying ‘That thou art’ (tI TvM\ Ais) and ‘I am Brahman’ (Ah> b/HmaiSmī)⁽²⁾ The explicit identification of *Brahman* and soul is vividly postulated in the various schools of Indian philosophy. The aim of life as conceived in the Upanishads and other holy scriptures is to overcome congenial ignorance i.e. *Avidya*, by attaining full enlightenment or *Gyana*. Prof. M. Hiriyana also sums up this essence and pith of Indian philosophy as:

“The goal of life, as already indicated, is the attainment of release (*Moksha*) from the empirical state of *Sansara* and the recurrent round of birth and death. It is becoming *Brahman*, or what comes to the same thing, the realization of one’s own true nature.”⁽³⁾

Thus, *Moksha* is a state of moral and intellectual perfection transcending the distinction between good and evil, between doubt and faith,

between being and non-being. This goal is attainable in present life as per the teachings, sayings of the Upanishads and “it is known as *Jivan Mukti* or liberation while still alive.”⁽⁴⁾ In the end, when the individual who has reached this stage, dissociates himself from physical accomplishments, he becomes *Brahman* itself; that is final release or *Videha – Mukti*.⁽⁵⁾

However, only a few people succeed in attaining complete enlightenment, majority of the people are mainly the seekers. The Upanishads have classified these people into two broad categories. Firstly there are the people who follow the right path and secondly there those who yield to natural passions for want of self control. The first category of the people ultimately attains release from the cycle of birth and death. M. Hiriyani writes in his book Essentials of Indian Philosophy:

“The former category progresses from one state of existence to a higher without returning to the world of morals, until at last they find release from the cycle of births and deaths. This progressive realization (*Karma – Mukti*) of the ideal of life is what some Vedantins consider to be the sole form of release in the Upanishads.”⁽⁶⁾

R. K. Narayan’s fiction corroborates with this eternal view of self – realization as well as the contents of Indian philosophy. This concept of attainment of *Moksha* as found in Indian philosophy is artistically incorporated in The Guide and The Man Eater of Malgudi. Narayan’s birth and upbringing in a traditional Brahmin family further substantiates this indelible mark of Hinduism on his personality and writing. Narayan is not inclined to the study of his novels as social documents. He writes:

“A novel is about an individual living his life 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 document could be very misleading.”⁽⁷⁾

Narayan specifically mentions that there is “a nucleus of absolute truth in all my novels.”⁽⁸⁾ This truth is conveyed and portrayed in different ways and in various colours with the aim to regenerate the consciousness and sensibility of the Malgudians, the common readers.

In one of the interviews Narayan already avers that one must have roots in family and religion.⁽⁹⁾ This reiterates the argument that the author has perceived the significance and remedial impact of religion on human life. William Walsh eulogizes Narayan for embodying this pure spirit of Hinduism in his fiction:

“Again, one must say that there is deeply in Narayan the profound Hindu conviction, or instinct for the fundamental oneness of existence. But this sense operates in harmony with a quick feeling for the instantaneous present: an appreciation of the multiple and dispersed nature of existence. The tension between the one and the many, a sustaining theme of Hinduism, operates quietly and unpretentiously throughout Narayan’s fiction.”⁽¹⁰⁾

In Narayanian fiction God is always in His Heaven and everything is well under his benevolence. The author takes the optimistic view of life in accordance with ingredients and ingenuity of Indian philosophy, which always traces the will of God in all matters, actions and consequent results. This unflinching faith in the existence of God is displayed by almost all the

characters of his novels. There is concern, some kind of sadness in his fiction at the human capacity for victimization and deception but it is never expressed with sourness, bitterness, disgust or anger. The novelist allots sufficient time to the protagonists to acknowledge and trace their frailties and eccentricities. His protagonists travel from one stage of life to the other where they attain *Moksha*. In simple terms, it is a stage where one sheds one's illusions, attachments and succeeds in merging his self with the universal self. This stage of *Moksha*, although a very difficult stage, can be achieved with continuous practice and unflinching faith and devotion to God. William Walsh writes in this regard, "The complex theme of Narayan's serious comedies, then, is the rebirth of self and the process and conditions of its pregnancy or education." ⁽¹¹⁾ Thus, Narayan's comedies are also concerned with the theme of self – illumination though in different ways and manner. Margaret Berry writes:

"But this very complexity of roles underscores the larger theme of Narayan's novels: the search for the True Self underlying the False. Only when characters are stripped of their excesses, attachments and illusions can they emerge on a plane above the empirical. The novels are essentially about this passage from ignorance to knowledge, and not about a linear resolution of events." ⁽¹²⁾

THE GUIDE:

MOKSHA THROUGH THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

The Guide (1958) is R. K. Narayan's eighth novel. It is also the first novel in English to have won the first Sahitya Akademi Award. The Guide amply demonstrates India from the inside with its undying faith in God and goodness. C. D. Narasimhaiah avers:

“India's undying faith in God and goodness, holy men and miracles is here rendered quite credibly by the novelist's art even to the skeptical and questioning mind.”

“Here is India from the inside – Raju is India itself, its astonishing power, and deep inner reserves to revitalize itself and work its way to fulfillment.”⁽¹³⁾

According to K. R. S. Iyenger “The Guide is an advance on the earlier novels”⁽¹⁴⁾ O. P. Mathur is of the view that the novel displays and treats the East–West theme on the more significant level of the unconscious and unobtrusive, the deep and comprehensive influence of the Western mode of life and values upon the traditional Indian society.⁽¹⁵⁾

David Scott Philip points out that Narayan has depicted Hinduism in the real essence.⁽¹⁶⁾ Raju maintains the dignity and consciousness of Hindu thought in his last days. Vasant Sahani opines that Raju is a curious combination of disparate qualities, a romantic and a realist, a lover and a cheat, a clever manipulator and a drifter.⁽¹⁷⁾

Narayan has characteristically introduced the concept of attaining *Moksha* or salvation in this novel. Hindu philosophy considers three stages of

life through which a seeker attains *Moksha* or liberation. These stages are – committing sin, repenting and attaining self-realization. Raju, the protagonist of the novel, passes from these three stages in order to achieve liberation from the world and unity with the Almighty.

Narayan presents Raju, the guide, who lives his life in the pattern devised by Manu in Manu Smrutj. This pattern of life encompasses four stages – *Brahmacharya Ashrama*, *Grihastha Ashrama*, *Vanaprastha Ashrama* and *Sanyastha Ashrama*. It is through these four stages that Narayan presents a gradual evolution and transformation in Raju's character. Raju commits fatal sins, repents for his evil deeds and ultimately achieves self-realization.

Initially, in his first stage of *Brahmacharya Ashrama*, Raju is a devoted, obedient and sincere son of his parents. His mother usually narrates the folklores of 'Devaka' and many more, and his father gives him elementary education on the pyol. During his childhood Raju has been brought up in a religious environment, which influences him towards the end.

"I washed myself at the wall, smeared holy ash on my forehead, stood before the framed pictures of gods hanging high up on the wall, and recited all kinds of sacred verse in a loud, ringing tone" ⁽¹⁸⁾ (p. 11)

Raju's childhood has been orthodox and rigid. His stern disciplinarian father does not provide him education in the fashionable Albert Mission School because the principles of this institution do not meet with the Hindu values. His father says:

“I don’t want to send my boy there; it seems they try to convert our boys into Christians and are all the time insulting our Gods.” (p. 25)

It is during his *Grihastha* Ashrama that man finds himself completely bound by the familial and economic bondages. It is here that man commits sins and welcomes all obstacles in his path of salvation. But a true seeker of salvation succeeds in keeping himself away from all bondages and progresses towards his goal. After the death of his father, Raju enters into *Grihastha Ashrama*. He takes over the charge of his family and opens a stationary shop at the railway station keeping in view the students of the recently started Albert Mission College. This bookselling business not only provides financial stability to Raju but also awakens in him the desire for reading.

“During the intervals between trains, when the platform became quiet, there was nothing more pleasing than picking up a bundle of assorted books and lounging in my seat and reading....I read stuff that pricked up a noble thought, a philosophy that appealed.” (p. 49)

Like everyman, Raju with his advanced and revolutionary ideas, novel schemes and adventurous nature grows up to be a resourceful, enterprising, unorthodox, modern young man and becomes a tourist guide. This job suits his temperament since he has an inherent curiosity to know about people and places. Raju, philosopher in disguise at this stage of his life guides the tourists to the scenes and sights of Malgudi, imparting information about the ancient geography and legendry of events in Malgudi. Due to his popularity and skill

tourists prefer him as a guide. Like an expert guide, he comments before the visitors:

“It must be the source of Saryu mentioned in the mythical stories of goddess Parvathi jumping into the fire; the carving on one of the pillars of the shrine actually shows the goddess plunging into the fire and water arising from the spot etc...” (p. 57)

“I gave statistics out of my head. I mentioned a relic as belonging to the thirteenth century before Christ or the thirteenth century after Christ, according to the mood of the hour.” (p. 58)

Raju’s popularity as a tourist guide is universal. People from different places, various walks of life contact him for his guidance.

“Do you know how well I am? People come asking for me from Bombay, Madras and other places, hundreds of miles away. They call me Railway Raju and have told me that even in Lucknow there are persons who are familiar with my name.” (p. 59)

The zest for knowledge shapes Raju into a different kind of Narayanian hero. The quest for knowledge adds wisdom to the scintillating personality of the protagonist. This potential for knowledge of new things transforms an ordinary Raju into a ‘Railway Raju’. (p. 55) All Malgudian as well as strangers on the railway station visit his shop. They inquire the train timings, seek information about historical places and other relevant information about Malgudi.

Raju remains a lovable son, a true friend, a marvelous guide and a respectable citizen of Malgudi so long as he follows and adheres to the traditions, social and moral values and customs of the town. His adventure to enlarge his ideal of *Artha* from his ancestral shop to railway shop and then to the profession of tourist guide is supported and praised by all the Malgudians, including his orthodox mother. Raju remains noble so long as he observes the Indian philosophical ideals and ideas with specific limitation.

Raju may even be termed as an anti-hero in the novel. He bears close parallel with Eliot's Prufrock in the poem Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock. Prufrock is much concerned with outward appearances and is self-conscious about his looks. He explains that "they will say: 'how his hair is growing thin!'" which insinuates his lack of courage and pride. Throughout the poem he complains about not being able to do what he wants to do to get sympathy from his audience. Like Prufrock, Raju too is initially much conscious about his material appearance and position. He wishes to be financially successful in Malgudi. But in his attempts to achieve this, he goes too far like Hemingway's Santiago. He develops illicit relationship with a married woman, commits forgery and is ultimately paid for his deeds. Both Prufrock and Raju display qualities, which are most commonly found in anti-heroes.

