

**INFLUENCE OF GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY
ON THE NOVELS OF R.K. NARAYAN**

A THESIS

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Submitted by

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Debahuti Brahma has prepared the thesis, ***INFLUENCE OF GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE NOVELS OF R.K.NARAYAN*** for the Ph.D degree with my general supervision and with strict conformity with the rules laid down for the purpose. This work is the product of her own investigation, and it has not been submitted to any other University or institution for research degree.

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Declaration

I do hereby declared that the thesis entitled *Influence of Gandhian Philosophy on the Novels of R.K.Narayan* is done under the supervision of Dr. Zothanchhingi Khiangte from the Department of English, Bodoland University, Kokrajhar is my original work and has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associate ship, fellowship in any institution of higher learning.

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Certificate of the guide.

Declaration

Acknowledgement

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CHAPTER-I

Introduction: A Brief Overview on the Life and Works of R.K.Narayan

Gandhian philosophy-

Mahatma Gandhi was a freedom fighter, a philosopher, a spiritualist and above all a practitioner of truth and non-violence. Gandhism is a body of ideas and principles that describes the inspiration, vision and the life work of Mahatma Gandhi. The term Gandhism also encompasses what Gandhian ideas, words and action means to people around the world and how they use them for guidance in building their own future. Gandhian philosophies are universal and timeless philosophies, it is set in the Indian social context. They hold the ideals of truth and non-violence which is relevant to all humankind. Gandhian philosophy is a philosophy of self-transformation. It is the task of the individual to make a sincere attempt to live according to the principles of truth and non-violence which Gandhi regarded as ultimate reality. The four main elements of Gandhian philosophy are truth, non-violence, *sarvodaya* (progress of all) and *satyagraha* (holding onto truth) which constitute Gandhi and his teachings.

Mahatma Gandhi was a dominant figure in many of the major novels of Indian English writers. His philosophies and his fight for Indian independence emerged as a key theme in the writings of the Indian English writers. R.K.Narayan is also very much influenced by the philosophies of Mahatma Gandhi which has its roots in the Hindu religion and the Indian social context.

The thesis is an attempt to depict the influence of Gandhian ideals and his philosophies on R.K.Narayan and which is reflected in his select novels. It also highlights the role Gandhi in Indian freedom movement and how the characters of the novelist are influenced by it and what are the impact of Gandhian freedom movement of non-violence on the common people of India.

The present study is a literary one and the method applied is analytical. It is based on the primary sources. The study is based on the theoretical concept of Gandhian ideology from philosophical and socio-psychological perspective.

R.K. Narayanaswamy was born in Madras in his grandmother's house on October 10, 1906. As his mother had several other children, his grandmother, in order to provide her some relief from additional parenting responsibility, undertook to bring up young Narayan herself. He grew up in a large rambling house in an old section of Madras, with a peacock and a monkey for company. His grandmother combined love with discipline, supervised his studies, and taught him Sanskrit verses and told him stories from the epics. When Narayan was in his early teens, he moved to Mysore where his father had become the headmaster of a prestigious high school. Mysore was very different from Madras, with much natural and man-made beauty, and Narayan rambled around a good deal, tried writing poetry which was much appreciated by his friends. He also had the full run of the school- library and read a number of British and American magazines which his father had thoughtfully ordered. Reading and spending time with his brothers and friends was his main occupation at this time. He was not a particularly good student, and eventually, after he got his BA degree, he was talked into accepting a

teaching job which he promptly gave up after a couple of weeks. To provide for his large joint family he became a reporter for a Madras Journal. This hardly brought much money, but it enabled him to meet a wide variety of people, many of whom provided him with characters for his novels. It was in one of those ventures that he met and fell in love with a girl whom he saw drawing water from a street-tap. He eventually married her against all astrological warnings. The marriage lasted for only five years. A four year old baby girl was the legacy of the marriage, and Narayan regained his equanimity by his recognition of the child's need of him, and through some spiritual experiences in Madras.

Narayan's native language was Tamil, though he was proficient both in Kannada and English as well. However, he chose English for his artistic expression. This choice of English language did not make Narayan any less rooted to his motherland. He was as much an Indian in his thoughts and feelings. His characters and setting were drawn from the native land which made them 'recognizably autochthonous'.¹

R.K. Narayan has long been regarded as the best Indian writer in the English Language. The adjective 'Indian' needs to be heavily underscored on several counts. Narayan is neither Anglo-Indian nor Indo-Anglican; he is very much an Indian both in spirit and thought. He does not write with an eye on foreign audience, though his writings were published abroad and widely read abroad. He does not choose his themes nor distort them in order to please his western readers who continue to treat us Indians as if we are inferior breed. He deals with big themes that has been happening in India, but with deceptive simplicity. Ved Mehta has written of R.K. Narayan, "He seems to carry his home, his cosmos, on his back, as did the ageless Swamis."² He is not only a great

novelist, but also a contented and simple man. The remarkable simplicity in his personal life is described by K. Natwar Singh in his interview with *Times of India*.³ Singh recalls how he went to meet Narayan at his home when he was greeted by a small man with bare feet who happened to be Narayan himself. This description gives one an idea of how unassuming a man Narayan was, unlike many pompous men with airs of self-importance.

Narayan's stories are uniformly compact and are told in his usual seemingly artless style. He sometimes uses the 'Talkative Man' as narrator in the manner of Woodhouse and except in 'Uncle's Letters' where the epistolary mode is employed, He does not attempt any radical experiments in narration. Though Narayan's stories are always readable, they are not as significant an achievement as his major novels. What one misses, even in the best of them, is that transformation of irony from a simple stance into a meaningful vision of life. He is one of the few writers in India who take their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instrument, pursuing with a sense of technical perfection. There is a standard of excellence below which Narayan cannot possibly lower himself. After some hand-to-mouth journalism for a few years, Narayan published his first novel, *Swami and Friends*, in 1935. His early novels include *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The Dark Room* and *The English Teacher*. The mid-period novels comprise *Mr. Sampath*, *The Financial Expert*, *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *The Guide*. The later novels of Narayan are based on the classical myth-the inevitable victory of the God over the evil, the law of life and the concept of Karma. The later novels *The Man-eater of Malgudi*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *The Painter of Signs* and *A Tiger for Malgudi* embody the religious and cultural glory of Hindu society. *Swami and Friends* created for the first time the famous 'Malgudi'.

R.K. Narayan frames his fictional imagination within the municipal limit of Malgudi. It is an 'imaginary regional locale' like the 'Lake District', of Wordsworth, 'boarder countries' of Sir Walter Scott, 'The Wessex' of Thomas Hardy or 'The Five Towns' of Arnold Bennet. As an imaginary south Indian town, it is situated between Madras and the Tiruchirapalli. Narayan's all characters - students, teachers, artists, *sannyasis* (hermit), dreamers and realists all live within its limits.

Several attempts have been made to identify the originality of Malgudi. In an interview to All India Radio, Narayan himself explains that "his Malgudi is a small temple town situated on the bank of a holy river, like Nanjangud. It is also a University town, like Mysore." ⁴ It has been the subject of all absorbing interest for readers and reviewers and hence they were all trying to locate the possible originality of Malgudi. But actually Malgudi has a viable existence in the geography of Narayan's imagination, which recreates the town and its environs successfully for the reader, and that is all that matters. ⁵

After *Swami and Friends* two more novels of Narayan appeared in quick succession: *Bachelor of Arts* (1936) and *The Dark Room* (1938). Then the war started and Narayan was apparently obliged to bide his time. He edited the short-lived 'Indian Thought,' wrote for the papers occasionally, and conserved his powers. The end of the war meant the return of spring, and *The English Teacher* (1945) was followed by *Mr. Sampat* (1949), *The Financial Expert* (1952), and *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955). An American tour was presently organized by the Rockefeller Foundation, and the fruits of

this adventure are *The Guide* (1958) and *My Dateless Diary* (1960). He has also collected two volumes of his short stories and a volume of his weekly causeries, *Next Sunday* (1960). He has been translated into several European and Indian language, and he had a considerable audience in Britain and in U.S.A.

In this backdrop of political turmoil, literature could not distance itself as an exclusive property of sensuous art, removed from the contemporary scenario. Narayan himself admits that during such a period, the subject of fiction tended to become more political because it was the prevailing mood and other themes that usually formed the subject matter of fiction, like the comic sensibility to life or the psychological probing of an individual soul and so on, were pushed to the background. However, after independence the writers in India hoped to express their thoughts and feelings, stories about the way of life of people and their psychology with whom they were familiar, to a larger audience outside. Whether this is an altogether correct description of conditions in India or not, it certainly is indicative of Narayan's art. His is an art that deals with careful exploration of his characters' psyche and a narrative of his contemporary times with a subtle dash of humour. He chooses for his subject matter provincial towns whose essential atmosphere he sets to explore and to present these small groups of inhabitants with all their foibles and oddities. In his skilful hands, the ordinary becomes unique and the most prosaic becomes tragic and poetic. For his imaginative maneuverings, he creates a fictional town of Malgudi, from where he can give wings to his fanciful delight in creating unique characters out of the ordinary citizens of the quaint little municipal town of Malgudi. These inhabitants of Malgudi become etched on memory because, with all their local trappings and foibles, they represent the universal man. Their kinship to every

man is essentially what makes them so endearing and in this sense, Malgudi can be said to represent every Indian town rather than a definite locale.

Narayan takes his craft very seriously. He has often shaped his own life in the light of the requirements and demands of art. Among the many other themes his writing deals with, he himself becomes a subject of exploration. His own experiences and encounters with people, his relationship with family and friends and his worldview all form part of his art. This does not, however, mean that these experiences of his life are put down into his work as autobiographical statements; instead they act as a kind of melody to his art. His is not just a historical account or a mere autobiographical rhetoric of life but reorganization and reshaping of these experiences and observations in a colorful spectrum of words. It is this 'refashioning' of life that turns Narayan's works from a 'self-expression' to an art as Northrop Frye had rightly observed in regard to Wordsworth. The self becomes subsumed in the artistic expression.

R.K. Narayan started his career as a novelist dealing primarily with the atmosphere of school and colleges. Therefore, in all of his early novels like *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The Dark Room* and *The English Teacher* his characters mostly consist of school boys, teachers, college boys and college teachers. The novels present a sociological study of the pre-independence era. This period is the formative period of his career. *Swami and Friends* (1935) deals with the socio-economic condition of pre-independence India and traces the various stages of the life of its protagonist, Swaminathan. It is in the typical style of Narayan that he chooses first a central-figure and then prepares other events accordingly. Narayan concerns himself mostly with the

presentation of the various stages of his protagonists' lives and their evolutions into the human being they become. In *Swami and Friends*, Swami, the central character is portrayed as a person who lives in Malgudi, which at that time was ruled by the English and therefore the atmosphere of being in an English environment prevailed in many aspects of the character's life, especially in his educational upbringing. The school where he was admitted, Albert Mission School, is presented as being very keen in converting their students to Christianity and used to abjuring the Hindu gods. Narayan appears to disapprove such motivated teaching. Narrating from his own experience about the motivated academic atmosphere of Christian Mission School, Narayan writes:

Most of the Christian students also detested us. The Scripture classes were mostly devoted to attacking and lampooning Hindu Gods, and violent abuses were heaped on idol worshiper as a prelude to glorifying Jesus.⁶

A lively presentation of the prevailing mood is seen in the novel. This was the time when the English rulers were obstinately trying to remain in the country. The movement for independence was spreading everywhere in the country. People were becoming aware of their personal rights and hence more and more people were joining the stream of the freedom movement. The hero, Swaminathan, is sharply aware of the political disturbances that affect Malgudi also. An analysis of the novel reveals that *Swami and Friends* is a fine sociological study of the academic atmosphere of the

early'30s. The novel presents to us the religious interest of Christian teachers in pre-independence era which overshadowed the purpose of education.