Indian philosophy describes the attainment of self-realization as a hard nut to crack. Raju is trapped by the tempting webs of *Artha* and *Kama* and commits sins which debar him from achieving self-realization. The advent of the couple from Madras heralds the illusory or *Mayik* phase of the protagonist's life. Raju, on the brim of his youth is attracted towards the "lovely and elegant" (p. 65) lady named Rosie at first glance. The magnetic personality

of this post – graduate girl from Madras University who belongs to the *devdasi* clan stirs the inner emotions of the hero. Her first appearance on the railway station awakens the senses and poetic faculties of Raju’s mind who compares her to a film actress at the very first glance. Raju at once leaves this couple. He says, “I gave some excuse and sent them off to the hotel, and stayed back to run home and tidy up my appearance.” (p. 65) Thus, he wishes to change his appearance to attract Rosie later.

Thus, in the Indian mythological context, the arrow of *Kama Deva* ⁽¹⁹⁾, the God of Love strikes on Raju. Raju’s physical transformation coincides with his inner transformation. He fulfills Rosie’s demand to witness a cobra dance, he engages a clerk from municipal office to reach the house of snake charmer and reaches there with this woman. They enjoy the dance and return back to the hotel in the evening where the couple is staying. This small journey brings Raju and Rosie in a closer relationship, which in the times to come acquires an intimate bond.

According to P. Nagaraja Rao, traditional thinkers of Advaita analyze an object into five factors - reality (*asti*), intelligence (*bhati*), bliss (*ananda*), name (*nama*) and form (*rupa*). ⁽²⁰⁾ Name and form constitute the stuff of the universe. The world is a medley of names and forms. They also constitute the concept of *Maya* in broader sense. Raju is also the victim of this illusion of form and name. The very figure of Rosie arouses his carnal desires.

“...she did have a figure, a slight and slender one, beautifully fashioned, eyes that sparkled, a complexion not white, but dusky, which made her only half visible – as if you saw her through a film of tender coconut juice.” (p. 65)

Raju's role changes from a guide to a lover and later when Rosie becomes a stage dancer he becomes her manager, trainer, organizer and agent separated from his mother and rebuffed by his uncle. Raju contemplates to market the dance performances of Rosie.

“My activities suddenly multiplied. The Union function was the start. Rocket – like, she soared. Her name became public property. It was not necessary to elaborate or introduce her to the public now.... I became known because I went about with her.” (p. 182)

Raju is entrapped into the illusory world both as a manager of tinsel world and as a victim of it. He has no time to analyze or probe into his actions and thoughts. His hedonistic approach to life takes him thousand miles away from the ground reality. The Indian *Charvaka* materialistic philosophy is fully operative in his life.

“I showed respect for law by keeping the street – window shut when serving drink to non-permit folk. ...We played Three-Cards sometimes for two days at a stretch. ...I could get a train reservation at a moment's notice, relieve a man summoned to jury work, get a vote for a co-operative election, nominate a committee man, get a man employed, get a boy admitted to a schoolall of which seemed to me important social services, an influence worth buying at the current market place.” (pp. 196-197)

The protagonist's social illusions related to his vision of position and status lead him towards the materialistic world, but Raju forgets the essence of Hindu culture. He commits the cardinal Hindu mistake of falling into the trap

of *Maya* becoming imprisoned by the passion for attachments and the illusory bonds of self. Thus, it is in this Mayik world that Raju commits the sins for which he repents later during his jail days.

Indian philosophy devises the ways to enjoy *Artha* and *Kama* within specific limits and within certain rules and regulations i.e. *Dharma*. Raju flouts all limits and commits the mistake to possess anything that comes across his way. His possessiveness mainly centers on Rosie and her money. He loses all sense of moral proportion and ends up in jail for forging Rosie's signature in a foolish attempt to keep her husband Marco out of her memory and life. His high-headedness results in his downfall who has already trespassed the *Laxman Rekha* or the boundary of Malgudian social order and ethical values. Consequently his downfall is imminent and natural. He disobeys his mother and uncle, cheats his friends, develops illicit relationship with Rosie, misappropriates the funds, exercises influence in a wrong manner, cheats the Malgudians and forges the signature. All these actions violate the social and moral value system of the traditional town of Malgudi. The principle of nemesis operates and the consequences of wrong actions are surely to be delivered.

One of the Sanskrit writers states, "kmaRnugo gC7it jlva 0k:" (Soul follows its Karma) As a matter of fact, what happens in the life of Raju, Rosie and Marco, is the result of their own deeds. It is their inherent weakness or misdeed that brings about their catastrophe. Raju becomes a prisoner not because of some divine agency, but as a logical result of deviation from moral duty. Raju violates the social norms and commits adultery while getting

involved with Marco's wife. Consequently, the nemesis falls on him. Som Dev remarks:

“At first he grabs the wife of another person, and then he grabs the money. The first unsettles him socially, and the second sees him clapped into prison” ⁽²¹⁾

What Raju does in the novel, is the part of his own will and not that of the providence. Fate stands within the confines of his own doing and will.

The engagement of a star lawyer from Madras can not alter Raju's ill fate. The Malgudi court sentences him for two years of imprisonment. Raju is degraded in the eyes of his beloved Nalini, his aristocrat friends like the police commissioner and mainly his mother. The remarks of his orthodox mother posit the sanctity of the moral and ethical values in Malgudi:

“She said to me, what a shame you have brought on yourself and all known to you! I used to think that the worst that could happen to you might be death, as when you had that pneumonia for weeks; but I now wish that rather than survive and go through this ...”^(p. 231)

This brief span of *Mayik* or illusory world shatters and shocks Raju. He realizes his guilt and mistake, which propels him to take to sainthood after the completion of the prison term.

The Indian view of life is marked by the absence of bitterness at the face of misfortune in the life of people, there is neither a shouting against injustice, nor a railing against God. ⁽²²⁾ *Karma* induces in an Indian a mood of acceptance and understanding as he knows that there is no dark fate governing the universe. One moves by one's deeds. *Karma* is central to the

Indian philosophy. Raju, the realist accepts his guilt laden existence in the jail, learns to adapt the situation and time and acquires a positive new dimension here. He works incessantly on a vegetable patch in the backyard of the superintendent's home growing brinjals, beans and green cabbages. This surely indicates his vitality and faith on life accepting life as it comes in its stride. He says:

“I loved every piece of work, the blue sky and sunshine, and the shade of the house in which I sat and worked, the feel of cold water; it produced in me a luxurious sensation. Oh, it seemed to be so good to be alive and feeling all this; the smell of freshly turned earth filled me with the greatest delight.” (pp.

227-228)

Raju enters into the second stage. It is in jail that Raju starts repenting his ill deeds. According to Hindu philosophy, *Moksha* can still be achieved if man realizes his ill deeds and attempts to clean his mind and soul of all evils. Detachment from the material world and sincere efforts to rectify the sins could win him the spiritual height. Raju too realizes this and like a true seeker detaches himself from all worldly bondages and moves towards the true path of self-realization. Raju's life in jail is a fine example of a *Sanyasi*, he likes the prison life and wants to “stay in this prison permanently”. (p. 228) He establishes intimacy and personal rapport with 500 prisoners of the jail. He also gets along well with the prison staff and is respected and adored by all inmates of jail. During respite, he tells them stories and philosophies of life. They often refer to him as “*Vadhyar* – that is teacher.” Raju, the “model prisoner” (p. 226) is transferred to the superintendent's office as a personal servant enjoying his confidence. Mani, former secretary of Raju, is his only visitor in the prison, all

other friends and relatives seem to have forgotten him. Mani tells him the news of Rosie's departure from Malgudi. But Raju maintains poise at this news, which reinforces his internal transformation. There is a great change between Raju who was guarding her memory jealously and the Raju who receives the news of her departure in a stoic manner.

In jail, Raju realizes the hollowness and emptiness of worldly relationship. All his social illusions, wild fancies and corporal attachments disappear due to the new phenomenal change of place confronting him with the abstract realities of life. William Walsh ⁽²²⁾ describes Raju as an "institutional figure" who reveals a great adaptability. But more than an institutional figure, he is an experimenter and researcher in his journey of life learning from each situation and incident of his life.

Raju refines and refrains from worldly attachments. This quality of detachment, a cardinal principle of Indian philosophy, develops during his prison life. The prison of Malgudi virtually becomes for Raju a self – realization center, an abode where he reviews his illusions and delusions.

"....I felt choked with tears when I had to go out after two years, and I wished that we had not wasted that money on our lawyer. I'd have been happy to stay in this prison permanently." (p. 228)

Evolution in the life and personality of Raju is not a mere momentary phenomenon but quite on the contrary, it is a gradual ongoing process that is initiated in jail. All types of culprits listen to his views and are guided by him. Raju shares a spiritual bliss and magnetic moral power with the spiritual Master in A Tiger for Malgudi, the tamer of the tiger Raja. But the spiritual

awakening process in Raju is far more practical and substantial than the master since Raju is taming and guiding the most brutal human beings in jail.

“Whether they were murders or cut-throats or highwaymen, they all listened to me, and I could talk to them out of their blackest moods.” (p. 226)

Opting for the spiritual life after his prison term is therefore an automatic choice that corresponds to the sensibility of Raju. It is during this prison term that he enters into *Vanaprastha Ashrama* first and then into *Sanyastha Ashrama* when he comes to Mangla village. There is some ambiguity in the initial portrayal of Raju’s life in Mangla village, but it can safely be concluded that the renunciation of Raju is purely in accordance with his views, ideas and sentiments which have germinated and nurtured due to his introspection in the prison. Raju has distanced himself from social attachments and social circle of urban Malgudi. Now his illusion is of a higher order i.e. the illusion associated with the circle of birth and death. The Vedanta philosophy also recognizes these types of illusions in the form of rope and serpent. ⁽²³⁾ The dilemma is clearly visible in Raju’s conversation with Velan on his arrival in the village temple:

“A woman once went wailing to the great Buddha, clasping her dead baby to her bosom. The Buddha said, ‘Go into every home in this city and find one where death is unknown; if you find such a place, fetch a handful of mustard from there, and then I’ll teach you how to conquer death.’” (p. 15)

Thus, to “conquer death” is the sole motto of the protagonist who has already realized the futility of the material world and mundane relationships. He desires to interlink his self with the Supreme *Atman* which is the ultimate

ideal of all the Indian philosophical systems variously termed as *Moksha*, bliss, ultimate reality, *Brahman* etc. So Raju's renunciation can be termed as *Satvik* in pursuit of this ideal conforming to the dictate in the Bhagwad Gita.

कार्यमित्येव यत्कर्म नियतं क्रियतेऽर्जुन ।
सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलं चैव स त्यागः सात्त्विको मतः ॥⁽²⁴⁾ (XVIII/9)

(A prescribed duty which is performed simply because it has to be performed, giving up attachment and fruit, that alone has been recognized as the *Satvik* form of renunciation)

One characteristic feature of the Indian philosophical system is the permissibility of salvation for all humans irrespective of caste, colour and their previous *Karma*. The only pre-requisite is true devotion or *Shraddha* on the part of the seeker. Rishi Valmiki was initially a dacoit, sinner and a liar. He was known as "*Angulimar*", one who used to cut the fingers of passers-by and wear them on his neck. But he approached God and performed penance selflessly to please God, he obtained the status of a *Rishi* or a realized soul. Similarly Guru Ravidas and the Sanskrit poet Kalidas belong to the same category. Raju too can be atoned and pardoned since he has an unflinching faith in God.

अपि चेदसि पापेभ्यः सर्वेभ्यः पापकृत्तमः ।
सर्वं ज्ञानप्लवेनैव वृजिनं सन्तरिष्यसि ॥

⁽²⁵⁾ (IV/36)

(Even though you were the foulest of all sinners, this Knowledge alone would carry you, like a raft, across all your sins.)

Raju finally succeeds in obtaining an equanimity and tranquility of temper and is not unduly bothered by the memories of his past. This calm and balanced approach bears a semblance to a *yogic* stance.

“Raju said with a philosophical weariness, ‘Such things are common in life. One should not let oneself be bothered unduly by anything.’” (p. 16)

Thus, the possessive and egoistical or *Ahankari* nature of Raju is totally annihilated. This shift from the self – ego to God is a positive step in the process of his evolution and self – realization. He is one in communion with God who has submerged the ego with this Supreme Ego.

“Velan rose, bowed, low, and tried to touch Raju’s feet. Raju recoiled at the attempt. ‘I’ll not permit anyone to do this. God alone is entitled to such a prostration. He will destroy us if we attempt to usurp His rights.’ He felt he was attaining the stature of a saint.” (p. 16)

His advice to the villagers is to offer everything to God. He ceremoniously placed the basket of edibles at the feet of the image of God and said:

“It’s His first. Let the offering go to Him, first; and we will eat the remnant. By giving to God, do you know how it multiplies, rather than divides?” (p. 18)

The status of Raju also changes in the village and his abode is a spiritual center for the villagers. Raju no doubt tries his best to fulfill the aspirations and wishes of his devotees. He grows a beard and reads the Bhagwad Gita, which enhances his spiritual status both inwardly and outwardly.

“He came to be called Swami by his congregation, and where he lived was called the Temple. It was passing into common parlance. ‘The Swami said this or that’ or ‘I am on my way to the Temple’. People loved this place so much that they lime-washed its walls and drew red bands on them.” (p. 91)

Raju, acquiring universality in his personality, discerns the same *Atman* in all. This slow and steady evolution highlights the Indian philosophical principle of universality or cosmopolitanism. His influence in the village is unlimited. He not only chants holy verses and discourses on philosophy, but he even comes to the stage of prescribing medicine to the villagers. Even people bring to him their disputes and quarrels over the division of ancestral property.

Raju has been described a “spiritual martyr”⁽²⁶⁾ who finds himself accidentally involved through the misunderstanding of a village idiot in undertaking a fast to propitiate the god of rain. Initially, Raju is not ready for such activity, he feels trapped but later, he resolves to stick to it. He acknowledges his limitations to Velan and consequently declines the preposterous pressure of villagers for undertaking the fasting. It can be opined that Raju is miles away from illusion now. He narrates to Velan the candid story of his life in a desperate effort to explode the legend about himself.

This act of exposing his past reinforces the view that Raju has understood the quintessence of the Indian religion and philosophy. There are no traces of duality or fickle mindedness in his philosophy, the only thing left is the sense of service for the betterment and contentment of humanity. He says, “If by avoiding food I should help the trees, bloom and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?” (pp. 237-238) Thus, for the first time he learns the thrill

of full application outside money and love. He plans to perform the fasting and this is the first thing he does in which he is not personally interested.

There is a close parallel between Raju in The Guide and Thomas Becket in Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral. Becket in the play is completely transformed from the physical world of pleasure into the world of spiritual glory and wins over the element of evil by his martyrdom. Similarly, Raju who has enjoyed all sorts of material pleasures, dissociates from this material world, renounces all social bondages and ends up a saint who wishes the well-being of all villagers of Mangla. According to Catholic belief, there are three characteristics of a martyr. Firstly, he should sacrifice his life and accept death. Secondly, the death is thrust upon him due to hatred for Christian life and truth and thirdly, he should voluntarily accept death to defend Christian religion and truth. ⁽²⁷⁾ Initially, Raju does not wish to continue with his role of a saint. Sainthood is thus thrust upon him. But later, he performs fast to please the God of rain. He sacrifices his own life for the villagers.

The interview of Raju, now a Swami with James J. Malone, a Californian film producer, bears the echoes from the Bhagwad Gita. Raju is now a *Nishkam Karma Yogi*:

“Let us chat. Okay? Tell me (J. J. Malone), how do you like it here?”

“I am doing only what I have to do; that's all. My likes and dislikes do not count.”

“Can fasting abolish all wars and bring peace?”

“Yes.”

“Have you always been a *Yogi*?”

“Yes, more or less.” (p. 244)

The critics like S. R. Ramteke consider Raju as a fake saint. Ramteke takes Raju's actions as deception. He writes, "The crocodile, an archetypal symbol of hypocrisy, provides a fitting parallel of the fake saint in Raju." (28) Raju also invites comparison with Kalo, the protagonist in Bhabani Bhattacharya's He Who Rides A Tiger. Both Raju and Kalo initially deceive the society and are carried away by their deception until a point comes when it is difficult to undo the enormous lies. Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly observes:

"In Bhattacharya's book Kalo's deception is a deliberate act of revenge against society. Raju in The Guide, on the other hand, drifts into the role of a *sadhu* willy-nilly, and once he finds himself cast in the role of an ascetic he attempts to perform the act with gusto, partly for the sake of self-preservation, partly because it suits his personality, wonderfully." (29)

Meenakshi Mukherjee's views about Raju's deception does not seem appropriate. It is just a superficial observation of Raju's action. She ignores Raju's psychological and spiritual transformation. Although Raju plays the role of a saint initially, he is so much caught and absorbed in the role that he attains the height of a true saint in the end. In the beginning ascetism is entrusted upon him by the people, partly because his outward appearance looked like a *sadhu* and partly because the people needed a mentor whom they find in Raju. At this time, Raju is also in need of an anchor. He is tired of running. Finally, it is the unconditional faith of the people that gives him the spiritual strength to submit to God's will.

Raju is a *Nishkam Karma Yogi* in the sense he always promotes the interests, tastes and likings of others by sacrificing his own aspirations and desires. He promotes the research of Marco, the dancing capabilities of

Rosie, the well being of the jail-mates and the villagers, and in the end sacrifices his life for the genuine and universal cause of humanity. He performs all these actions in a missionary and servile mood.

Thus, Raju gains purity of thought and action on the path of Moksha. Gaining absolute control over mind is within his reach now. Gaining control over the five senses is the most difficult part in the life of a human being on the path to attaining Moksha. But it is a goal not unachievable. Raju in the end of life lives with complete control over his senses and lives not for himself, but for the villagers of Mangla.

The Indian philosophy, homocentric and optimistic in its nature upholds the belief that the universe is ruled by an omnipotent and omnipresent power. True prayers, true beliefs, true devotion and true meditation are rewarded by God. Narayan seems to record this essence of the Indian philosophy in the end of the novel. Raju's sacrifice is blessed with the rain in Mangla and Malgudi. This endorsement of Indian values establishes The Guide as a real mouthpiece of Indian philosophy, culture and religion. The end of the novel is a vindication of Indian rituals, mysticism and spiritualism that are the various manifestations of Indian philosophy. Critics hold divergent views about the ending of the novel but keeping in view the mind set of Indians including Narayan, this end is apt and natural.

The Malgudian society in The Guide is religious, traditional and God-fearing inherently believing in the moral ethics of the Indian philosophy. The Malgudian society does not fully approve of Rosie's dancing performances, Raju's mother dislikes a *Nag-Kanya* or a dancing girl, Macro's bitter comments on this act of dancing, substitutes the traditional Malgudian bent of

mind. The rural folk of Mangla village are more devoted, innocent and honest. These people recognize the miracles, the seasonal changes, divine order, the coincidence of festivals in the memory of gods etc.

“He (Raju) counted the seasons by the special points that jutted out, such as the harvest in January, when his disciples brought him sugar-cane and jaggery cooked with rice; when they brought him sweets and fruits, he knew that the Tamil New Year was on; when *Dasera* came they brought in extra lamps and lit them, and the women were busy all through the nine days, decorating the pillared hall with coloured paper and tinsel; and for *Dipavali* they brought him new clothes and crackers.” (p. 90)

The urban and rural society of Malgudi is intensely religious. It does not believe in an abstract or dry religion but grooms its faith in a living, dynamic religion. These people accept Raju as a saint or spiritual master. Velan reaffirms his faith in Raju after listening to the story of his previous life. The Malgudians do not subscribe to the principle that once sinned is sinned forever, on the contrary, they accrue proper opportunity for the spiritual survival of all.

Rosie, born in a *devdasi* clan, is ignorant of her patronage. A post graduate in Economics, she typifies the woman liberation movement in India thus moving from the habitual world of deep rooted religion and mystic belief into a world marked by sophistication and cynicism. Rosie is viewed not as the wife of Marco or the beloved of Raju but as an individual with aspirations, desires and volition of her own.

Rosie is a lovely, elegant woman, Raju is bewitched by her charm from the very first day of her arrival to Malgudi. “She was not very glamorous But she did have a figure, a slight and slender one, beautifully fashioned....” (p. 65) She has an inherent passion for dancing, as she reaches Malgudi, her first question to Raju on the railway platform is, “Can you show me a cobra – a king cobra it must be – which can dance to the music of a flute?” (p. 64) Her devotion to dancing parallels Macro’s love for history. She wants to attain the perfection in the art of dancing. Like Raju, she is also on a quest for self.

No doubt a wronged wife, Rosie might have resisted the physical urge in her if her husband Marco had been a least kind and considerate, but his inhuman intellectual coldness spoils and destroys her innocent love and loyalty to him. Rosie makes the best efforts to be a good wife but her attempts are let down by the high-headedness and hard-heartedness of Marco. Like a typical Indian woman, Rosie endures his idiosyncrasies and finds a friend in Raju. She has a special corner for Raju, but this is primarily due to the fact that Raju helps her in her dancing pursuits. On many occasions she also insults him. In the hotel room, she orders him to go out of their room. She says, “Do you not understand? We want you to leave.” (p. 135) She is willing to compromise with her husband, she is even prepared to leave and sacrifice her dancing career just to please him. She makes her best efforts to regain his faith and love. She says:

“But I followed him, day after day, like a dog – waiting for his grace. He ignored me totally.... I followed him like a shadow, leaving aside all my own pride and self – respect.” (p. 151)

When she asks him, “Have you not punished me enough?” (p. 151), he replies, “Don’t talk to me. You can go where you please or do what you please.” (p. 151)

But like any Indian woman, she says, “I want to be with you. I want you to forget everything. I want you to forgive me.” (p. 151)

Rosie epitomizes an Indian woman oscillating between tradition and modernity. She is a woman in transition who can neither totally break from tradition nor accept modernity. Narayan presents her as a woman with deep faith in the traditional Indian values governed by the Indian ethical code. She tries her best to gain the sympathy and forgiveness of her husband. Despite his indifferent attitude, she addresses him respectfully and regards herself guilty of neglecting her wifely duties. Rosie realizes the absence of Marco, when she was at the apex of her career. She at once orders the copy of the book authored by Marco and laments for her loss. She still has respect for him in a typically Indian manner. She repents and says, “After all, after all, he is my husband.” (p. 201) She also repents for her past follies and says:

“I do and I deserved nothing less. Any other husband would have throttled me then and there. He tolerated my company for nearly a month, even after knowing what I had done.” (p. 201)

Rosie represents a traditional Indian woman in her desire to study “ancient work of art, the *Natya Shashtra* of Bharat Muni, a thousand years old, and various other books, because without a proper study of the ancient methods it would be impossible to keep purity of the classical forms.” (p. 122) She wants to take lessons from a Sanskrit pundit who can help her in understanding the old Sanskrit texts.