The Bachelor of Arts (1937) is a novel about ordinary everyday incidents in the a Hindu South Indian household, told with much charm and wit. The hero, Chandran, is a progressive college student. He falls in love with a girl named Malati and ignoring the traditional norms of society, wants to “set an example by marrying this girl whatever her caste or sect might be.”⁷ The hero’s father Venkatachela Iyer, the retired District Judge of Malgudi, with his quiet dignity and fondness for gardening, may be any Hindu father. Chandran, his only son, with good physique and a university degree but unemployed may be any young man. Chandran’s mother represents any Hindu mother whose only wish in life is to see her son married off to the most beautiful young girl who brings the best dowry and Susila happens to satisfy all the criteria. The novels show us the norms, manners and the conventions of a South Indian middle class family. The real theme of the novel is reaction to the traditional marriage custom of India and the family relationship that of son and parents. In *The Bachelor of Arts* the novelist shows Indian Society’s orthodox belief in astrology. It also shows that how free choice of emotional relation is made limited by fate and astrology and the choice of life-partner is determined by the mercy of astrologers.

The Dark Room (1938) is a study of the Indian society where the husband is stereotyped as the uncontested patriarch of the family, whose words are not to be disobeyed. It presents the typical Indian attitude which glorifies the authority of the man over the woman. It is considered a sin for an Indian wife to disobey her husband. This is

not uncommon in other societies as well where the woman is economically dependent on the husband, because of which she remains helpless and has to gulp down what she does not like.⁸ The life of an Indian housewife is presented is lucidly presented in this novel. Narayan assumes the stance of a detached observer and aims to focus the reader's attention to the feelings and emotions of the Indian couple with all their stereotypical attitudes and trappings of conventions. Narayan is a minute observer of society and shows all minor events which an ordinary eye is more prone to miss. Narayan ironically satirizes some absurd systems of Hindu families. The novel is simply a sociological study of the Indian concept of family and what it terms as happiness.

The English Teacher (1945) is basically a love story but it is unlike other love stories one reads. The traditional idea of a love story suggests premarital love that may or may not, consequently, lead to marriage. But in this novel, the love story the author deals with is the love story of a married couple, Krishnan and Susila. Their marriage was an arranged one and they began to fall in love only after their marriage. Krishnan is a lecturer in English in the Albert Mission College of Malgudi and he is filled with zeal to see change in the society he lives in. He was in opposition against the British system of education, though he himself was the product of the same education which, in his words, "makes up morons, cultural morons,"⁹ and his profession as a teacher was rejected as "a fraud practiced for a consideration of hundred rupees."¹⁰ Narayan was sensitive to the problem of illiteracy, which was one of the biggest problems India was facing and he made it starkly evident in this novel. Since Narayan is a regional novelist, he is closely acquainted with the various mannerisms of South Indian Hindu Community. This acute awareness seems to be vividly evident in *The English Teacher* in his portrayal of Susila

as a typical Indian wife. Susila is a stereotype of a devoted Hindu wife for whom her family and her domestic duty come first. *The English Teacher* is a peep into “a little middle class home” and a lively portrayal of “the comic irony of the petty problems of the daily business of living.”¹¹

The mid-period novels of R.K. Narayan, except *Waiting for the Mahatma*, are delightful stories of three cunning sharks whose greatest fault was their over-confidence. Iyengar’s description about the characters in the three novels of this period, *Mr. Sampath*, *The Financial Expert* and *The Guide* seems to be the most apt:

We enter an exotic world of half-headed or half-hearted dreamers, artists, financier, speculators, twisters, adventurers eccentrics, cranks, cinema-stars, Sanyasis, several of them not Malgudi products at all but staying or imported from outside.¹²

Waiting for the Mahatma is a study of socio-political condition of the immediate pre-and post-1947 whereas the other three novels are the study of three shrewd money spinners.

Mr. Sampath (1949) is the story of an unscrupulous and cunning rogue, who is a victim of high ambition and over-confidence without adequate corresponding abilities. Mr. Sampath is seen as indecisive and fickle. He jumps from one career to another

without ever being able to come to a definite decision. He considers the question of career to be an embarrassing subject to seriously deal with, as embarrassing as “a physiological detail.”¹³ He tried a hand in agriculture, banking, teaching and law, but each time he felt it as a waste of time and tried his hand on another which looked more suitable and more appealing only to give it up again. Srinivas, an idealist, is another important character of the novel who lives with his wife and children. The role of Srinivas contributes to the structure of the novel as he integrates the plot. All the characters in the novel are connected to him one way or the other.¹⁴

Narrating the story of an over-ambitious cunning Sampath, Narayan ironically preaches us that an evil way always ends into misery and trouble. He also satirizes the tendency of extra-marital relations in our society.

The Financial Expert (1952) satires the modern society for its unquenchable desire for material wealth.¹⁵ It is a story about a cunning business man, who without possessing the corresponding ability is over-confident to earn enormous wealth. The main character of the novel Margayya, who wished to become rich in a short period of time, started lending money to people on high interest. But he was not able to continue his business for a long period of time and eventually failed. Both Sampath and Margayya are common men who dreamed to achieve great heights without much labour on their part but their high ambition crashed them to the ground.¹⁶ The novel seems to warn the people the danger of the existing ambition for earning more and more money in a very short time. Narayan wants to show that a man without corresponding ability cannot

succeed in earning desired wealth and power. He also draws our attention towards the evils arising out of the wealth.

In the novel *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1953) Narayan explores the socio-economic condition of the people of India before and after independence; it is a story about an average young man Sriram and his beloved Bharati, written against the backdrop of the Gandhian image. It is purely a political novel which highlights the influence of Gandhi and the Gandhian movement on the people of India. Narayan reveals, through his careful exploration, the impact made by Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophies to the different sections of the society. In the novel, Sriram's teacher was appreciative of his joining the congress which is evident in his words of motivation to Sriram, "I am proud to see you here my boy. Join Congress, work for the country. You will go far, God bless you."¹⁷ However, the same opinion about Gandhi is not held by all sections of people. For instance, Sriram's grandmother holds an entirely different opinion on Gandhi. She disapproved of Sriram joining Gandhi's movement and reminded him that the Mahatma preached dangerously because she found that his attempt to bring the untouchables into the temples was bordering on dangerous grounds for the society.¹⁸ From her words, the picture of some sections of the society who are apprehensive of the drastic social changes brought forth by Gandhi is viewed with disdain and doubt.

The novel is conspicuously divided into the two parts based on the theme - the Mahatma Gandhi and his social and political activities as one part and the love-story of Sriram and Bharati as the other. These two seemingly unrelated parts are connected by the figure of Mahatma Gandhi, who is the central character in the novel and all events in

the story revolve around him. Bharati, the female protagonist of the novel, who, in order of importance in the novel, is next to Mahatma Gandhi; she is an ardent supporter of Mahatma Gandhi. For Bharati, her priority lies with Mahatma Gandhi and the National Movement and nothing overweighs that, not even her affair with Sriram. The hero Sriram is simply a shadow of Bharati, who for the sake of his love, follows her and gets involved in the National Movement.

Waiting for the Mahatma reminiscences the author's own experiences during the period of the National Movement. With Gandhi at the background throughout the novel, Narayan seems to create a live scene of the Movement and its hero, the Mahatma. He adds a liberal dose of detailed descriptions about the people's attitude and temperament of the time which makes the novel very lively and holds the reader's attention.

The Guide (1958) explores new themes which were different from the earlier ones; it brings out the ironies of a modern Indian life¹⁹ as well as a tradition that does not distinctly demarcate the line between the comic and the tragic.²⁰ Like other novels of Narayan, *Mr. Sampath* and *The Financial Expert*, the hero of the novel Raju rises from average to the most distinguished position and then reverts to the original position passing through different stages in the society. The principal character, Raju, is a romantic doubled with a rascal like his fictional predecessors, Margayya and Sampath. Trying to help a rich visitor, Marco, in his researches, Raju is involved in a tangle of new relationships. Rosie, Marco's wife, becomes Raju's lover. *The Guide* uses a technique similar to the 20th century 'stream of consciousness' that brings flashbacks of the past into the present that produces an air of suspense mixed with anticipation.

The later novels of R.K. Narayan are based on the classical myths- The inevitable victory of the good over the evil, the law of life and concept of cyclical existence and the four stages of human life. His later novels which were written during 1961 to 1983 embody the religious and cultural glory of Hindu society. The novels are marked with maturity in fictional imagination.

The Man Eater of Malgudi (1961) has a definite sustained mythical structure. There is the opposition between the good and the evil. M.K Naik describes the novel as “an impressive fictional statement dealing with ethical issues such as the fate of evil and the question of human relationship, and the precepts and practice of the entire business of living.”²¹ The novel takes the reader to the intricacies of the society, its situations and problems neatly pictured with characters drawn from different spheres of Indian life, who inhabit the fictional town of Malgudi. Vasu, the taxidermist, is about six feet tall has a tanned face, large powerful eyes, a large forehead and a crop of unkept hair and his bull neck and hammer-fist looks like a *rakshasa* (demon). He is dashing, assertive and callous and lacks in social morality. Nataraj is a friendly and unambitious man who could not explain himself to sordid and calculating people of his society. Nataraj runs a printing press and lives with his wife and a little son, the traditional extended family. Nataraj falls into problem by the dangerous activities of Vasu and he does not know how to deal with the situation. The concept of ‘*Kama*’ (desire) finds an expression in the novel. We see how Nataraj, a man of good character, is found deviating when he sees Rangī, the prostitute, at a close distance. It also shows several evils of society. These mark the life of common people residing in the society of Malgudi.

The Vendor of Sweets (1967) traces how Gandhi's name is degraded and used for the self interests of individuals who engage in corruption. Gandhi's values are used to promote their interests and his preachings are conveniently twisted to their advantage. Basically, the novel highlights the corrupted Indian life of the sixties in a country which has just come out of the clutches of the colonizers under the leadership of Gandhi. The country is pictured as a nation led by leaders who swear by *Bhagawat Gita* and take the name of Gandhi but debase the holy book and him every time for their personal gains.²²

The Vendor of Sweets continues the Gandhian philosophy after the *Waiting for the Mahatma*. The hero Jagan is a prosperous owner of a sweetmeat shop who calls Gandhi "my master". Jagan looks like a caricature of Mahatma Gandhi, he is clad in Khadi (homespun cotton cloth) and with the Bhagawat Gita in hands; he runs a sweetmeat shop in Malgudi. He has a son Mali who is very average young man. He is a representative of such a class of young Indian men who are captivated by western culture and wealth, make very big plans for the improvement of their own prospects and in this process sometimes criticize their own country. The novel shows us the changes that took place in the post- 1947 society of India. It also highlights that how the Gandhian philosophy is exploited by the people for their own benefits. We also see through this novel the conflict between the old and new generation in their outlook to life and society. Thus, the novel is a fine sociological study of the post- independence period of Indian society and the people.

The Painter of Signs (1967) is a novel which underlines the problem of population increase and problems arising out of it. Raman, the hero of the novel, is a young man, unattached painter of sign who lives with his aunt. He is rather weak and

non-heroic among all the Narayan's major figures. He is fascinated by Daisy and her modern attitude and falls desperately in love with her. Daisy is presented as a modern woman who looks sophisticated. She reveals nothing much about her past and made her quite mysterious. She claims to be a non-believer in 'love', for she sees romantic feelings as just a concoction of the literary man. *The Painter of Signs* is a fine study of a typical sophisticated girl whose tendency is to bid farewell to the tradition and existing norms of society. The novel shows us the mentality of modern girls and also of the girls of days to come. It also highlights Hindu's religious attitude and the problem of population increase and its drawbacks.

A Tiger For Malgudi (1983) is a classic written under the influence of philosophical Indian myths and religious parable. The novel, written in an allegorical mask, shows Narayan's pure spirit of Hinduism. The story begins with an aged tiger Raja lying in cage contemplating on its past, its cub hood and wild days in the jungle, and later life in captivity as a circus star. It attains freedom when it breaks loose from a film-shooting camp and wanders into the town. The terror-stricken public attempts to get it shot but an ascetic appear on the scene and adopt it as a companion after protecting it. Its master becomes a *Sannyasi* (A Hindu religious mendicant). Narayan shows how some fake *Sannyasis* dupe people to grind their axes. The novel highlights the religious and cultural glory of Hindu Society. But it also points out some evils associated with it.

It would be right to say that in Narayan's writings, rather than the protagonists, Malgudi, the place, seems to be the real 'hero'. On the surface, all things seem to undergo change, including humans and their affairs, while there are those that seem to defy

change, for instance landmarks like the Sarayu, the Hills, the Jungles, and the Grove that seem unalterable.

However, on closer scrutiny, even the characters seem to transmigrate from body to body, name to name they seem to lose their sharp distinctions and a sort of haze seems to pervade. Swami is also the Bachelor of Arts: he is presently Krishnan the English Teacher. The agreeable rascal Mr. Sampath is also Margayya and later Railway Raju the Guide, Vasu the Taxidermist, and Mali the novel-writing machinist. The disappointed lover of *Bachelor of Arts* becomes a *Sadhu* (a religious ascetic) for a change: the discharged convict is taken for a *Sadhu* in *The Guide*: and in between, there is the true, historical Mahatma of *Waiting for the Mahatma*. ‘*Sadhu*,’ ‘*Sannyasi*’ ‘*Swami*’ (an ascetic) and ‘*Mahatma*’ (great soul) are names that can cover many sins and describe many virtues. Susila of *The English Teacher*, Brinda of *The Financial Expert* and Bharati of *Waiting for the Mahatma* are all variations on the theme of Indian girlhood, and Shanta of *The Dark Room*, Shanti of *Mr. Sampath* and Rosie of *The Guide* are also kindred souls. There are no extremely ‘good’ or ‘bad’ characters in Narayan’s novels. Human nature is presented variously and interestingly and memorably, and there is no overt condemnation or praise. Malgudi and the community of Malgudi seem to predominate in his various fiction and stories that in itself provides a kaleidoscope of engaging tales of humanity.

Waiting for the Mahatma is another novel that stands apart, though chronologically, it falls between *The Financial Expert* and *The Guide*. *Waiting for the Mahatma* is exceptional because the action strays out of Malgudi, and the two central

characters, Bharati and Sriram are existentially 'engaged' in politics. Other novelist, whether writing in English or in the regional languages, have likewise exploited the magic of Gandhi's name and presence, but seldom is the Gandhian role subsumed in the fiction as a whole. Gandhi is too big to be given a minor part: on the other hand, he is sure to turn the novel into a biography if he is given a major part. The best thing for the contemporary novelist is to keep Gandhi in the background but make his influence felt indirectly. 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. Since the stress is not merely on Gandhi's influence but on Gandhi himself -we see him in Malgudi stationed in Nallappa's groove and we see him, years later, in Delhi on his way to prayer on the fatal day, 30 January 1948. *Waiting for the Mahatma* is an ambitious effort, and an impressive feat; but one also feels that Narayan's art -now denied the security of Malgudi and catapulted into Gandhian or terrorist political action -betrays unsureness and perplexity.

Waiting for the Mahatma is written in Narayan's gentle comic style. An unusual feature of this novel is the participation of Gandhi as a character. His revolutionary ideas and practices are contrasted with the views of traditionalist such as the town's notables and Sriram's grandmother. The novel is set in the South Indian village of Malgudi during the concluding years of the country's struggle for Independence from the British Empire.

Sriram, the male protagonist of the novel is an orphan who lived with his grandmother since childhood. His father was killed in Mesopotamia fighting for the British, and his grandmother used to receive a monthly military pension from the day

ever since. She saves every penny received as a pension in an account set up for Sriram, and now as he is twenty years old, she signs the account over to him. Sriram, feeling wealthy and quite independent, strolls around the town until he is stopped by a beautiful girl asking for a contribution. She is collecting money for Mahatma Gandhi's work, as Mahatmaji is coming to visit the people of Malgudi. Sriram is not familiar about Gandhi, or about Indian independence, the elimination of the caste system, or non-violent civil disobedience movement. He is only interested in the girl who is collecting coins for a cause. He wants to know her name, her age, her caste, her horoscope and whether she is free to marry him. He falls in love at first glance. He follows her into a large gathering of people, all waiting for the arrival of "the great soul" the Mahatma Gandhi. The crowd suddenly cries out in one great voice, "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*" (Victory to Mahatma Gandhi). After his arrival, the great man begins to clap his hands rhythmically and loudly and asks the crowd to do the same, with vigor and spirit. He prompts them with, "Not good. Not enough. I like to see more vigor in your arms, more rhythm, and more spirit. It must be like the drum beats of the non-violent soldiers marching to cut the chains that bind Mother India." ²³ Sriram eventually finds Bharati, the girl of his dreams, in Gandhi's entourage. He asks to volunteer, to work for the cause, and charms Bharati by his obvious romantic intentions. She, however, has more serious matters on her mind. She brings Sriram to meet Gandhi after he promises to tell the truth in all things. He suddenly blurts out that he wants to work and live in the ashram so that he can be close to Bharati. Gandhi responds that Bharati must be pleased to have such a fine friend. He will permit Sriram to travel with him and his followers for a few weeks if his grandmother permits him to go. When the Mahatma finally leaves the area, Sriram becomes Bharati's disciple, and she his Guru, with the great man's blessing. His parting words to the boy are, "Spin

and read *Bhagavad-Gita* and utter *Ram nam* (the name Rama) continuously and then you will know what to do in life.”²⁴ He promises to write to both of them, and he does.

As the struggle for independence gains in intensity, Gandhiji gets arrested which incites many of his followers to court arrest in support of their leader. One of them is Bharati. Now that Bharati chooses to be jailed, Sriram is left alone to contemplate on the ideals he has dedicated himself to. He tries his best to remain faithful to these ideals he adopted, basically for the sake of Bharati, but his idea of non-violent resistance differs from Gandhi's and Bharati's.

In the novel, although Mahatma Gandhi looms in the background throughout the narrative, it is at a primary level a story of the common man and his reactions to the greater than life figure of the Mahatma. The presence of the Mahatma adds to the fascination and excitement in the novel. At the same time, Narayan also draws our attention to the fact that all the populace is not influenced so powerfully as a few are. There were also those who were not the least bothered about the political happenings of the time and they were those whose primary concerns were the basic needs of everyday life like food, shelter, clothing and health. The problems of the larger world may have occasional effects on them but not for long. Narayan gives a realistic portrayal of the small village and its concerns, with its trials and tribulations juxtaposed against Gandhi's larger concern. Narayan reminds his readers the truth that inspite of the appeal of the Mahatma, much of the common population is quite lukewarm about the Mahatma Gandhi and his National Movement. Trying to establish a difference between Raja Rao's and

Narayan's treatment of Gandhian influence in their novels, Meenakshi Mukherjee compares Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* with Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*:

“..... these two novels deals basically with the theme:
the impact of Gandhian thought on an ordinary Indian.
In Narayan's book this impact is felt by an individual,
in Raja Rao's, by a community.”²⁵

Narayan's social consciousness is maintained under a limitation. There is nothing in his works of angry reformist feelings which is found in the fiction of Mulk Raj Anand, with his passionate concern for the villages with the ferocious poverty and cruelties of cast, with orphans, untouchables and urban beggars and laborers. Narayan's work is removed of the passionate indignation that Anand feels against social injustice and colonial rule. If Mulk Raj Anand is a writer of underdogs and Raja Rao is recognized for religious inclination, Narayan prefers to sit at the fence. He simply shows us what happens in our society in a detached manner. But he is aware of the causes of suffering, not of only middle class society, but underdogs as well.

In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, while dealing with the theme of Gandhian freedom struggle, Narayan brings in too many subjects than he could successfully deal with, which ultimately results in the novel ending up as a conventional love story of Sriram and Bharati, who both do not leave much impact as strong characters. Perhaps Narayan aimed to depict the freedom struggle of 1942 but his picture fails to evoke much emotions. Rather, Narayan's fiction is imbued with a strong “sense of place.’ His setting,

Malgudi, develops from novel to novel but always possesses a genius locus which gives reality to his men and women. Narayan relies more on keen observation and steady accumulation of small details than on evocative description. He has no great heroes and heroines -only local nobodies and local eccentrics, and his style habitually wears a deliberately drab air so that the thrusts of his insistent irony are felt more sharply. Narayan's fiction consistently creates a convincing world observed with a certain but uniformly tolerant sense of human absurdities.

Unlike R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao has not been a prolific novelist, having written just four novels beginning with *Kanthapura* (1938), which is perhaps the finest evocation of the Gandhian age in Indian English fiction. It is the story of a small South Indian village caught in the maelstrom of the freedom struggle of the nineteen thirties and transformed so completely in the end that 'there's neither man nor mosquito' left in it. In this little village situated high on the Ghats up the Malabar Coast, the most important event has traditionally been the ploughing of the fields at the first rains in 1930; the harvest reaped is the Gandhian whirlwind. Raja Rao offers no dreamland vision of the freedom struggle in fact, the initial reaction of Kanthapura to Gandhian thought is one of bored apathy. But young Moorthy, the Gandhian, who knows that the master- key to the Indian mind is religion and puts the new Gandhian wine into the age-old bottle of traditional *harikatha* (story of Lord) and thus indoctrinates the Kanthapurans. There is also no runaway victory for Gandhianism in the village, for the forces of orthodoxy and conservatism is strong. The struggle is even harder for the simple, illiterate village women who don't understand the why and the wherefore of it all, and only know that the Mahatma is right in the tradition of the Hindu avatars. They have their moments of

temptation, cowardice and backsliding but still hold out to the bitter end, until Kanthapura is a deserted village. *Kanthapura* is thus a brilliant attempt to probe the depths, to which the nationalistic urge penetrated, showing how, even in the remote villages, the new upsurge fused completely with traditional religious faith, thus rediscovering the Indian soul.

Like its sensibility, the form and style of *Kanthapura* also belong to the living Indian tradition. In this forward, which has now become a classic, Raja Rao wrote, 'we cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indian. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it,' the narrative technique of the novel offers the required justification. The narrator is an old grandmother, who tells the story in the garrulous, digressive and breathless style of the Indian *purana* (a genre of ancient Indian literature) or the *Harikatha* (story of Lord), mixing freely narration, description, reflection, religious discourse, folk-lore, etc.

Raja Rao's fiction lacks the social dimension of R.K. Narayan. He has neither the burning humanitarian zeal of Anand nor Narayan's ability to paint a realistic picture of the contemporary social life with humour and jest. Their easy fecundity has also never been his. But in no two novels of his does Rao strike the same fictional chord. Within his brief corpus of writing, Raja Rao has crammed things which could have been, with a little clever housewifery, neatly spread out into a dozen novels and more. Narayan's stories are

uniformly compact and are told in his usual seemingly artless style. Raja Rao succeeds best because he rightly tells the traditional tale in the traditional manner.

In Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* the tremors of Gandhi's impact on a South Indian village are recorded in the chatty language of an elderly widow, and we see everything through the film of her memory, sensibility and temperament. The theme of *Kanthapura* may be summed up as 'Gandhi and our village' but the style of narration makes the book more a *Gandhi Purana* than a piece of mere fiction. Gandhi is the invisible God, Moorthy is the visible *avatar* (a manifestation of a deity).

Narayan's success in using the English language as a medium for the expression of creative urge lies in his device of using irony, satire and humor- irony may be a major weapon to expose the shame, the follies, the foibles and the hypocrisy of a society,²⁶ satire to bring out the facts and it is humor that makes his writing interesting and readable. Narayan's language is objective, convincing and simple and hence it is found to be "closest to the language of the newspaper and the Sunday Weekly."²⁷ For an Indian, it could be really a feat to write about the native customs and manners in a foreign language, i.e. English.

Narayan writes in an easy and natural flowing language. His English is pure in style but has the tone of an evolved and conscious medium. He adopts a foreign language, not to write as an English man in England would, but rather he uses it as an Indian would and lends a local flavor in a language that is not his own. The history, the social condition, the weather, the social memory- transferred to a wholly different setting-

the brutal heat and hovering vultures, flocks of brilliant glittering parrots, jackals rippling over the rubbish dumps, and utter shining clarity of lights and the deadly grey of an appalling poverty. It is clear of the palpable suggestiveness, the foggy taste, the complex tang, running through every phase of our own English. What it has instead is a strange degree of translucence, Narayan's language is beautifully adopted to communicate a different, an Indian sensibility.

If irony, as it is defined, means the contrast between appearance and reality, or what is actually narrated and its real implications, Narayan's irony starts from the title of his first novel *Swami and Friends*. As soon as we hear about a "Swami"(an ascetic), it is naturally expected to be a man having a bearded face, clad in saffron colored cloth and rather aged. His "friends" too are naturally expected to be the same. But our expectations are shattered as soon as we turn the first page of the novel:

It was Monday Morning, Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes. He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar. After the delicious freedom of Saturday and Sunday, it was difficult to get into the Monday mood of work and discipline. He shuddered at the very thought of school; that dismal yellow building; the fire-eyed Vedanyagam, his class teacher, and the Headmaster with his long cane.

R.N. Narayan, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Bhabani Bhattacharya are prominent Indian authors who have used irony as a literary device to present an expose of the human predicament.²⁸ Narayan's ironical device shows the gap between the promise and the fulfillment, the prose and reality, and intended and the committed, and then ultimately the incongruity of society. Narayan's heroes are average human beings with high ambition and without any such corresponding ability. They want to jump high in sky of success just in a short time. *Mr. Sampath* (1959), the printer of Malgudi possesses all qualities that a businessman should have- patience, congeniality, co-operative nature and humor- but he lacked the brashness and initiative essential for the success in business. Margayya in *The Financial Expert* (1952) too fails to succeed in his big enterprise because of his shortsightedness and lack of proper skill. Sriram in *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955) has neither political aspirations nor courage for initiative in love and hence he fails to succeed in his both affairs. Raju in *The Guide* (1958) fails in his mission due to his overconfidence. He remains a guide till the last moment of his life; Railway Raju guides visitors whereas Raju, the saint guides the credulous villagers. Rosie too fails in her life, she neither could be of her lover nor of husband. She could not become a Hindu bride although she married a gentleman and tried to forget her past as a 'devadasi,'(temple dancer) Vasu in the *Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961) breaks iron rods, fractures the wrist of a police officer and imposes himself upon everybody, but his own slap on the forehead for killing a mosquito ends his life. We see that the loss of judgment, over-confidence in their endeavors, and unrealistic appraisal of the social, economic and historical forces weakens their prospect and causes their doom. Narayan's novels, therefore, are ironical satires on society and show us actually how many slips are there in between the cup and the lip.

Narayan observes society very carefully and presents his observation in the minutest details. Although he keenly observes and is very much aware of the evils of society, his reaction is neither of condemnation nor of judgment. He simply does not seem to hold an indignant opinion. He just gives seems to smile on the incongruities and eccentricities of the society he perceives. For instance, he just passes off the insincerity of a milkman who is caught adding water with an ironical smile. He spurns the idea of criticizing or reacting like Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya. Narayan carefully keeps himself aloof from giving any comments while exposing such evils of society:

Tell me the secret of your magic; how you manage to
extract milk-like product out of that miserable cow-like
creator to supply thirty families as you do every morning.
What exactly are you, conjuror or milk vendor ? ²⁹

Narayan is an artist of language and his supreme art lies in his fine psychological study of human characters. He places his idea in a concrete form be it a historic one or an ordinary observed fact which has caught his attention. He uses pedestrian language as “brought and dumped,” “a silent and be- numbed gang”. “For me the greatest reality is this and nothing else..... Nothing also will worry or interest me in life hereafter” is successfully conveys philosophical thoughts and metaphysical speculations better than the full length description on such occasions. It shows Narayan’s skill in introducing narrative technique in his novels.

It is significant that in his novels Narayan avoided both the themes and the treatment one would have expected of him. He was not going to present ideas of conduct and character; nor portrays the greatness of the country. He would deal only with his own personal experience in school and colleges present the characters he has come across as they were, without exaggerating either their virtues or their vices. Fond as he was of the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*, he would avoid irrelevance and prolixity, concentrate on the story interest, and make his prime concern a well-told tale.³⁰

Narayan presents the common rhythm of life through the appearances of various aspects of South Indian Society. He sketches lively scenes, the absurdities, the pretensions, the inner and outer excitements and the traditional make up of the situations touched with his gentle irony. The entire authentic description is marked with intense realism. The life of his protagonist ends into an unrealized life at the end of every novel. His characters are wonderfully innocent and distinctive artistic presentation. Narayan's treats his subject matter in a concrete and objective style. Although Narayan has a very limited vocabulary but he can do wonder with his modest language resource. He uses Indian English and never tried to mix regional language or any other Indian language into his English. He uses a lot of Indian words, e.g. *pyol* (a small veranda), *jukta*, *pahelwan* (wrestler) etc. but never try to distort the rules of English language. His English is very common and understandable by his readers. His themes in the novels, its characters and their dialogues are very much apt in carrying the feelings and atmosphere of the South Indian society. He uses common Indian English idioms without bringing any change in their structure. His language is perfectly capable for the presentation of ideas and characters and is suitable also for the amusement of the readers of the West.

Narayan is fond of the English language from his early age. He explains how English language has served his purpose throughout his career:

My whole education has been in English from the primary school, and most of my reading has been in English language. I am particularly fond of the language. I was never aware that I was using a different medium, a foreign language, When I wrote in English, because it came to me very easily. I cannot explain how. ³¹

Narayan's language is gentle and smooth. His vocabulary is limited but adequate enough to deal with the range of subject matter. He avoids the use of lengthy and obscure phrases. In his language, syntax is put closer to the pattern of the normal conversation of its characters and the use of compound sentences is avoided. His writing is marked with lucidity, purity, simplicity and exactitude. The use of simple and easy English language makes him successful in drawing philosophical and ironical sketches of men and events. His stylistic writing makes even simple incidents and things interesting and charming. His narrative descriptions as well as conversations give an impression of his masterly confidence and power of storytelling. Simplicity of language, sincerity of art and gentle touch of humor are the secret of his artistic performance. He is a silent onlooker of human follies and deals everything with surety and an unerring instinct.

This is not to say that there is no touch of the fantastic in Narayan's novels. There is, as in the description of the house of Enlightenment and its bizarre master in *The Financial Expert*. This is deliberate; an extravaganza as in Dickens. Basically Narayan's world is our own everyday world. Even so it is limited, because Narayan's own experience is limited.

Indo-Anglican literature on the whole is deficient in humor, "R.K. Narayan and Ruth Praver Jhabvala have written social comedies, but their episodes are mostly meant for exposing the ludicrous aspects of social relations and cultural clashes."³² Narayan mixes satire with his gentle humor to smile at the ridiculous foibles and eccentricities of human nature. In his novels such scenes are common: a young man trying to find out the residence of his fiancée who was actually his neighbor; parents anxious for the horoscope matching of their sons and daughters as if heaven would fall if they commit any mistake in comparison; or a printer running after the lawyers and municipal clerks because a section of his house is forcibly occupied by a giant-like man. Whatever be the reason or occasion, laughter is always at the inadequacy of common sense. William Walsh remarks at Narayan's use of comedy:

The comedy arises from the sometimes bumbling, sometimes desperate, sometimes absurd exploration of different experiences in the search for a new, and it may be, an exquisitely inappropriate, role. The complex theme of Narayan's serious comedies, then, is the rebirth of self

and the process and conditions of its pregnancy or education.

There is nice amalgamation of humor and realism, and both intermingled into irony. The world depicted in his novels is paradoxical in its essence. In Narayan's worlds appearance and reality, free will and determinism, individual and society virtue and vice, reason and passion, beauty and ugliness, hope and despair, tears and smiles, are inseparably interwoven. His art, like that of all truly great ironists, is based on the principle of selection and rejection. This is the case with all artists, as R.L. Stevenson remarks, "The artist must suppress much and omit more,"³³ and hence no artist presents us a picture of reality in its entirety. And if Narayan, like Jane Austen, writes within any limitations, i.e. dealing with only middle class society, it is futile to complain that the world he presents in his novels is narrow.

R.K. Narayan's novels are so satisfyingly Indian perhaps because they are so authentically South Indian. This means not only that he depicts the customs and manners of the Tamil people accurately, which he does, but what is more important is that skillful use of the English language he delineates people whose actions, behaviors and responses are shaped by a language different from English.³⁴ Mulk Raj Anand successfully conveys a flavor of Punjabi through English, and when he endeavors to write about the customs and the manners outside the Punjab, as in *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, he is not so successful. Narayan presents the customs and manners of the Tamils with supreme perfection but yet he is free from any bias due to his skillful use of English language. And if the most significant challenge before the Indo-Anglican novelist is the task of using the

English language in a way that will be distinctively Indian and still remains English, Narayan is perhaps most successful among all Indo-Anglican novelists.

Narayan presents the people's behaviors and manner as they talk or they behave. It is really a feat to present such alive native scenes in a language of an alien country. Narayan is not a humorist but his superb use of humor provokes laughter at many places in his novels wherever needed. He portrays the character of a lawyer in such a way in *The Man-Enter of Malgudi* that offers a good deal of humor. Clients who went to him once never went there again as they sneezed endlessly and catch cold, asthmatics went down for weeks after a legal consultation with him. He tackle the problems of his clients standing in the verandah or under the shade of a tamarind tree in the court compound as he does not have a office in the court.

Narayan satirizes wherever he observes an angularity or oddity in the society. But his satire is too soft to prick anybody; it rather provokes our sense of humor. In almost every novel this satirical device, i.e. satire meant for humor, is followed by him.

R.K. Narayan's language is almost devoid of imagery. His language is deceptively simple and sentences are straight forward in syntax and unobtrusive in diction. The authenticity of his style cannot be judged from the quality of his imagery due to the simple reason that imagery is not the vehicle of his perception.

The art of Narayan's style, however, lies in his ironic vision and satirical device. Narayan's gentle irony and mild satire is nothing but an honest recording of facts, without any coloring of conventional bias. His ironic vision can be seen well in his

treatment of romantic love. Narayan's masterly use of gentle irony and soft satire is the real secret of his greatness as a stylist of language.

In Narayan's writings expression follows character, manner and temperament. In particular, the cool clarity with which Narayan considers himself, his tastes and his problems are mirrored in the lucidity and firmness of his account. In the novels the limpid quality of the telling is the result of the calm and unsurprising security.