“I shall also want him (pundit) to read for me episodes from Ramayana and Mahabharata, because they are a treasure house, and we can pick up so many ideas for new compositions from them.” (p. 123)

She performs her *pooja* before her dance performance. “At one corner of the room she’d have a bronze figure of Nataraja, the god of dancers....She would have incense sticks burning.” (p. 122) before her dance performance.

She acquires the status of a divine damsel for Raju who forgets his earthly life in her company. He confesses:

“I could honestly declare that, while I (Raju) watched her perform, my mind was free, for once, from all carnal thoughts; I viewed her as a pure abstraction. She could make me forget my surrounding.” (p. 125)

Like Rosie, Nalini also acts in accordance with the Indian philosophical theory of *Karma* or philosophy of acceptance in overcoming her miseries. Her weakening mind also highlights the common plight of modern woman in Indian context. Although Shanta Krishnaswami takes a sympathetic view for her coming back to Raju, ⁽³⁰⁾ but it can not be justified in the country where Sita and Savitri are the ideals of womankind.

Rosie remains a traditional woman for a comparatively short span of time. Her illicit relation with Raju violates the Indian ethical code that promotes the ideal of loyalty to one’s spouse. Rosie’s sufferings, it could be inferred are an example of poetic justice. A woman in transition, she can not uphold the tradition and subscribe to the old moral and ethical value system, nor is she bold enough to forsake the tradition. In the portrayal of Rosie, Narayan presents a modern liberated Indian woman. Narayan has apparently offered a novel paradigm of Indian ethical code in much the same way he has offered a new variable of a *yogi* in the character of Raju. Thus, the Indian philosophy and religion are critiqued in the novel in the contemporary context.

R. K. Narayan has very artistically inseminated the Indian philosophical ideas in this novel. The Vedantic philosophy of self – realization, the concept of *Maya*, ignorance or *Avidya*, the ideal of *Niskama Karma* or action without attachment, the values of ethical systems and the consequence of its violation, the search for ancient culture, traditions and customs, the theory of *Karma* or action, the four ideals of *Purushartha* and other Hindu concepts such as ascetic purification, *yoga*, renunciation, cyclic progression of life and death – all philosophical ideas are comprehensively amalgamated in this novel.

A TIGER FOR MALGUDI: TRANSFORMATION INTO A SANYASI

A Tiger for Malgudi published in 1983 is a magnificent novel about a tiger said to have possessed the soul of an enlightened human being. The novel established the fact that R. K. Narayan, committed as he is to Hindu way of life, consciously turns to legends and fables, which have given him sustaining power all through his career as a novelist. In this novel, he dramatizes the harmony that is possible and the self-awareness that could be visualized when the human and the animal world are viewed as a simultaneous order.

“Now, in my story the Tiger Hermit employs his powers to save the tiger and transform it inwardly...and with the right approach you could expect the same response from a tiger as from any normal human being.” ⁽³¹⁾ (pp. 9-10)

R. M. Verma remarks, “Narayan is at the peak of his creative originality in A Tiger for Malgudi” ⁽³²⁾ which has deep spiritual meaning and dimensions. R. P. Chaddah writes, “This is almost a spiritual odyssey from the early wild days through circus and then to the training by the ring master.” ⁽³³⁾

A Tiger for Malgudi is a practical document of the Indian philosophy. R. L. Dickinson writes, “It’s a nice little tale of redemption and self-awareness.” ⁽³⁴⁾ *Moksha*, the crux of Indian philosophy is endorsed in this novel in a direct and emphatic way. The other facts of Indian philosophical thought, namely, the four ideals of *Artha*, *Kama Dharma* and *Moksha*, the tradition of *Guru – Shishya*, the last *yogic* spiritual resort i.e. *Samadhi*, the *Ashrama Dharma*, the

concept of *Sansara*, the idea of renunciation and detachment, the magic power of *yoga*, the philosophical discourses on the Bhagwad Gita and self evolution, self – realization, the three *Gunas* and various other interpretations of Hinduism are beautifully conceptualized in this novel.

R. K. Narayan experiments in this novel with the theme of transformation of the self which is the focal point in all ancient and modern Hindu philosophy. In Hinduism, all the systems of the Indian philosophical thought have stressed on the need to dissolve the darkness within to attain illumination - the knowledge of the true self. P. Nagaraja Rao truly summarizes this in the following manner:

“The soul of man is covered with thick layers of unreality. The removal of these layers enables the soul to shine in its effulgence. The soul has merely to uncover the sheaths to realize its nature. Reflection of the true nature of the self is the method. Ignorance is the veil and sin that hides truth. The hinge of ignorance is the ego. We must dissolve this pseudo – self.”⁽³⁵⁾

सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टो-
 मत्तः स्मृतिज्ञानमपोहनं च ।
 वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यो- (XV/15)⁽³⁶⁾
 वेदान्तकृद्वेदविदेव चाहम् ॥

(It is I who remain seated in the heart of all creatures as the inner controller of all; and it is I who am the source of memory, knowledge and the ratiocinative faculty. Again, I am the only object worth knowing through the Vedas; I alone am the father of Vedanta and the knower of the Vedas too.)

The above cited verse from the Bhagwad Gita states that God is omnipresent. This universal concept of Hinduism is stressed upon by Narayan in the introduction of A Tiger for Malgudi. Narayan reinstates the truth of this universality of soul in all living creatures – in man, beast and bird – the animate and the inanimate.

“...That deep within, the core of personality is the same 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.” (pp. 9.10)

Narayan has purposely selected the most powerful and frightening animal from the animal kingdom as the main character in the novel. The tiger is a symbol of violence, arrogance and egotism. Raja, a tiger also states in the novel that his supremacy and domination in the animal kingdom of the Mempi forest can not be challenged. He is the acknowledged master, leader and king of the animals. His pride does not tolerate the least show of disrespect to his supreme authority by anybody. He punishes the disobedient ones brutally and at once.

“...but in course of time considered myself the Supreme Lord of the Jungle, afraid of no one, striking terror in others. It was naturally a time of utter wildness, violence and unthinking cruelty inflicted on the weaker creatures....I delivered the fatal blow in any case when I wished and strode about as the king of the forest.” (p. 13)

Narayan knowingly picks up the elementary passions i.e. *Tamsik Gunas*, in the most natural form in a beast. In the Bhagwad Gita indolence, ego or *Ahankara*, ignorance, illusion – all are attributed to *Tamo Guna* which

generates possessiveness, anger or *Krodha*, self – righteousness and a sense of attachment. Raja is also occupied with these layers of darkness. In a gradual development from innocent childhood to a sensible juvenile youth one witnesses these changes.

“I remember my cub hood when I frolicked on the sandy bank and in cool stream, protected and fed by a mother. I had no doubt whatever that she would live forever to look after me: a natural delusion which afflicts all creatures, including human beings.” (pp. 12-13)

Narayan in the portrayal of the ferocious nature of the tiger explores and exposes such human weakness and wild emotions which are manifested in some men. The author in a systematic manner traces various stages of evolution in the tiger. *Kalesh*⁽³⁷⁾ and *Vikara*⁽³⁸⁾ are the elementary hurdles on the way of evolution and the annihilation of these evils is the first step on the way of transformation in the self.

Raja fiercely fights with his would be wife to posit supremacy and authority. “We butted into each other, scratched, clawed, wrestled, grappled, gashing, biting, tearing each other, and I also stood up and threw on her and struck.” (p. 19) After this bloody fight both lay unconscious and on the advice of a jackal that “If you can not discover a reason to be enemies, why don’t you consider being friends.” (p. 20), they first became friends and later husband and wife. The inherent message that annihilation of ego and mutual respect are the essential tools for a harmonious married life is distinctly conveyed here. Once this agreement is reached between the spouses, love and then their progeny, the four cubs are born.

The conjugal life of Raja does not prove to be fortunate and long lasting. His family is ambushed and subsequently killed by the villagers and hunters. Raja, as an animal, is unknown to the sentiments of sorrow, repentance and the meaning of death. As an animal he only understands the meaning of revenge, possession, attack, target, arrogance etc. When the tiger looks at the cart in which the cubs and their mother lay, he gets extremely angry and says:

“A blind, impossible anger stirred within me: I just wanted to dash up, pounce upon every creature, bite and claw and destroy.” (p. 24)

The life of tiger Raja offers a close parallel to the circle of human engagements in *Sansara*. The instincts and emotions of a tiger are more or less human without any artificiality. The life of the tiger with his tigress and cubs also reflects on human domestic instincts. The similarity of the familial ties in the animal kingdom and human world also justifies the Indian philosophical concept of the *Grihastha Ashrama* in which enjoyment of *Kama* in accordance to *Dharma* and propagation of progeny are the main features of this stage of life.

The tiger in the Hindu mythology is the *Vahan* or vehicle of goddess Durga who epitomizes power to destroy the demons. Durga Saptati ⁽³⁹⁾ refers to:

— iv^yu^6am smp/Wam\ m<gpit Sk>6ixt> Wal8`m\

kNyaiWa: krvalqe3 ivIsTsa^yaiWaraseivtm\ a

hStEXck/ gdaisqe3 ivixqam\ S4ap> gu`>tjRnlm\

ibWa/a`a mnlaiTmka> xix6ra> dugaR>i5ne5a> Waje aa (XII /1) (p. 171)

The three eyed goddess appears most frightening sitting on the shoulder of the tiger to a worshipper of the Goddess Durga.

So the tiger, the king of all animals signifies here a dualistic role. This is a symbol of power, strength, valour and secondly the eradicator of all evils. Narayan's use of animal allegory is not without an inherent artistic and philosophical purpose.

The life of the tiger with the tigress and its cubs also reflects on human domestic instincts. The ultimate demise of his family and remorse of the tiger on this tragedy indicate his preference for family life.

The induction of the circus people in the life of Raja symbolizes the "active phase of human life."⁽⁴⁰⁾ The pursuit of *Artha* is introduced to mark the human instincts for money and *Maya*. The tiger is enforced in this material world from the carefree life of the jungle by the captain – the proprietor of the Grand Malgudi Circus. This mixing of the civilizations, firstly the advanced human civilization and secondly the remote, ignorant civilization of a forest is remarkably portrayed by Narayan. Here Raja is introduced to the materialistic world represented by the captain as the head of the family members, the circus staff and other wild creatures and the people of Malgudi as the spectators of the circus.