It is this inner tranquility and unforced assurance that distinguish Narayan's fiction from Western fiction. Narayan's gift is the perception of the comicality of men with the subtle blend of South Indian realism and irony indulged without any rancor, that peculiar trenchant quality which marks it out from the humorous or serious writing emanating from elsewhere in the country. It is an irony of a delicate texture with a dash of the farcical in it, rather puckish and is also always humane. Narayan began, as in his *Swamy and Friends*, not with the novel proper, but with little yarns about credible young things- a clever, earnest, naughty, and boisterous lot of South Indian boys who hold their grand Cricket tournament on a strip of ground adjoining someone's bungalow till they are driven out by the next batch of intruders. Narayan knew how to make the school or College atmosphere sweet with these quixotic of juvenile enthusiasm. One thing that distinguished these little vignettes was the peculiar gusto for life. In his mature work, Narayan has carried with him this invigorating element in the treatment of more adult interests, when another kind of motley crowd and somewhat more complex but equally engaging rascals come into focus. Though the circumstances have changed, the 'admitted innocence of the original picture has remained intact'. Narayan has never departed from

his healthy respect for the ordinary, the physical, the surface feature regarded as the solid ground of our existence. He needs to feel this solid ground under his feet as though to establish his right to its surface. Characters and episodes could then be brought on and off that stage without much need of patterning so that they depart leaving everything undisturbed, primal. That traditional matrix includes hard facts of inner isolation and distance, of frightful poverty and ruthless climate. These are as immutable as the Sarayu, the Mempi hills, or a Lawley Extension.

While all that happens in the novels the aspect of time present or time passing seems to have the evanescence of waves on water, but the permanence of objects impresses itself strongly on our minds. So strong indeed is this crispy tang of the commonness of object as objects that Western critics are inclined to see in it infinitely more than we perhaps do- because of our myopic closeness to the object. Narayan's works express a peculiar piety towards existence and this piety is focused in the object so they become hallowed, with more than their own nature and invested with singular and lasting importance. This appreciation of the weight, the form, the value of things is considered a feature of both the author's temperament and of his art. It pins down and solidifies the lightness and flash of manner which would have otherwise seemed "too evasive, too spiritual." Objects help to enclose the souls of people in flesh, pitted, worn, and ordinary flesh- Krishnan's clock, his father's steel pen of ink prepared in a careful yearly ceremony, Sriram's teak-and-canvas chair, or better still, Srinivasa's sandalwood image of *Nataraja* (the Hindu God Shiva in his form as a cosmic dancer) which was given to him by his grandmother and without spending a few minutes before which he never stepped out to start his day.

R.K. Narayan has the ability to present the physical fact cleanly in its identity as physical fact are unburdened by emotional or idealistic suggestion. It is because there is no straining to load it with such implication that the object calls attention to itself. His is a rare feeling for the importance and density of things. Here is an art that works not by compressed wealth but by excision of the accustomed and hence effete brilliance. Walsh compliments Narayan on his pure and limped English which is free from that exciting physical energy sometimes adventurously injected into it, such as is observed in the writings of the West Indians and in those of several East Indians as well. Walsh says about Narayan's English that, his English has been extracted from the "English" context and transferred to a wholly different setting. It is clear of the palpable suggestiveness, the foggy taste, and the complex tang running through every phase of our own English. Walsh is right about Narayan's use of English language. His fiction is also at the same time an instance of how a limited, the thinness of the medium, has been turned to advantage. The result is that the words gain a strange translucence that is somehow- as Walsh felt- perfectly filled to express a uniquely Indian sensibility. Narayan's English may repudiate its inheritance- that suggestive nuance, that complex tang- but by so doing it lays claim to greater gain. Its very flatness, bear literal quality, has a strange effect. It focuses the mind sharply on the Indian reality, gives it correctness. Modesty can pay dividends.

The same silence and modesty marks his treatment of characters. He has stoutly resisted getting engaged with their insides over- much allowing them to express themselves by their activities and their innate impulse to break out of the dreamy

automations of habit that the stifling pressure of poverty and tradition imposes upon them. They are uniformly viewed with a quick eye to the comic- a ridiculing yet affectionate glance which lights up even the most commonplace among them. The note of human queerness, the bizarre remain dominant. Narayan avoids shaping a story merely to present sentimental caricatures of love or joy or of frustration which is the bane of popular fiction. He has thus saved his art from a weakness to which something our tradition seems to make us vulnerable. Early in his development as novelist the temptation did come to him- the desire to attempt a serious probing of the tragic consequences of passion, as in *The Dark Room*. But Ramani and Shantabai of that novel remain shrouded figures; and the truth of their passion escapes us. And Savitri's spirited protest appears to end up in a gratuitous homecoming, thus simply deepening her bizarreness of the surface world. One specific type of character dear to Narayan's heart answers his prescriptions ideally- the funny, bewildering, sad rascal retrieved from villainy by his inherent simple- mindedness and gusto. Margayya and Raju are unquestionably mature products of his art but his Srinivases and Sampats and even Chandrans on their varying ways foreshadow the coming transformation. So, too, the minor figures like the peculiar headmaster of *The English Teacher* who is declared dead, arrives home at the height of the funereal commotion, and then adroitly turns *sanyasi* (a Hindu religious mendicant) to escape the responsibilities of the family. Narayan gives this impossible Headmaster that rare appreciation of the "child" element. The Headmaster echoes the author's own sentiments, that there is something there of a deep undercurrent form which Narayan's art derives its vitality. That element-an almost "Wordsworthian" bequest- somehow seems integral to Narayan's finest creations and to the quality of his matured art as it has grown from the bare journalistic fare to the complex consistency of

his later work. Narayan's people- ordinary, stupid, vain, queer- retain in Lawrence's phrase, a peculiar nuclear innocence. They all possess this infant grace, the whole motley crowd- that varied cast of crooks and saints, business adventures, the ardent young and the earnest elder, serious minded professors who are serious- minded and slightly comic for that reason, way-side pop sellers, the nondescript boys, the strays and waifs, little rascals and bigger guides who misguide, children who are just children, ordinary man and extra- ordinary, lively women. And this touch of salvation is offered alike to those on whom the focus light plays continuously over long periods, and who drift into the shadow after a brief illumination.

Narayan gets his artistic effect more by a process of exclusion. The characters retain their naiveté of being human, their inherent right to independent existence, all the more so because care is taken to exclude any attempt to judge them- to fit them into idealistic patterning or crusading roles. The irony that laps them round is singularly free of social or moral censure. Narayan's fiction appears to bypass the raging dilemmas and intellectual frustrations of the time. He puts aside that compulsive obsession; it's so like a nonchalant loyalty of one's art. Narayan remained passively unresponsive alike to the contemporary movement of thoughts and feeling and to the fairly long tradition of the novel of social idealism in the country. Even when public themes of similar import enter the scope of Narayan's fiction, the emphasis is clearly elsewhere; his basic preoccupations and interests remain inviolate. His *Waiting for the Mahatma* despite its ostensible theme, very eminent in itself, centers round the same old "personal" rather than socio- political interest. That is why the novel fails to grip; there isn't anything like an "inside" either to the Mahatma or to his message. And the last scene of his martyrdom

lacks fire. The force of Gandhi's appeal and the people's genuine, spontaneous response- even if only naive- loom large on the horizon, remain keenly impressive to reflection. But that aspect is never allowed to come into focus or find expression in powerful fictional term.

This immunity is not earned without a price to pay, but it is also the basis of Narayan's artistic success. He not only shuns the intellectual theme, he saves his characters from getting involved in moral or social issues; nor does he demand such an involvement from his readers. Moral perception is implicit in his irony but the immunity of art pre-empt testing of character against pre-determined code, doctrine or message. The lively human landscape he creates seems innocent of any big comment on life and he wisely refrains from putting to use denizens of that world or the logic of their fortunes to an illustrative purpose.

Narayan is often credited with being a subtle symbolist. His projection of "the racial subconscious" is a remarkable characteristic of Narayan's art- the four dominant symbols being the temple, the village, the town Malgudi, and the river Sarayu. Narayan have invested these four symbols with a deep mystery that influences the individual conscience as it flows into the universal; he develops Malgudi as the symbol of the whole of India as well as the Universe. So the river Sarayu by being a witness to history becomes a testimony to eternity.

Narayan's art is the reflection of traditional Indian sensibility and offers a contrast to Mulk Raj Anand. Narayan's outlook is primarily comic because Indian sensibility precludes any possibility of tragedy. Narayan's Indian sensibility is shaped by

puranic (a genre of ancient Indian literature) and epic myths and legends. In the deep recesses of his collective unconscious, which every individual inherits from his forefather, patterns and symbols of the art *Puranas* and epics are lying. It is not that Narayan uses such myths and legends to display his knowledge of things but the truth is that the feelings cannot be expressed economically without them. “These things are present and influential not as a dogma or metaphysics but as part of a mode of perception and a habit of recreation. They flow in and out of a writer’s thought and touch.”³⁵

That is the reason why Narayan very often draws broad mythic parallels to his plot in order to give authenticity and creditability to his Indian theme and setting. *The Guide* and *The Man Eater of Malgudi* are very close to *Valmiki* and *Bhasmasura* myth respectively and thus bring an easy credibility to the actions and their consequences in the context of an Indian ethos. Besides finding well- defined mythic parallel to plot, Narayan often weaves the narrative with allusions from ancient scriptures. In *Mr. Sampath* Srinivas muses about the God *Nataraj*. The mythic re-union of Krishnan with his dead wife in *The English Teacher*, the renouncement of Jagan in *The Vendor of Sweets*, and the penance of Raju to save the village from drought in *The Guide* are equally significant age-old beliefs and ideals that have percolated to the very bottom of our psyche. While studying the style of Narayan, Jayant K. Biswal writes:

These Indian myths and the traditional rituals, beliefs and superstitions not only create an authentic Indian touch, but also contribute to the effective communication of experience. The use of myth whether as a broad parallel to plot or as a “digressional technique” has made

Narayan's style of story telling lucid and amply communicative,³⁶

Narayan's plot moves in archetypal pattern of order- disorder- order which is also the pattern of the *puranas* and epics and the traditional concepts of creation. The forces of Evil appear in the world to disturb its peace and stability and are ultimately destroyed either by themselves or by an incarnation. The stability returns with a renewed assertion of moral and spiritual values. This theme is recurrent in Narayan's novels with an astonishing degree of accuracy. With the solitary exception of *The Guide*, Narayan's novels moves on the cyclical path of life's various experiences reaching at the ordered world of the beginning.

Reading Narayan's novels is both an exciting and exhilarating experience. Once can only catalogue his virtues. He is a great story teller, he has always maintained that the story alone matters to him. His limpid style flows from the fact that the story flows so easily. He is a storyteller per excellence, his humanities gives life to the stories, his basic affection for his character, his strong feeling that no man is an island. Add to these a feeling of gentle irony and an overpowering sense of humor and we have the greatest writer of our time of fiction and who allows his world to be ours too.

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Chapter II

Reflections on R. K. Narayan's Novels: Techniques and Themes.

Narayan's success in using the English language as a medium for the expression of a creative urge lies in his use of certain literary devices like irony, satire and humor. Irony and satire are used as major weapons to expose the social ills, the follies, the foibles and the hypocrisy of a society and thus bring out the facts; and humor makes his writing interesting and appealing to his readers. Narayan's language is objective, convincing and simple and hence it is found to be "closest to the language of the newspaper and the Sunday Weekly." ¹ For an Indian, it is quite a feat to write about the native customs and manners in an alien language, i.e. English.