Raja is more or less an instrument of attaining *Artha*, he performs his actions not as an actor or a participant, but under compulsion. This portrayal of fear and compulsion is correlated with human world where one confronts such situations in one's routine life. The personality of the tiger also undergoes transformation in the process of his education and actions in the circus.

“My only aim now was to please Captain, and when I did that I got the reward, pieces of meat and water and undisturbed sleep in my cage.” (p. 55)

So this compulsive relationship between the ruler and the ruled are purely materialistic and mundane in their nature. The only positive side of this relationship is that Raja is disciplined and administered to a new type of life i.e. the human civilization. This gradual development awakens the reasoning and analytical faculties of Raja’s mind. His invincible ego or *Ahankara* is annihilated by the captain tactfully. When the ego vanishes, he knows to learn a new meaning of life. So the circus life is also more or less a school for Raja where he learns new *Vidya* or knowledge of life.

“Ultimately, by sheer doggedness he made me realize that I was to ignore the goat.... Here I was disciplined enough not to move a muscle in the presence of that supposed goat.” (p. 63)

The wheel of *Sansara* rotates on its full turn, when the captain reaches an agreement with a film producer. Now he wishes to improvise the role, habits and activities of Raja to the new requirements of the tinsel world. Raja is not ready for this change and screams loudly, “Oh, captain, don’t be foolhardy, your life is in danger, go away, leave me before any calamity befalls you.” (p. 114) But the captain did not relent and is consequently killed by Raja. The wife of the captain also commits suicide. This ends the worldly life of the captain and his wife. Raja also frees himself from the shackles of this hollow life.

With this mishap, Raja also ends his worldly life. He calmly walks off the place and takes shelter in the school building from where he is rescued by the Swami. Narayan has interestingly interwoven the *yogic* – spell of saints to

take this wild animal. Regarding the power of *Yoga*, P. Nagaraja Rao remarks:

“It is on the record that the practice of *Samadhi* gives rise to super normal powers in the *yogi*. He develops certain super normal powers at this stage. The *yogis* are able to tame ferocious wild animals.”⁽⁴¹⁾

The above statement reinforces the supernatural powers of the *yogis*. The portrayal of this kind of relationship between a beast and a *yogi* has its origin in the Indian philosophy and religion. There are many mythical illusions related with animals. Narayan in the introduction of the novel A Tiger for Malgudi refers to one such mythology:

“During *Kumbha Mela* festival, which recurs every twelve years at the confluence of the three river Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati in Allahabad, vast crowd gathers for a holy bath in the rivers. Amidst that ocean of humanity also arrives a hermit with his companion, a tiger. He does not hold the any man on a leash since he claims they were brothers in previous lives. The tiger freely moves about without hurting or scaring anyone.”^(p. 7)

Unaware of the spiritual or supernatural powers of the Swami, the ferocious animal first tries to resist him but finding himself helpless before him, he completely surrenders himself to the gnostic and occult powers of the Swami. Raja voluntarily accepts the authority of the Swami and follows his dictates like a disciple as per the *Guru –Shishya* tradition. Both Swami and Raja need each other. Raja has completed his *Grihasth Ashrama* and needs an illuminated soul for his further mental and spiritual growth.

This entry of Raja into the *Vanaprastha Ashrama* is devised by his Master, who telepathically instructs him to leave his arrogant and violent style of living.

“You are now an adult, full grown tiger and assuming you are fifteen years old, in human terms you are seventy years old, and at seventy and onwards one’s temper gets toned down through normal decay. ...You can not continue your ferocity forever. You have to change.” (p. 145)

This point is further reinforced when Raja refers to his feeling of guilt consciousness, when he is “oppressed with a sense of guilt.” (p. 159) When he kills or hunts any living creature in the forest, he experiences a feeling of remorse. He says, “But now-a-days, the moment I had eaten my fill I’d be seized with remorse. And so, when I returned from the jungle I’d lie low, out of sight of my master.” (p. 159) Raja tries to purify himself by reducing his frequency of seeking food thus suffering hunger for consecutive days. The meditations of his Master are instrumental in this transformation of Raja.

“Nowadays he (Master) encouraged me (Raja) to remain close by when he meditated as it might help me too. ...At such moments I felt lighter at heart and my physical self also became secondary.” (p. 165)

Raja’s visionary and hearing senses are gradually weakened, restricting his subsequent movements. The Master remarks, “Raja, old age has come on you, beautiful old age, when faculties are dimmed one by one, so that we may be restful.” (p. 174) The Master arranges for his transportation to the zoo, where he can be in the safe custody of authorities properly nourished

and cared. Raja's departure to the zoo to a new life or *janma* confirms the Indian philosophical concept of *Punarjanma*.

“Both of us will shed our forms soon and perhaps we could meet again, who knows? So good bye for the present.” (p. 176)

Raja thus enters into *Sanyastha Ashrama* in total spirit. Ranga Rao remarks in this respect:

“After The Vender of Sweets, we have in this novel finally *Sanyasa* in total spirit and content: time to ‘shed purpose of every kind’; and move from time to timelessness.” (42)

Raja achieves self –realization under the guidance of his Master, his *Guru*. This *Atman – Gyana* or self – realization is the basic aim of Indian philosophy. Raja can now appreciate and acknowledge the reality of life in the zoo. Raja succeeds in discerning the triple merits, namely, *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* i.e. purity, passion and ignorance respectively which are the three cardinal qualities of a seeker.

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसम्भवाः ।
निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥

(43) (XIV / 5)

(*Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* – these qualities born of nature tie down the imperishable soul to the body, Arjuna)

Raja thus epitomizes the three *Gunas* as prescribed in the Indian philosophy. He represents the *Tamasic Guna* in the initial stage of his life while living in the forest. His *Rajasik Guna* is overwhelmingly expressed in the company of the captain. His emotions and desires correspond to *Rajas Guna* at this stage of his life. *Satva Guna* overpowers *Rajas Guna* when he is in the

company of his spiritual Master where he is leading a pure, calm, selfless life in Mempi hills.

R. K. Narayan has portrayed in A Tiger for Malgudi an ideal *Guru – Shishya* relationship. The tiger is one of the most dangerous and freedom – loving animal, difficult to be tamed. But once tamed, he proves to be a disciple par excellence. A tiger can be domesticated and enslaved with love and wisdom, not by fear and violence. So the message is that the relationship based on love is everlasting, enduring and fruitful. Both the captain and the Swami wanted to master Raja with an altogether different approach, but the Swami succeeds in his efforts because he has a moral reason to master the beast. On the other hand, the captain who believes in the *Charvaka* principle of enjoyment and materialistic concept perishes in the end. The captain's death symbolizes the impermanence of his worldly life which is further corroborated by the death of his wife. The death of the couple signifies the similar end of worldly people. Narayan spares the lives of Raja, the seeker and the Master, the Swami – a reiteration of his faith in the Indian spiritualistic values and *yogic* powers.

The master in a truly Indian philosophical spirit is interested in unraveling the mystery of this universe and the self. “*Ah> b/HmaiSm*”⁽⁴⁴⁾ i.e. “I am *Brahman*” is another correlated search for the self in our *Shashtras*. It manifests the search of an individual for self – realization and integration with God. That the Master is also endeavouring to attain this stage of oneness with God is reflected from his argument with the people in the school ground who had gathered there to entrap Raja.

“Someone said, ‘What a reckless man you are! What are you?’”

“You are asking a profound question. I’ve no idea who I am! All my life I have been trying to find the answer. Are you sure you know who you are?” (p. 118)

The Master is a true Vedantin who firmly believes in the benevolence of God. He has overcome his fears, anxieties and dilemmas after studying the Indian scriptures. When the Chairman, the second Honorary Magistrate of Malgudi asks the Master to sign an affidavit absolving them from all responsibilities for his life or death during his encounter with Raja locked in the school room, he writes and signs these documents in Sanskrit, “the language of the God” (p. 143) although he knows ten other languages including Japanese. His reaction is also typically Indian:

“Life or death is in no one’s hand: you can’t die by willing or escape death by determination. A great power has determined the number of breaths for each individual....That’s why God says in the Gita, ‘I’m life and death, I’m the killer and the killed...Those enemies you see before you O Arjuna, are already dead, whether you aim your arrows at them or not!” (p. 142)

The master conceptualizes in the manner of the ancient sage Patanjali, the great seer who devised the system of *Yoga*. Patanjali considers mind as the main obstruction on the way of self – realization and contemplation. He prescribes *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Dharma* and *Dhyana* as the essential steps for the control of mind which ultimately result into *Samadhi*. The Bhagwad Gita also considers practice and renunciation as essential devices for controlling the mind:

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

⁽⁴⁵⁾ (VI/ 35)

(The mind is restless no doubt; and difficult to curb, Arjuna; but it can be brought under control by repeated practice of meditation and by the exercise of dispassion, O son of Kunti)

The Master's advice to Raja to overpower his senses and mind has echoes of Patanjali's *Yoga Darshana* and the Bhagwad Gita:

"The eye is the starting point of all evils and mischief. The eye can travel far and can pick out objects indiscriminately, mind follows the eye, and the rest of the body is conditioned by the mind. Thus starts the chain of activity which may lead to trouble and complication, or waste of time." ⁽⁴⁶⁾

This great spiritual Swami has transgressed to this state of spiritual perfection after graduating from the *Grihastha Ashrama*. He renounces the familial bondages in order to step in to *Sanyastha Ashrama*:

"I was a man of the world, busy and active and living by the clock, scrutinizing my bank book... One day it seemed all wrong, a senseless repetition of activities, where one's head always throbbed with the next plan, counting time or money or prospects....At midnight I softly drew the bolt of our back door, opening on the sands of Saryu...while others slept very much in the manner of Siddhartha." ^(p. 161)

The Swami's renunciation of the *Grihastha Ashrama* is not circumstantial. He has renounced the *Grihastha Ashrama* on his own volition. Consequently, his wife's overtones to bring him back to the family fold are rendered futile. This worldly man who is prone to passions forsakes the social and earthly life in search of a higher spiritual life, unlike Margayya in The

Financial Expert or Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets. The Master's renunciation of the *Grihastha Ashrama* is on purely spiritual grounds.

"If you think over it, you will realize that the surrender has been rather on his part: it was total, he took nothing for himself except a piece of loincloth for all the wealth he had accumulated! However please know that he left home not out of wrath, there was no cause for it, but out of an inner transformation." (p. 171)

The Indian ethical ideal comprehensively described as *Dharma* orders the desires of man around four principles called *Purusharthas* (aspirations). P. Nagaraja Rao describes them as under:

"The first of these are desire for wealth and possession (*Artha*), and the gratification of desires (*Kama*). ... There are two other values and these are spiritual. They are righteousness (*Dharma*) and liberation (*Moksha*)." (47)

These four *Purusharthas* are amply illustrated in this novel. The Swami and the tiger Raja both were enmeshed in the earthly pursuits. The Swami is a man of worldly matters living a social life in the initial stage of his life. Likewise Raja also expects "the deferential withdrawal" of other creatures from his path. He uses the earliest opportunity to punish the disobedient ones. He hunts all types of animals in Mempi forest. He also assists the captain in improving his financial position by partaking in the circus activities.