The characteristic feature of Narayan's style as a writer is his detached way of depicting a picture of his contemporary times. His stories are narrated in an impersonal manner by a seemingly detached narrator. He interprets Indian life purely with an aesthetic sense unmarred by biased objectivity. He takes utmost care not to give an authorial opinion on such issues of social, economic and political interests of his time. He does not support or criticize any cause. He writes as a detached observer of human nature without any prejudice.

Narayan is an engaging storyteller. He tells his story with the ease and skill of a raconteur. The very tone of his narrative adds humour to his tales. Most of his stories are narrated by an omniscient author in the third person narrative and the stories are told in a chronological order. This conventional style of story-telling runs through most of his novels with the exception of *The Guide*. In *The Guide*, Narayan seems to depart from his usual style of narration and employs a technique which is somewhat similar to the stream of consciousness narrative technique employed by the contemporary

writers of the 20th century like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. In this novel, Narayan employs the dual narrative technique by which a part of the story is told by the omniscient narrator and another part is told by the protagonist, Raju. Raju's narrative gives flash-backs through which the reader can get a glimpse of the past and provide a psychoanalytic exploration of the protagonist.

Narayan uses a number of techniques in his narratives, most prominent of which are irony and humour. His employment of irony and humour add to the appeal of his stories.

The Oxford Dictionary defines irony as 'the expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect'. If irony, as it is defined, means the contrast between appearance and reality, or what is actually narrated and its real implications, Narayan's irony starts from the title of his first novel *Swami and Friends*. As soon as we hear about a "Swami"(an ascetic), he is naturally expected to be a man having a bearded face, clad in saffron colored robe and rather aged. His "friends" too are naturally expected to be the same. But our expectations are shattered as soon as we turn the first page of the novel:

It was Monday Morning; Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes. He considered Monday especially unpleasant in the calendar. After the delicious freedom of Saturday and Sunday, it was difficult to get into the Monday mood of work and discipline. He shuddered at the very thought of school;

that dismal yellow building; the fire-eyed Vedanyagam, his class teacher, and the Headmaster with his long cane.²

Swami and Friends is the story of a ten year old boy Swaminathan, a boy full of innocence, wonder and mischief, and his experience of growing up in the fictional town of Malgudi. Like every common school boy, Swami considers Monday to be very unpleasant as he has to go to school after two days of freedom or the reason may be the scripture teacher of Swami who always mocks Indian gods in class.

Swami and Friends is more than the story of a child. It is the story of a generation of such Indians who are born in a British ruled country and they are educated in mission schools run by the British Empire, which makes them confused about their own culture and society. Swami thinks and acts like an adult. He get himself involved in the freedom movement without actually knowing what it is actually about. In this movement many lost their life but Swami lost his cap. When Swami was standing in a crowd ,somebody from the crowd forced him to throw his cap in the fire saying that it is made in foreign but later he come to know that it is made with *khaddar* (a homespun cotton cloth). Irony is used as a technique in this novel by R. K.Narayan.

R.N. Narayan, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Bhabani Bhattacharya are prominent Indian authors who have used irony as a literary device to present an expose of the human predicament. ³ Narayan's ironical device shows the gap between the promise and the fulfillment, the prose and reality, and intended and the committed, and then ultimately the incongruity of society.

Narayan's heroes are average human beings with high ambition and without any such corresponding ability. They want to jump high in sky of success just in a short time. *Mr. Sampath* (1959), the printer of Malgudi possesses all qualities that a businessman should have- patience, congeniality, co-operative nature and humour- but he lacked the brashness and initiative essential for the success in business. Margayya in *The Financial Expert* (1952) too fails to succeed in his big enterprise because of his shortsightedness and lack of proper skill. Sriram in *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955) has neither political aspirations nor courage for initiative in love and hence he fails to succeed in his both affairs. Raju in *The Guide* (1958) fails in his mission owing to his overconfidence. He remains to be a guide till the last moment of his life; Railway Raju guides visitors whereas Raju, the saint guides the innocent villagers. Rosie too fails to achieve her goal; she ultimately could not come to terms with neither Raju nor her husband. In spite of marrying a gentleman through whom she hoped to shed the stigma associated with a *Devadasi* (temple dancer), she could not entirely rid herself of her past and her identity.

Similarly, in the *Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961), it is ironical that Vasu's extraordinary strength, because of which he imposes himself upon everybody, should be the cause of his own death. His own slap on the forehead meant to kill a mosquito ends his life.

We see that the loss of judgment, over-confidence in their endeavors, and unrealistic appraisal of the social, economic and historical forces weaken their prospect and cause their doom. Narayan's novels, therefore, are subtle satires on the Indian society

as it existed during his time, told with light humour highlighting the slips between the cup and the lip.

The social system of the Hindus was predominantly based on the caste system. The caste system was one of the most important causes of social disunity. A large part of the population was considered by the people of higher castes as untouchables. Hindu society is divided into castes and sub-castes and marriages are often arranged within the caste. In *The Guide*, Raju's mother does not accept Rosie as her daughter-in-law because of her prejudice against her class- '*devadasi*' (temple dancer). Traditionally, *devdasi*(s) enjoyed a high status in the Indian society but during the colonial India, their position diminished without the royal patronage and they became to be considered as no higher than prostitutes. Thus Rosie, belonging to the colonial era, was looked down upon by so-called traditional Indians like Raju's mother, who see themselves as tradition bearers attempting to maintain and uphold the Indian values. It is ironical that Raju's mother, a traditionalist, contradicts the 'traditional view' regarding *devadasis* which has assigned them a high status in the Indian social hierarchy considering their committed service to God. In her contempt for *devdasis*, she seems to be upholding the view of the ignorant colonial rulers who are unable to distinguish between a *devadasi* and a girl who dances on the street.

Narayan, through his novels, paints a picture of the Indian society with all its incongruities. The social values, norms and morals of the society have always influenced the Indian worldview. These values are jealously guarded and upheld by the people and its purity is insisted upon, especially by the so-called traditionalists. Any violation of these norms and values is frowned upon and is seen as a disrespect of Indian culture.

Some women characters like Swami's grandmother in *Swami and Friends*, Shrinivas's Granny and Rama's aunt can be cited as representatives of this class of Indians who see themselves as guardians of age-old Hindu values. They are superstitious and irrational in their outlook, and are opposed to any kind of change in the social conventions. Through his stories, Narayan projects the conflict between these conventional thoughts and the more liberal thoughts of the twentieth century Indians. The twentieth century India was a period of transition, from the old to the new. These conflicting ideologies were skillfully juxtaposed in Narayan's novels through his expertly woven characters. For instance, in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, while Sriram's grandmother represents the conventional class, Mahatma Gandhi represents the more liberal class which is set to bring change. Sriram's grandmother is against Mahatma Gandhi's patronizing attitude towards the untouchables. She feels threatened by Mahatma Gandhi's stand against untouchability. She cannot tolerate that untouchables should be brought inside the temple. Thus, through these representatives, Narayan presents the conflicting ideologies present during his time but as a detached narrator, he does not seem to pronounce any conclusive judgment. In fact, he leaves that judgment to be made by his readers.

R. K. Narayan's women characters stand both for change and the resistance to change. He shows the contrasting views of the older women and the younger women. Savitri, Sriram's grandmother, Raju's mother are some of the women characters who hold a traditional view. On the other hand, Bharati, Rosie and Shanta Bai are representatives of the more liberal women. Narayan portrays in his novels an Indian society which is deeply rooted in traditionalism. Women in that society are relentless victims of social circumstances and conventions. The women in that society have no

opportunity to express their feelings. The women are suppressed by the males. Men are seen as superior to women; they give women a secondary place and keep them there so cleverly that she herself loses all her notion of independence.

Womenfolk in Indian society have more or less the same status as that of slaves; they are enslaved or suppressed by their husbands, their sons or some male members of the family. They are rendered incapable and made totally dependent on the men folk for their survival. Savitri in *The Dark Room*, laments about her condition and wails: “What despicable creations of God are we that we can’t exist without a support?”⁴ which offers a peep on the pitiable state of Indian women.

Western influence and the industrialization have considerably changed their lot and brought about a change in outlook. Shantabai, in *The Dark Room*, struggles free from her drunkard husband, and comes all the way from Bangalore to Malgudi to work as a trainee officer in the Insurance Bank. Shanti, in *Mr. Sampath*, who lost her husband, is taken to acting in the film company established by Sampath. Rosie, in *The Guide*, asserts her individuality by her resolution to pursue her career as a dancer against the wishes of her husband Marco. Narayan, through these characters, shows the other side of Indian women whose views are antithetical to the social conventions of the time. These women characters, who disturb the traditional norm of the society by refusing to conform, offer oppositional binaries to the docile and wholly submissive women characters like Savitri (*The Dark Room*) who suffers at the cost of her very existence to keep the harmony of the family intact.

Narayan is a minute observer of society. He is very sensitive about the condition of women in Indian society but he neither criticizes nor gives reaction to any such evils of society. He stands on the sideline and only an ironical smile can be seen on his behalf. If he sees, for example, a milkman adding water into the milk, only an ironical smile is seen on his behalf : “Tell me the secret of your magic; how you manage to extract milk-like product out of that miserable cow-like creature to supply thirty families as you do every morning. What exactly are you, conjuror or milk vendor?”⁵ Here, he seems to expose the social evils, foibles and follies with light humour and unlike his contemporaries like Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya; he spurns the idea of criticizing or reacting strongly to the evils of society. In Bhattacharya, we see more intense scenes of exploitation in the Indian scenario:

He had for lack of food, so it was reported, and the brief news flashed past almost unnoticed. A mere beggar. No one of them felt that he was a premonition, a symbolic shape of things to come. Other men sank down and died. (So Much Hunger, 104-105.

The novel is full of horrible scenes of hunger and exploitation. It is of the peasants, and of moral degradation of the rich landlords and the capitalists and of indifference of the Government officials.

Mulk Raj Anand writes with more accusing tone at the middle class who try to imitate their colonial masters without concern for their countrymen:

The rich don't really want to mix with each other. The women perspire in their furs and their underclothes get wet. And the men are uncomfortable in their tight trousers as they flirt with other men's wives. Then they say how smart it all was as they drink tea at Davico's while you starve. (Coolie, 312)

Mulk Raj Anand's fictions seem to be more personal, purposeful and didactic interspersed with social message. The purpose behind his fiction is to teach people to recognize the fundamental principles of human living and exercise vigilance in regard to the real enemies of freedom and socialism.

Narayan is an artist of language and his supreme art lies in his fine psychological study of human characters. He presents the abstract in concrete pictures, in particular his ideas, along with the historic and observed facts. He himself explains about his writing that, he reduces the range of his observation and make his subject behave according to the situation and environment. He uses ordinary language as "brought and dumped," "a silent and be- numbed gang". "For me the greatest reality is this and nothing else..... Nothing also will worry or interest me in life hereafter" successfully conveys philosophical thoughts and metaphysical speculations better than the full length

description on such occasions. It shows Narayan's skill in introducing narrative technique in his novels.

It is significant that in his novels Narayan avoided both the themes and the treatment one would have expected of him. . He would deal only with his own personal experience in school and colleges present the characters he has come across as they were, without exaggerating either their virtues or their vices.

Narayan presents the common rhythm of life through the appearances of various aspects of South Indian Society. He sketches lively scenes, the absurdities, the pretensions, the inner and outer excitements and the traditional make up of the situations touched with his gentle irony. The entire description is marked with intense realism. The life of his protagonist ends into an unrealized life at the end of every novel. His characters are wonderfully fresh and with distinctive artistic presentation, they represent varied facets of human nature which are neither good nor bad. Narayan's approach towards his subject matter of writing is concrete. Narayan has a very limited stock of language but he can portray a very realistic and beautiful picture even with this modest language resource with honesty and confidence. The language of his writings is very simple and he never attempted to use the essence of Tamil language or any other Indian languages in his writings (*Narayan is known to have used a number of Indianised English garnished his stories with some Tamil words*). Narayan for his own gain did not try to bend or alter the rules of English Grammar. He uses a lot of Indian words, e.g. *pyol* (a small veranda), *jukta*, *pahelwan* (wrestler) etc. He writes in very simple and clear English. The themes of his novels, its characters and their dialogues are able of carrying

the belief and ideologies of a South Indian society. He uses common Indian English idioms without bringing any change in their structure. His language is perfectly capable for the presentation of ideas and characters and is suitable also for the amusement of the readers of the West.

Narayan is fond of the English language from his early age. The following words of Narayan himself explain his choice of the English language as a medium of his writing:

My whole education has been in English from the primary school, and most of my reading has been in English language. I am particularly fond of the language. I was never aware that I was using a different medium, a foreign language, when I wrote in English, because it came to me very easily. I cannot explain how. ⁷

Narayan's language is gentle and smooth. His vocabulary is limited but adequate enough to deal with the range of subject matter. He avoids the use of lengthy and obscure phrases. In his language, syntax is put closer to the pattern of the normal conversation of its characters and the use of compound sentences is avoided. His writing is marked with lucidity, purity, simplicity and accuracy. The use of simple and easy English language makes him successful in drawing philosophical and ironical sketches of men and events. His stylistic writing makes even simple incidents and things interesting and charming. His narrative descriptions as well as conversations give an impression of his masterly

confidence and power of storytelling. Simplicity of language, sincerity of art, and gentle touch of humour are the secret of his artistic performance. He is a silent onlooker of human follies and deals everything with surety and a certain instinct.

This is not to say that there is no touch of the fantastic in Narayan's novels. There is, as in the description of the house of Enlightenment and its bizarre master in *The Financial Expert*, a deliberate extravaganza as in Dickens. Basically Narayan's world is our own everyday world and the characters who people his world are humans with all their shortcomings and weakness. Even so, it may be said that his world was quite limited, because Narayan's own experience is limited.

Narayan mixes satire with his gentle humor to smile at the ridiculous foibles and eccentricities of human nature. In his novels such scenes are common: a young man trying to find out the residence of his fiancée who was actually his neighbor; parents anxious for the horoscope matching of their sons and daughters as if heaven would fall if they commit any mistake in comparison; or a printer running after the lawyers and municipal clerks because a section of his house is forcibly occupied by a giant-like man. Whatever be the reason or occasion, laughter is always at the inadequacy of common sense. William Walsh remarks at Narayan's use of comedy:

‘The comedy arises from the sometimes bumbling, sometimes deprecate, sometimes absurd exploration of different experiences in the search for a new, and it may be, an exquisitely inappropriate, role. The complex theme of

Narayan's serious comedies, then, is the rebirth of self and the process and conditions of its pregnancy or education'.

There is nice amalgamation of humor and realism, and both intermingled into irony. The worlds depicted in his novels are paradoxical in its essence. In Narayan's world, appearance and reality, free will and determinism, individual and society virtue and vice, reason and passion, beauty and ugliness, hope and despair, tears and smiles, are inseparably interwoven. His art, like that of all truly great ironists, is based on the principle of selection and rejection. This is the case with all artists, as R.L. Stevenson remarks, "The artist must suppress much and omit more,"⁹ and hence no artist presents us a picture of reality in its entirety. And if Narayan, like Jane Austen, writes within any limitations, i.e. dealing with only middle class society, it is futile to complain that the world he presents in his novels is narrow.

R.K. Narayan's novels are so satisfyingly Indian perhaps because they are so authentically South Indian. This means not only that he depicts the customs and manners of the Tamil people accurately, which he does, but what is more important is that, through skillful use of the English language he delineates people whose actions, behaviors and responses are shaped by a language different from English.¹⁰ Mulk Raj Anand successfully conveys a flavor of Punjabi through English, but when he endeavors to write about the customs and the manners outside the Punjab, as in *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, he is not so successful. Narayan presents the customs and manners of the Tamils with supreme perfection but yet he is free from any bias due to his skillful use of English language. And if the most significant challenge before the Indo-Anglican novelist

is the task of using the English language in a way that will be distinctively Indian and still remains English, Narayan is perhaps most successful among all Indo-Anglican novelists.

Narayan presents the people's behaviors and manners as they talk or they behave. It is really a feat to present such native scenes in a language of an alien country. Narayan is not a humorist but his superb use of humor provokes laughter at many places in his novels wherever needed. Narayan satirizes wherever he observes an angularity or oddity in the society. But his satire is too soft to prick anybody; it rather provokes our sense of humor. In almost every novel this satirical device, i.e. satire meant for humor, is followed by him.

R.K. Narayan's language is almost devoid of imagery. His language is deceptively simple and sentences are straight forward in syntax and unobtrusive in diction. The authenticity of his style cannot be judged from the quality of his imagery due to the simple reason that imagery is not the vehicle of his perception.

The art of Narayan's style, however, lies in his ironic vision and satirical device. Narayan's gentle irony and mild satire is nothing but an honest recording of facts, without any coloring of conventional bias. His ironic vision can be seen well in his treatment of romantic love. Narayan's masterly use of gentle irony and soft satire is the real secret of his greatness as stylist of language.

In Narayan's writings expression follows character, manner and temperament. In particular, the clarity with which Narayan considers himself, his tastes and his problems

are mirrored in the lucidity and firmness of his account. In the novels the limpid quality of the telling is the result of the calm and unsurprising security.

It is this inner tranquility and unforced assurance that distinguish Narayan's fiction from western fiction. Narayan's gift is the perception of the comicality of men with the subtle blend of South Indian realism and irony indulged without any rancor, that peculiar trenchant quality which marks it out from the humorous or serious writing emanating from elsewhere in the country. It is an irony of a delicate texture with a dash of the farcical in it, rather puckish and is also always humane. Narayan began, as in his *Swami and Friends*, not with the novel proper, but with little yarns about credible young things- a clever, earnest, naughty, and boisterous lot of South Indian boys who hold their grand Cricket tournament on a strip of ground adjoining someone's bungalow till they are driven out by the next batch of intruders. Narayan knew how to make the school or College atmosphere sweet with these quixotic of juvenile enthusiasm. One thing that distinguished these little vignettes was the peculiar gusto for life. In his mature work, Narayan has carried with him this invigorating element in the treatment of more adult interests, when another kind of motley crowd and somewhat more complex but equally engaging rascals come into focus. Though the circumstances have changed, the innocence of the original picture has remained intact. Narayan has never departed from his healthy respect for the ordinary, the physical, the surface feature regarded as the solid ground of our existence. He needs to feel this solid ground under his feet as though to establish his right to its surface. Characters and episodes could then be brought on and off that stage without much need of patterning so that they depart leaving everything undisturbed, primal. That traditional matrix includes hard facts of inner isolation and

distance, of frightful poverty and ruthless climate. These are as absolute as the Sarayu, the Mempi hills, or a Lawley Extension.

While all that happens in the novels the aspect of time present or time passing seems to have the evanescence of waves on water, but the permanence of objects impresses itself strongly on our minds. So strong indeed is this crispy tang of the commonness of object as objects that Western critics are inclined to see in it infinitely more than we perhaps do- because of our myopic closeness to the object. Narayan's works express a peculiar piety towards existence and this piety is focused in the object so they become hallowed, with more than their own nature and invested with singular and lasting importance. This appreciation of the weight, the form, the value of things is considered a feature of both the author's temperament and of his art. It pins down and solidifies the lightness and flash of manner which would have otherwise seemed "too evasive, too spiritual." Objects help to enclose the souls of people in flesh; pitted, worn, and ordinary flesh- Krishnan's clock, his father's steel pen of ink prepared in a careful yearly ceremony, Sriram's teak-and-canvas chair, or better still, Srinivasa's sandalwood image of *Nataraja* (the Hindu God Shiva in his form as the cosmic dancer) which was given to him by his grandmother and without spending a few minutes before which he never stepped out to start his day.

R.K. Narayan has the ability to present the physical fact cleanly in its identity as physical fact unburdened by emotional or idealistic suggestion. It is because there is no straining to load it with such implication that the object calls attention to itself. His has a rare feeling for the importance and density of things. Here is an art that works not by

compressed wealth but by excision of the accustomed and hence effete brilliance. Walsh compliments Narayan on his pure and limped English which is free from that exciting physical energy sometimes adventurously injected into it, such as is observed in the writings of the West Indians and in those of several East Indians as well. His fiction is also at the same time an instance of how a limited, the thinness of the medium, has been turned to advantage. The result is that the words gain a strange translucence that is somehow- as Walsh felt- perfectly filled to express a uniquely Indian sensibility. Narayan's English may repudiate its inheritance- that suggestive nuance, that complex tang- but by so doing it lays claim to greater gain. It's very flatness, bear literal quality, has a strange effect. It focuses the mind sharply on the Indian reality, gives it correctness. Modesty can pay dividends.

The same reticence and modesty marks his treatment of characters. He has stoutly resisted getting engaged with their insides over- much allowing them to express themselves by their activities and their innate impulse to break out of the dreamy automations of habit that the stifling pressure of poverty and tradition imposes upon them. They are uniformly viewed with a quick eye to the comic- a ridiculing yet affectionate glance which lights up even the most commonplace among them. The note of human queerness and the bizarre remains dominant. Narayan avoids shaping a story merely to present sentimental caricatures of love or joy or of frustration which is the bane of popular fiction. He has thus saved his art from a weakness to which something our tradition seems to make us vulnerable. Early in his development as novelist, the temptation did come to him- the desire to attempt a serious probing of the tragical consequences of passion, as in *The Dark Room*. But Ramani and Shantabai of that novel

remain shrouded figures; and the truth of their passion escapes us. And Savitri's spirited protest appears to end up in a gratuitous homecoming, thus simply deepening her bizarreness of the surface world.

One specific type of character dear to Narayan's heart answers his prescriptions ideally- the funny, bewildering, sad rascal retrieved from villainy by his inherent simple-mindedness and gusto. Margayya and Raju are unquestionably mature products of his art but his Srinivases and Sampats and even Chandrans on their varying ways foreshadow the coming transformation. So, too, the minor figures like the peculiar headmaster of *The English Teacher* who is declared dead, arrives home at the height of the funereal commotion, and then cleverly turns *sanyasi* (a Hindu religious mendicant) to escape the responsibilities of the family. Narayan gives this impossible Headmaster that rare appreciation of the "child" element. The Headmaster echoes the author's own sentiments, that there is something there of a deep undercurrent from which Narayan's art derives its vitality. That element-an almost "Wordsworthian" bequest- somehow seems integral to Narayan's finest creations and to the quality of his matured art as it has grown from the bare journalistic fare to the complex consistency of his later work. Narayan's people-ordinary, stupid, vain, queer- retain in Lawrence's phrase, a peculiar *nuclear innocence*. They all possess this infant grace, the whole motley crowd- that varied cast of crooks and saints, business adventures, the ardent young and the earnest elder, serious minded professors who are serious- minded and slightly comic for that reason, way-side pop sellers, the nondescript boys, the strays and waifs, little rascals and bigger guides who misguide, children who are just children, ordinary men and extra- ordinary, lively women. And this touch of salvation is offered alike to those on whom the focus light

plays continuously over long periods, and to those who drift into the shadow after a brief illumination.