Kama or the gratification of desires and propagation of one's progeny is the second *Purushartha* in the Hindu philosophy. The Swami passes through this aim of life successfully which is also hinted by his wife who

comes to the jungle to take him back. She reminds him of his past life with her and urges him to go with him:

“I have borne your vagaries patiently for a lifetime: your inordinate demands of food and my perpetual anxiety to see you satisfied, and my total surrender night or day when passion seized you and you displayed the indifference of a savage, never caring for my health or inclination, and with your crude jocularities even before the children I shudder.” (pp. 170 - 171)

Dharma, the third of the four aims helps in the fulfillment of the spiritual needs of human beings. *Dharma* is the kingdom of God on earth. The life of *Dharma* leads to *Moksha*. The Swami describes to Raja the process of his gradual shifting into the life of *Dharma*:

“I was a man of the world, busy and active... - and I abruptly shed everything including clothes, and fled away from wife, children, home, possessions, all of which seemed intolerable.” (p. 161)

Same is the case with Raja. When he kills the captain his reaction is a peculiar one, “that such a flimsy creature no better than a membrane stretched over some thin framework, with so little stuff inside, should have held me in fear so long.” (p. 115) Both the Swami and his disciple Raja break all the barriers to attain their last ideal of *Moksha*.

The fourth and the last ideal of *Moksha* is the supreme spiritual ideal and leitmotif of Indian philosophy. *Moksha* is a state of undiminishing bliss which puts an end to all tensions and sacrifices and quells all doubts and discontentment. There is no return to *Sansara* once one attains *Moksha*. It is

the realization of one's own nature or *Swarupa*. It is the natural state of the *Atman*. This state of realization is attained by the Swami:

“I achieved complete anonymity, and shed purpose of every kind, never having to ask what next. And so here I am, that's all you need to know.” (p. 162)

Raja also abandons his ferocity and prefers moderate diet fully incorporating the teachings of his Master in his life which manifests Raja's sublimated state of spirit. This manifests an elevated state in the life of Raja.

God is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe. The objectivity of the world is due to its Creator, the God. The world has a law abiding nature. God is *Brahman* in empirical dress. Dr. Radhakrishnan also justifies the conceptualization of God as a Supreme and Cosmic Power by Shankara. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ P. Nagaraja Rao also remarks, “Shankara's *Advaita* accepts the existence of one reality... It is *Brahman* that appears as the world of souls and the universe of matter.” ⁽⁴⁹⁾ In A Tiger for Malgudi the conceptualization of God is also in coherence with the Vedantic philosophy.

“He (the Swami) described God in his own way as the Creator, the Great Spirit pervading every creature, every rock and tree and the sky and the stars; a source of power and strength.” (pp.

157 - 158)

In a discourse between the Master and Raja – the *Guru* and the *Shishya* – Raja conceives of God as enormous tiger. His perception of God is also worth mentioning, “God must be an enormous tiger, spanning the earth and the sky, with a tail capable of encircling the globe, claws that could grind the mountain, and possessing, of course, immeasurable strength to match”. ^{(p.}

¹⁵⁸⁾. The reaction of the Master on this issue is again very balanced and in tune with the dictates of the Indian philosophy.

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।
श्रद्धामयोज्यं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥

⁽⁵⁰⁾ (XVII / 3)

(The faith of all men conforms to their mental constitution, Arjuna. This man consists of faith; whatever the nature of his faith, he is verily that)

In the similar way, the Master reflects on the nature of man and God.

“It’s often said that God made man in his own image, it’s also true that man makes God in his own image. Both may be right; and you are perfectly right in thinking of your God as a super tiger. Also it may be true. What we must not forget is that He may be everything we imagine and more.” (p. 158)

Madhusudan, the cine director and producer nicknamed Madan, a minor character in the novel offers a dialogue on *Ahinsa*. In spite of his linkage with the tinsel world, Madan has not lost his finer sensibilities and sense of appreciation for basic human values. He exclusively selects the subject of non – violence to be pictured in his prospective film.

“Non – violence is India’s contribution to civilization. I got the idea from your own speech before the tiger act; violence can be conquered only by non – violence.” (p. 82)

R. K. Narayan, the visionary could foresee the role and significance of films in the contemporary society and the recurrent references to films in his novels posit the need to correlate the films with the ancient Indian thought and values. His attitude towards the portrayal of sex and violence in films is not

totally traditional or conventional. “Life is created and made possible only through sex and violence.” (p. 81), opines Madan but he at the same time acknowledges their limitations too. He says, “Everyone knows how important normal sex is and what an evil sex can turn out to be without a proper philosophy of life.” (p. 82)

Narayan has explored the ideals of *Kama* and *Artha* which according to the Indian philosophy are essential for an individual in a family or *Grihastha Ashrama*. The role of popular cinema in determining and influencing the social and moral values can not be undermined. Therefore, the selection of the subject of non – violence for a prospective film is not without inferences and meaningful suggestions. The captain who represents the values of the materialistic society is not devoid of rudimentary Indian qualities of character. He thus upholds the cherished ideal of *Guru – Shishya* relationship and would always pay homage to his *Guru* before the commencement of the show:

“All that I wish to say is that the great circus master Dadhaji of Poona adopted me and trained me ...taught me how to educate the animals...I cannot begin the show without bowing in homage and gratitude to the memory of that great master ...” (p. 67)

In the character of the captain, Narayan has incorporated in him the qualities promulgated by the Indian philosophical thought and ethics. His devotion to his wife Rita is in conformity with the hypothesis of *Grihastha Ashrama*, his activities in the circus are in pursuit of *Artha* and money, the captain leads his life as per the dictates of Indian philosophy and ethics. The Grand Malgudi Circus owned by the captain is the main source of

entertainment for the Malgudians and the captain contributes in his own way to the material advancement of the town.

“He liberally dispersed money to smooth out the passage of all kinds of transactions and favours, and in a short while Malgudi became more famous for its circus than for its mountain and river, and Captain was viewed as the wonder man who had transformed the town.” (p. 36)

Renunciation is one of the major themes of R. K. Narayan's fiction. Swaminathan in Swami and Friends renounces his school, in The Bachelor of Arts, Chandran renounces his home and parents for a brief span of time after his failure in love, Savitri in The Dark Room leaves her home and takes shelter in a temple, Krishnan bids good bye to Albert Mission College which is a symbol of Western civilization in The English Teacher, Srinivas also leaves home and his relations in the beginning of the novel in Mr. Sampath, Margayya renounces his illusions and attachments in the end of the novel The Financial Expert to work under the banyan tree once again, Vasu renounces his native village for the purpose of material pursuit in The Man Eater of Malgudi, Raju, the guide becomes the saint renouncing the worldly affairs in The Guide and Swami and Raja both prefer to live a spiritual life in the end in A Tiger for Malgudi.

The act of renunciation in the later novels of Narayan acquires the maturity and purpose of self-illumination. Sriram, a member of an aristocratic family renounces his house and relations in a quest for self harmony in Waiting for the Mahatma, Raju and Rosie renounce their respective surroundings in search of self in the end in The Guide. Jagan is ready to renounce his son and shop in the end of The Vendor of Sweets for the

purpose of self-realization; Daisy and Raman also epitomize this theme of renunciation in The Painter of Signs. The Master and the tiger Raja are the superb examples of renunciation in A Tiger for Malgudi, the Talkative Man renounces his commandant wife and comes to Malgudi in The Talkative Man. Nagaraja represents the modern form of renunciation i.e. the renunciation of illusions and worldly desires within the framework of the *Grihatha Ashrama* in The World of Nagaraj.

कार्यमित्येव यत्कर्म नियतं क्रियतेऽर्जुन ।
सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलं चैव स त्यागः सात्त्विको मतः ॥

⁽⁵¹⁾ (XVIII/9)

(A prescribed duty which is performed simply because it has to be performed, giving up attachment and fruit, that alone has been recognized as the *Satvika* form of renunciation.)

Hence, the two texts discussed above – The Guide and A Tiger for Malgudi critique this idea of “*Satvika* form of renunciation” in a most comprehensive manner. The Vedantic philosophy of self and self – realization, the concept of *Maya* or illusion, *Avidya* or ignorance, the concept of *Nishkama Karma* or action without attachment, the four ideals of *Artha*, *Kama*, *Dharma* and *Moksha*, the four *Purusharthas* and *Ashrama* have been artistically incorporated and widely discussed in these two novels. Raju and Raja, the two protagonists bear a semblance in their names which is not coincidental or accidental. A visionary, perceptive and subtle writer that Narayan is, the striking similarity in the names of a human and a beast is most significant and meaningful. The Guide, the spiritual odyssey of a human is juxtaposed to the animal world in A Tiger for Malgudi. The parallel in the

human and the animal world refers to the primordial world and the primordial reality reinforcing the Indian philosophical belief that there is one soul i.e. one Supreme Reality that breathes in all living creatures.

Raju, the tourist guide is initially entrapped in the illusory world when the materialistic *Charvaka* philosophy guides and governs his life. He commits the crime of forging the signature of Rosie and is accordingly punished and sent to the prison. His foul deeds pay him. He receives his ill fate as per his evil *Karma*. But landed into the prison life, he finds time for his moral and social transgression. The prison accrues to him an ideal opportunity to journey into the innermost regions of his soul and shake off his material and social illusions. Thereafter, evolution in the character of Raju is a ceaseless and ongoing process.

Raju has been described as a spiritual martyr, one who finds himself in a precarious situation on account of the misunderstanding of a village idiot. Martyrdom is thus imposed upon him under certain unavoidable circumstances. But a close scrutiny of Raju's actions, thoughts and behaviour significantly indicates a metamorphosis in Raju who has in the process been enlightened. The sacrifice of Raju followed by the rains in Mangla village could very well be treated as a vindication of Indian philosophy and its various paradigms.

If The Guide is the spiritual odyssey of a human, A Tiger for Malgudi on the contrary presents an insight into the animal world. Narayan has experimented here with the popular theme of transformation in a beast. The novelist's choice for the most powerful animal from the animal kingdom as the chief protagonist in the novel is full of inferences and hidden meaning.

Narayan is in fact exploring as well as exposing human weaknesses, follies and foibles in both man and beast. At the lowest level of physical existence Raju and Raja share the *Tamasik Gunas* when the pursuit of *Kama* and *Artha* is their topmost priority in life.

The life of the tiger Raja offers a close parallel to the circle of human engagement in *Sansara*. Both man and beast require the guidance of a worthy *Guru* to attain liberation from *Sansara*. The tiger Raja under the guidance of the Swami attains knowledge. His entry into the *Vanaprastha Ashrama* is devised by Swami. Raja's departure to the zoo is symbolic of a new *janma* or life corresponding to the Indian philosophical concept of *Punarjanma* or reincarnation. Raju, the human attains knowledge by an exploration of the self and achieves sainthood. He too acquires entirely anew attire inwardly and outwardly. Thus, Raju also enters into his new *janma* or life.

The act of renunciation in The Guide and A Tiger for Malgudi could be described as *Satvik* which is deeply religious, spiritual and fully in conformity with Indian paradigms of renunciation for the purpose of *Moksha* i.e. self-illumination or self-enlightenment. Raju and the Master represent the release of a kind of *Videha – Mukti*, when a person attains release of bodily self whereas Rosie in The Guide and tiger Raja in A Tiger for Malgudi symbolize a kind of *Karma – Mukti* i.e. release from action, another paradigm of Indian philosophy. The Narayanian idea of *Videha – Mukti*, the physical release is fully applicable to both Raju and the Master. This is clear from the use of Narayan's narrative technique employed in these two novels. Both the novels are third person narratives, a narrative device well suited for the detached and

philosophical presentation of characters and events. Both the characters in The Guide and in A Tiger for Malgudi comment on their previous actions in a disinterested and detached manner.

Another striking similarity between these two characters is that they renounce the world and later contemplate in the traditional Indian way, one in the forlorn Mangla village and the other in the solitude and natural surroundings of Mempi hills. After years of rigorous and deep contemplation they both realize the absolute truth of life. Contemplation for self – realization is an inseparable part of the Indian philosophy. Rosie also tries to dissociate herself from illusory life slowly and steadily first by distancing herself from the *devadasi* clan as well as from the plans and schemes of Marco, her husband, and identifying her inner instincts of dancing with the old Bharat Natyam form of dance and finally by devoting her life to as per se the philosophy of *Nishkam Karma Yoga*. Likewise, the tiger Raja gradually develops his inner instinct for liberation. He leaves the jungle life and joins the company of human civilization a higher species and thereafter devotes himself to his spiritual Master who enhances his spiritual faculties to finally achieve *Mukti* or liberation. P. Nagaraja Rao comments on the final fruits of this *Moksha* or liberation:

“Philosophy has a practical purpose, namely, to put an end to all human sorrows arising from man’s environment, bodily, natural and supernatural. *Moksha* is a state of experience which puts an end to all tensions and strife and quells all doubts and discontent and is full of undiminishing bliss. There is no return to *Sansara*, once we attain *Moksha*. It spells the radical termination of all sorrows.”⁽⁵²⁾

Thus, this quintessential lesson of *Moksha* is depicted and described elaborately in The Guide and A Tiger for Malgudi. The protagonists in these novels initially lead a hectic, indulgent and active life. Narayan reiterates that *Moksha* can be had by all types of people in all circumstances. The only prerequisite is true devotion and an unshakable faith in God. The Indian philosophy regards *Moksha* as the final goal of an individual's life. R. K. Narayan in these two seminal texts reinforces the concept of *Moksha* or self – illumination.

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CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION

R. K. Narayan, one of the most revered and applauded writers among the trio of Indian writing in English, deeply rooted in Indian culture, tradition and philosophy, reflects the Indian spirit and thought in his works. His fiction imbibes the quintessence of Indian philosophy in general and theory of *Karma* in particular. However, Narayan, an unassuming and unpretentious writer, does not burden his fiction with pedantic philosophical discourses. In spite of all philosophical under-currents in his novels, Narayan does not treat his fiction as a means of social, political or religious propaganda. His fictional works are a simplistic, yet realistic projection of life.

An uninitiated, unperceptive reader of Narayan may often be beguiled by the overt simplicity of his thematic concerns marked by his characteristic comic narrative mode. The mundane commonalities of the Malgudian life depicted by Narayan and the simplicity of thematic concerns gives a non-serious tone to his fiction. However, there is a profound undercurrent of philosophical discourse in his fiction, inter-related with disciplines of religion and ethics.

Thus, Narayan is first and foremost a writer and not a philosopher. Nevertheless, his fictional texts have a foregrounding in Indian philosophy that could be partly ascribed to his traditional background. But his philosophical vision is purely indigenous that bears the imprint of his knowledge of ancient Indian tradition, culture and philosophy. It becomes therefore imperative to

briefly survey the Indian philosophical systems so as to correlate Narayan's fictional texts with *Karma* philosophy with a view to envisage the philosophical vision of the writer.

Philosophy in India is essentially spiritual. Consequently, the spiritual motives pre-dominate life in India. The interest of philosophy in India is in the self of man and not in supra-lunar solitudes. The emphasis is on "AaTman. ivip a" i.e. "Know Thyself". Religion in India is not dogmatic, though philosophy is not totally free from the fascinations of religious speculation, yet Narayan unveils this message in his fiction through the presentation of spiritual transformation of his characters such as Raju, the guide, Raja, the tiger, Jagan, the sweet vendor and Margayya, the financial expert.

A close examination of Narayan's novels from philosophical point of view introduces one to various classical systems that originated in India some three thousand years ago. It is preposterous to describe Indian philosophy as one system since it represents a rich variety of philosophical thought. The classical systems of Indian philosophy called *Darshanas* are categorically classified into three broad groups – the Orthodox (*Astika*), the Heterodox (*Nastika*) and the Indian Materialistic (*Charvaka*). An orthodox system is one that accepts the authority of the *Vedas*. These orthodox systems are six in number – *Nyaya*, *Vaishesika*, *Sankhya*, *Yoga*, *Mimansa* and *Vedanta*. Buddhism and Jainism, based on the authoritative spiritual experiences of their prophets are heterodox systems. *Charvaka* is an atheist who rejects spirituality in all forms. In his novels, Narayan presents two distinct types of characters in the light of the Indian philosophical systems. Firstly, there are Srinivas, Nataraj, Margayya, Jagan, Raju, Raja and Jagan who are

philosophers in their own right who expound and promote the value system known as *Astika*. Secondly, there are those like Vasu and Mali who offer a resistance to the order and harmony of the Malgudians. They represent the *Charvaka* system.

The first systems, *Nyaya* and *Vaishesika* are inter-related. The greatest contribution of *Sankhya* system to human thought is its conception of *Prakriti* or nature which is the root cause of all physical entities in the universe. The entire system of *Prakriti* is woven out of three *gunas* – *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Purusha* or man is the other important category in *Sankhya* system. Narayan has interwoven these three *gunas* in his novels. Raju, Margayya, Raja – all live *Rajasik* life initially. But spiritual transformation in their lives leads them to *Sattvik* ways of living.

Narayan's characters are *Yogis* in their distinct ways. Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutra* is the main source of the *Yoga* system founded on the central object of "*Chitta Vritti Nirodha Sa Yoga*" i.e. "The control of mind, that is *Yoga*." The sense of detachment from all material aspects and the efforts to achieve communion with God as found in Raju, Krishnan and Raja who live the life of *Yogis* towards the end of the novels.

Vedanta or Uttar Mimansa is the living and vital part of Indian philosophy today that has evolved from the interpretation of the triple texts – the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Vedanta or Brahma Sutra. The Vedantic tradition believes in *Guru*. The Vedantins acknowledge the limitation of reason though Vedanta is a fine example of a perfect blending of reason and revelation. The origin of *Varna* and *Ashrama Dharma* could be traced from the Vedantic school. These concepts of *Varna* and *Ashrama Dharma* are

also reflected in Narayan's novels. Raju's sacrifice for the villagers of Mangla, Raja's sacrifice of hunting wild animals and his constant meditation, Jagan's detachment from the worldly matters, his recitation of the Bhagwad Gita and Margayya's last advice to his son - all represent their entering into *Sanyasthashrama* which is an Indian philosophical thought derived from the Vedanta.

Narayan has artistically woven the concept of *Moksha* in his novels. Adi Sankaracharya's *Adwaita* conceptualizes of *Nirguna Brahman* as the ultimate reality, the identity of the *Jiva* and *Brahman* and conception of *Moksha* as the merging of *Jiva* in the *Brahman*. The ideal of *Moksha* is central to all the Indian philosophical systems and doctrines with the single exception of *Charvaka*. All the systems are one in defining *Moksha* as an experimental comprehension of Ultimate Reality that is to be exclusively attained not by discursive knowledge but by an experience described as *Prajanana*, *Kevalagnana*, *Anubhuti* – a state of ultimate bliss, joy or liberation.

Narayan has conceptualized the theory of *Karma* as depicted in the Bhagwad Gita, which presents unambiguously a comprehensive ideal of true religion and in its conceptualization of Ultimate Reality and the ideal of morality. This most luminous philosophical poem specifies the fourfold path of detached action (*Niskama Karma Yoga*), the path of knowledge (*Jnan Yoga*), the path of devotion and dedication (*Bhakti Yoga*) for the attainment of the ultimate goal of *Moksha*. The theory of *Niskama Karma* i.e. detached, selfless action is pivotal to any discourse on the Bhagwad Gita. The *Karma Yogi* performs his duties in a detached manner acquiring in the process a state of indifference to pleasure or pain. Through detachment from the material sense

of ego, the *Yogi*, or follower of particular path of *Yoga* is able to transcend his illusory mortality and attachment to the material world and enter the realm of the Supreme. Raju is a *Nishkam Karma Yogi* in the sense he always promotes the interests, tastes and likings of others by sacrificing his own aspirations and desires. He promotes the research of Marco, the dancing talent of Rosie, the well being of the jail-mates and the villagers, and in the end sacrifices his life for the genuine and universal cause of humanity.

Narayan's novels also corroborate with the two Indian epics, The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the most convincing documents of spiritual, religious, social, political and ethical teachings in India. The Ramayana is a perfect encyclopedia of the learning of the ancient Indian sages, especially of the quintessential wisdom of the *Upanishads*, the *Vedants Sutras*, the Bhagvad Gita, the doctrines of *Advaita Vedanta* and so on. The Ramayana is also rightly regarded as *Dharma Shashtra*. As Sant Keshavdas opines, in The Esoteric Meaning of Ramayana, "The Ramayana is not a mere story. It is the story we live every moment of our lives." (www.hinduism.co.za/ramayana.htm)

The Mahabharata often described as the fifth *Veda* has recorded almost the entire political, social, moral and religious history of ancient India. This encyclopedia of life and knowledge of India is also known as *Arthashashtra*, *Dharmashashtra* and *Kamashashtra*. The fourfold objectives of human life – *Kama* (enjoyment), *Artha* (wealth), *Dharma* (ethical living) and *Moksha* (spiritual bliss), theories of four *Varnas* i.e. *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Sudra* and four *Ashramas* i.e. *Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa* attain credibility and authority in the Mahabharata.

Margayya's acute appetite for money, Raju's concerns with Rosie and Raja's hunger and anger as depicted in The Financial Expert, The Guide and A Tiger for Malgudi respectively represent the ideals of *Artha* and *Kama*. The spiritual transformation in these characters in the end promote the other two ideals, *Dharma* and *Moksha*.

Indian ethics also determine the behaviour, attitude and philosophy of life of common man in the society. In Sanskrit the word "*Dharma*" signifies the moral code of universe. Consequently, morality in an Indian philosophical context is co-related with every activity of life. Manu and Prasastapada are the two great social and moral thinkers of ancient India who have offered a detailed discourse on Hindu ethics. Manu has classified the duties of an individual as *Sadharana Dharma* and Prasastapada has propagated the concept of *Samanya Dharma* and *Vishesha Dharma*. Under the class of *Sadharana Dharma* or common duties, Manu enumerates ten duties – steadfastness (*dhairya*), forgiveness (*kshama*), application (*dama*), non-appropriation (*chouryabhava*), cleanliness (*shoucha*), sensuous appetites (*indriya-nigraha*), wisdom (*dhi*) learning (*vidya*), veracity (*satya*) and restraint of anger (*akrodha*). All these duties prescribed by Manu are significantly relevant for the attainment of an individual's own perfection. The life of Margayya, Nagaraj, Jagan, Raju and other protagonists in Narayan's novels protect and promote these duties.

The terms of literary and social discourse in pre and post-independence era in India have largely been determined by Gandhian philosophy and thought. Gandhism forms a significant part of post-independent or post-colonial discourse not only in India but in the Third World

as well and a large corpus of Indian writing in English over the years has been inspired by the Gandhian thought and ideology.

Narayan has imbibed the Gandhian philosophy in his distinctly inimitable style and manner. His fiction resonates with the wisdom of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagwad Gita, the Ramayana and the Mahbharata.

The important feature of all Narayan's novels is the setting and the locale. All his novels are located in the imaginary town of Malgudi, known for its past history, a symbol of antiquity. Here Lord Rama made the river Saryu flow by pulling an arrow from his quiver and scratching a line on the sand. It is the land where Gautam Buddha preached the sermon of compassion, Sankara highlighted the *Vedantic* philosophy, Christian missionaries advocated their religion, Mahatma Gandhi preached his doctrines of truth and non-violence. So Malgudi is not a modern fashionable town, but a town having moorings in the mythic, historic past of the country and is a place that provides an ideal setting or locale for the intellectual, philosophical, religious, ethical and moral activities of his characters. This fore-grounding in the ancient past of India through the imaginary town of Malgudi accrues to Narayan's novels a credibility or authenticity.

His characters at various levels of reality and circumstances reiterate or critique the Indian philosophical thought, religion, moral or social code. Philosophy in the Indian context is not confined to the dissemination of intellectual knowledge and wisdom only. The homocentricism and centrality of man is the perennial theme of Indian philosophy and it has been rightly averred that Indian philosophy is not merely a view of life but it is also a way

of life. Thus, for the protagonists, namely, Srinivas, Nataraj and Nagaraj in his respective novels Mr. Sampath, The Man-Eater of Malgudi and The World of Nagaraj philosophy is operative in their lives as a way of life. These characters have largely constructed their philosophy of life from the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagwad Gita and the two Indian epics, though the interpretation and the subsequent implementation of philosophy varies as per the personal needs, familial or social conditions as well as the power of comprehension and assimilation of his characters and protagonists.

Narayan's characters are classified into three distinct groups on the basis of their perspectives, activities and engagements in a family or society. Firstly, there are the chief protagonists who manifest specific philosophical vision in life that subsequently go on to expound and promote the Indian philosophical value system. Secondly, there are the characters who offer a resistance to the organic harmony of the Malgudian world thereby violating the ethical, moral system. Lastly, Narayan introduces common people who offer a critique of Indian philosophy.

Srinivas and Nataraj and Nagaraj, the practitioners of the philosophy of *Karma*, devise ways and means to counter the hostile alien forces of the universe in a philosophical way. Theirs' is the philosophy of quietism of acceptance not to be misunderstood or misinterpreted for defeatism. The victory of the protagonists in these three texts and the subsequent annihilation of the subversive forces is a vindication of the Indian philosophical value system. The concepts of *Karma*, *Mayic* philosophy, quietism of acceptance leading to self illumination, the conflict between good and evil and the journey of an individual into the self are valorized in these

texts. The *Varna Ashrama Dharmas* are intricately interwoven in the texts of Mr. Sampath and The Man Eater of Malgudi and The World of Nagaraj.

Narayan expounds and believes in the cyclic vision of life. Krishnan in The English Teacher, Margayya in The Financial Expert and Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets project the doctrines of *Karma*, *Punarjanma* and *Sansara*. These doctrines are Indian philosophical attempts to probe into the primordial riddle of the origin of the sufferings of an individual in the *Sansara*. Indian philosophy upholds the belief in the cyclic vision of the world, the individual and the self. The chain of events in the life of Krishnan, Margayya and Jagan consistently depicts a cyclic order which is the expression of an almost hermetic philosophical system, a classical exposition of Hindu equilibrium that survives the external shocks in a patient and peaceful manner. Narayan's novels delineate the gradual stages of evolution in the protagonists from the stage of *Brahmacharya Ashrama* to the stage of *Grihastha Ashrama* as well as *Vanaprastha Ashrama* to the finale of liberation, self realization, *Moksha* in the modern context.

The final aim of life according to all the Indian philosophical systems is to release the ultimate bliss, the *Moksha*. In this context, Narayan imparts a new direction to the concept of *Moksha*. *Moksha* in the Indian philosophical context is self-centered. Krishnan's systematized acceptance of a job as a teacher in a kindergarten school is an attempt to redefine the concept of *Moksha* in the contemporary social context. Similarly, Jagan, the vendor of sweets, a man of worldly affairs renounces the world to enter the *Vanaprastha Ashrama*. His new *Janma* completes the full cyclic vision of life.

The overall impact of Gandhian philosophy and thought in terms of literary discourse in India can not be undermined. Gandhi in the contemporary times has become a legend, Behind the chimeric narrative mode of his fiction, Narayan makes a sincere attempt to sensitize the readers with the nuances of Gandhism. Narayan has translated and transcreated in his fiction the multi-dimensional paradigms of Gandhism in his novels. He posits the need to contextualize Gandhi in the modern times, in much the same way the concepts of *Moksha* or *Vanaprastha* need to be reoriented in the present context.

According to Narayan Gandhism does not simply correspond to spinning wheel, wearing *Khadi* and eulogizing Gandhian ideology. Sriram in Waiting for the Mahatma in pre-independence era and Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets in post-independence era initially take Gandhism for a ride. Sriram ushers into the Gandhian camp for ulterior motives, Jagan follows the Gandhian way of life to the minutest details without grasping the true essence of Gandhism. Through Sriram and Jagan Narayan exposes the pseudo Gandhians. However, Jagan and Sriram gradually undergo transformation from the class of pseudo-Gandhians in their search for truth and self-realization.

Moreover, Narayan projects Gandhi's anti-imperialistic stance in his critique of the Western educational system in The English Teacher. Similarly, the inherent discourses on colonization and de-colonization found in The Waiting for the Mahatma and The English Teacher posit the need to reorient the history of colonized nations with a view to expose the imperialistic biases and their subversive strategies.

A number of Narayan's novels that are not centralized on the Gandhian theme also adhere to the Gandhian ideology. In A Tiger for Malgudi and in The Man-Eater of Malgudi, the victory of good and the annihilation of evil could be treated as a vindication of Gandhian ideology and principles.

The thematic concerns in Narayan's fiction extensively explore the *Karma* philosophy of self-realization or self-enlightenment which is considered to be the ultimate goal in an individual's life. The final goal of life for an individual is the attainment of release from the recurrent cycle of birth and death. Narayan's fiction substantiates the conceptualization of *Moksha* and his unshakable faith in the existence of God. The Guide and A Tiger for Malgudi manifest the essentials of Indian philosophy. The protagonist in The Guide dies a martyr to the cause of Hindu thought. The Vedantic philosophy of *Moksha* or self and self-realization, the concepts of *Maya* or illusion, *Avidya* or ignorance and the ideal of *Nishkama Karma* or action without attachment, the four ideals of *Purushartha* and other Hindu concepts such as ascetic purification, *Yoga*, renunciation, cyclic progression of life and death – all these philosophical ideals have been artistically inseminated in these novels.

A Tiger of Malgudi can be regarded as a practical document of the Bhagwad Gita. The novel offers the most enlightening overt discourse on the four ideals of *Kama*, *Artha*, *Dharma* and *Moksha*, the tradition of *Guru-Shishya*, the three *Gunas* and the objectives of *Ashrama Dharma*, the concept of *Sansara*, renunciation and detachment. The power of *Yoga* and the philosophical discourses on the Bhagwad Gita through the autobiography of a tiger are also expressed in the novel.

The quintessential lesson of renunciation leading to final liberation or *Moksha* is valorized in Narayanian fiction. The protagonists in Mr. Sampath, The Man-Eater of Malgudi and The World of Nagaraj are philosophers in their own right. Narayan's projects these ordinary people engaged in ordinary pursuits of life who have no idea about *Moksha* but their philosophical vision surely imparts to them a purpose and meaning in life. Narayan has improvised and re-modified the concept of *Moksha* in The Vendor of Sweets, The Financial Expert and The English Teacher. Jagan, Margayya and Krishnan attain *Moksha* in their own ways in terms of detachment from worldly affairs. They achieve a stage in the end where they remain unmoved and indifferent to all adverse conditions. Raju in The Guide and the tiger Raja in A Tiger for Malgudi acquire the maturity of saints which could be described as *Satvik* life, a deeply religious and spiritual life corresponding to the Indian philosophical paradigms of renunciation and *Moksha*.

Thus, Narayan's novels can be studied as a critique of Indian philosophy and its inter-related discipline of *Karma* theory. Narayan's admission that there is a nucleus of absolute truth in all his novels substantiates his faith in the contents of Indian philosophy. Narayanian religion is cemented in the culture and philosophy of India and it is fully in conformity with the essentials of Hinduism. The tension between the one and many, a perennial theme of Hinduism operates quietly throughout Narayan's fiction, the author's optimistic view of life traces the will of God in all matters, actions and ends, is a marked feature of Hindu religion.

The ethical and moral code in Narayanian fiction reiterates the basic trends of Hindu ethics which is founded on a threefold system of spiritual life

encompassing the stages of social, moral and transcendental. Majority of Narayanan characters adhere to the *Varna Ashrama Dharma*, *Sadharana Dharma* and *Vishesha Dharma* as per the Hindu ethical code specified by Manu and Prasaspada. His fictional texts critique the problematizing issues or facets of Indian philosophy, religion and ethics, the four ideals of *Artha*, *Kama*, *Dharma* and *Moksha* and the positionality of an individual in an *Ashrama*.

Narayan is, thus, deeply entrenched in the Indian philosophical system which is rendered clearer once one witnesses the originality of the texts, the motives of characters, the ideals of the protagonists or the reactions of the Malgudians in a particular situation or a context. An analysis of his novels unleashes the spontaneous flow of philosophy of *Karma*. His novels offer us an insight into the wisdom and knowledge of the epics, the *Puranas* and the *Upanishads*.

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