Narayan gets his artistic effect more by a process of exclusion. The characters retain their naiveté of being human, their inherent right to independent existence, all the more so because care is taken to exclude any attempt to judge them- to fit them into idealistic patterning or crusading roles. The irony that laps them round is singularly free of social or moral censure. Narayan's fiction appears to bypass the raging dilemmas and intellectual frustrations of the time. He puts aside that compulsive obsession; it is so like a nonchalant loyalty to one's art. Narayan remained passively unresponsive to the contemporary movement of thoughts and feelings and to the fairly long tradition of the novel of social idealism in the country. Even when public themes of similar import enter the scope of Narayan's fiction, the emphasis is clearly elsewhere; his basic preoccupations and interests remain inviolate. His *Waiting for the Mahatma*, despite its ostensible theme, very eminent in itself, centers round the same old "personal" rather than socio-political interest. That is why the novel fails to grip; there isn't anything like an "inside" either to the Mahatma or to his message. And the last scene of his martyrdom lacks fire. The force of Gandhi's appeal and the people's genuine, spontaneous response- even if only naive- loom large on the horizon, remain keenly impressive to reflection. But that aspect is never allowed to come into focus or find expression in powerful fictional term.

This immunity is not earned without a price to pay, but it is also the basis of Narayan's artistic success. He not only shuns the intellectual theme, he saves his

characters from getting involved in moral or social issues; nor does he demand such an involvement from his readers. Moral perception is implicit in his irony but the immunity of art pre-empt testing of character against pre-determined code, doctrine or message. The lively human landscape he creates is devoid of any big comment on life and he wisely refrains from putting to use denizens of that world or the logic of their fortunes to an illustrative purpose.

Narayan is often credited with being a subtle symbolist. His projection of “the racial subconscious,” is a remarkable characteristic of Narayan’s art- the four dominant symbols being the temple, the village, the town Malgudi, and the river Sarayu. Narayan has invested these four symbols with a deep mystery that influences the individual conscience as it flows into the universal; he develops Malgudi as the symbol of the whole of India as well as the Universe. So the river Sarayu by being a witness to history becomes a testimony to eternity.

Narayan’s art is the reflection of traditional Indian sensibility and offers a contrast to Mulk Raj Anand’s art. Narayan’s outlook is primarily comic because Indian sensibility precludes any possibility of tragedy. Narayan’s Indian sensibility is shaped by *Puranic* and epic myths and legends. In the deep recesses of his collective unconscious, which every individual inherits from his forefathers, patterns and symbols of the art in the *Puranas* (a genre of ancient Indian literature) and the epics lies dormant. It is not that Narayan uses such myths and legends to display his knowledge of things but the truth is that the feelings cannot be expressed economically without them. “These things are

present and influential not as a dogma or metaphysics but as part of a mode of perception and a habit of recreation. They flow in and out of a writer's thought and touch.”¹¹

That is the reason why Narayan very often draws broad mythic parallels to his plot in order to give authenticity and credibility to his Indian theme and setting. *The Guide* and *The Man Eater of Malgudi* are very close to *Valmiki* and *Bhasmasura* myth respectively and thus bring an easy credibility to the actions and their consequences in the context of an Indian ethos. Besides finding well- defined mythic parallel to plot, Narayan often weaves the narrative with allusions from ancient scriptures. In *Mr. Sampath*, Srinivas muses about the God *Nataraj* (The Hindu God Shiva in his form as the cosmic dancer). The mythic re-union of Krishnan with his dead wife in *The English Teacher*, the renouncement of Jagan in *The Vendor of Sweets*, and the penance of Raju to save the village from drought in *The Guide* are equally significant age-old beliefs and ideals that have percolated to the very bottom of our psyche. While studying the style of Narayan, Jayant K. Biswal writes:

These Indian myths and the traditional rituals, beliefs and superstitions not only create an authentic Indian touch, but also contribute to the effective communication of experience. The use of myth whether as a broad parallel to plot or as a “digressional technique” has made Narayan's style of storytelling lucid and amply communicative.¹²

Narayan's plot moves in archetypal pattern of order- disorder- order which is also the pattern of the *Puranas* (a genre of ancient Indian literature) and epics and the

traditional concepts of creation. The forces of evil appear in the world to disturb its peace and stability and are ultimately destroyed either by them or by incarnation. The stability returns with a renewed assertion of moral and spiritual values. This theme is recurrent in Narayan's novels with an astonishing degree of accuracy. With the solitary exception of *The Guide*, Narayan's novels move on the cyclical path of life's various experiences reaching at the ordered world of the beginning.

Reading Narayan's novels is both an exciting and an exhilarating experience. One can only catalogue his virtues. He is a great story teller. He has always maintained that the story alone matters to him. His limpid style flows from the fact that the story flows so easily. He is a storyteller par excellence. His humanity gives life to his stories; his basic affection for his character and his deep empathy for people in general add to his narratives a feeling of gentle irony and an overpowering sense of humor because of which he is one of the greatest writers of fiction of all times. He makes his readers become part of his world of fiction.

Notes

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Chapter-III

The Freedom Struggle and the Birth of the Mahatma

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2nd October 1869 at Porbandar, Gujarat. Gandhi had his early schooling at Rajkot. After matriculation he went to England to study law. During the early period of his stay in England Gandhi went through a phase of playing the English gentleman. But he soon realized that if he could not become a gentleman by the virtue of his character, the ambition was not worth cherishing. He was ashamed and began to lead a more simple life. This was the Mahatma in making during his stay in England.

Gandhi returned to India in 1891, he started practicing at Rajkot and Bombay, but sailed for South Africa two years later as counsel for an Indian firm. This visit to South Africa became an important episode in his life and brought about a complete transformation in his life. It was in South Africa that this timid young man, inexperienced and alone, came into clash with forces that obliged him to tap his hidden moral resources, and turned him into an experienced, creative and spiritually oriented leader. The South African phase of his life laid the foundation for Gandhiji's fight against the British. By the time of his return to India, the Mahatma had emerged as a leader of the oppressed Indians in South Africa. Gandhiji's life experiences in South Africa turned him into a leader of the masses.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had been a prominent leader of the Indian nationalist movement in South Africa. He went to South Africa and had been a vocal opponent of basic discrimination and abusive labor treatment as well as suppressive police control such as the Rowlatt Act. He was very much inspired by the philosophies of Baba Ram Singh and during his protests; Gandhiji had perfected the concept of *satyagraha* (holding onto truth). In January 1914 Gandhiji was successful. The hated legislation against Indians was repealed and all Indian political prisoners were released by General Jan Smuts.

Gandhi returned to India, on 9 January 1915 and initially entered the political scene not with the demand for a free India, but in support of the Congress Party's demand for a unified commerce-oriented territory. Gandhi appeared on the Indian political scene when there was ruthless oppression and large scale economic exploitation by the British. Early Indian politicians had failed to establish a through contact with the common people. They are from upper middle class society; they could not arouse the political consciousness in the country as a whole, which Gandhiji did. The people of India wanted to attain freedom from the British rule. Gandhiji use the ways of civil protest which he has learned in South Africa. He was opposed to the British colonialist as they placed exorbitant taxes on Indian nationals. He organized the people of the working class and those below poverty line to protest against the high taxes that have been imposed on them and against social discrimination. Gandhi is of the opinion that the industrial advancement and educational development that the Europeans had brought with them are capable of solving many of the problems that the people of India are facing. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, become Gandhi's guide and mentor in his endeavor. Gandhi's idea of

Non-violent civil disobedience are not supported by many Indians and some leaders of prominence, it appeared not practical to them. In Gandhi's own words, "civil disobedience is civil breach of unmoral statutory enactments." Gandhi believed that the protest against the British should be non-violent; they should withdraw cooperation with the British ruler. Gandhi's use of *satyagraha* (holding onto truth) to protest against the British rule were inspired by Lokmanya Tilak's 'Chatusutri' programme. During the anti-Rowlett Act protests in Punjab Gandhi's ability to inspire millions of people become clear.

The independence movement as late as 1918 was an elitist movement far removed from the masses of India, focusing essentially on a unified commerce-oriented territory and hardly a call for a united nation. Gandhi changed all that and made it a mass movement.

Gandhi's idea of non-violent protest brings millions of Indians into the movement; he transformed it from a struggle of the higher class to a nationwide struggle. The nationalist cause was extended and it incorporated the benefit and interest of the people who run small scale industries which formed the economy of the common people of India.

Gandhi persuaded other leaders of the country of the need to start a non-cooperation movement in support of Khilafat as well as for 'swaraj' (self-rule) at the Calcutta session of the Congress in September 1920, The first *satyagraha* (holding onto truth) movement urged the people of India to use *khadi* (homespun cotton cloth) and

Indian material as an alternative to the cloths that were shipped from Britain. Gandhi also urged people to boycott British educational institutions and law courts; resign from government employment; refuse to pay taxes: and forsake British titles and honors. Although this boycott was late to influence the new Government of India Act 1919, the movement become popular and gets widespread support and it becomes a challenge for the British ruler to stay in India for a longer period of time. Gandhi became the leader of Indian National Congress ,a nationalist political party in India in 1921, which demanded equal laws for all the people, equal rights for men and women, peaceful inter-religious relations, abolishment of the caste system , and particularly , Indian independence.

Gandhi led non-Cooperation movement from September 1920 until 1922. During this time the British were only able to control and stay in the country because of some Indians who were supportive of British rule. If the residents of the country stop cooperating with the British, then the Britishers would be forced to give up. The movement grows in its popularity, and soon millions of people refused to work in British run offices and cooperative establishments. Mahatma Gandhi became very popular. However, the non cooperation movement ended suddenly due to a violent mob eruption in Chauri Chaura in Uttar Pradesh where 23 police officials were killed when the people burned down a police station. Gandhi stopped the movement immediately by remaining true to his stand on non-violent protesting.

In 1922 Gandhi was sentenced to six years of prison, but was released after serving two years. On his release from prison, he set up the Sabarmati Ashram on the banks of the river Sabarmati in Ahmedabad, established the newspaper “Young India”,

and introduced a number of restructuring works for the socially disadvantaged people like the rural poor, and the untouchables. This period saw the emergence of a new generation of leaders like C. Rajagopalachari, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose and others who afterwards became the prominent voices of the Indian independence movement, some of them following the Gandhian ideals, or, as in the case of Bose's Indian National Army; deviating from it.

The sudden disruption in the Non-cooperation Movement did not stop the people of India who were demanding an independent India. On March 12, 1930, protesters took part in the Dandi march, a drive intended to oppose against the taxes on salt and protest against the British control on salt. The 24 days march of about 400 kilometers was led by Gandhi from Ahmedabad to Dandi, a coastal place between 11 March and 6th April. This march is known as the Dandi March or the Salt Satyagraha. In Dandi, the protesters broke the law of British by making salt from sea water without paying any tax to the British. During his 24 days march to Dandi Gandhi would cover 10 miles in a day and gave many speeches.

In April 1930, a violent clash between police and crowd took place. During the course of Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-31), around 100,000 people were imprisoned by the British Raj. In Peshawar police fired upon unarmed demonstrators in the Oissa Khwani bazaar massacre which catapulted onto the National platform the newly formed Khudai Khidmatgar movement (non-violent movement against the British Empire by the Pashtun people). Gandhi was jailed during the period of the first Round Table Conference which was held in November 1930, in London, was passed without a single representative from the Indian National Congress. The *satyagraha* (holding onto truth)

movement has caused a lot of economic hardship for the British Raj so they lift the ban imposed upon the Indian National Congress. Gandhi was released from prison in January 1931 along with his followers and other members of the Congress Working Committee.

During the first decade of the 20th century the underground revolutionary groups began to gather themselves and their activities began to gain momentum, before that it was not organized and their strike are not impactful. Revolutionary groups started to arise in Bengal, Maharashtra, Odisha, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and the then Madras Presidency which now come to be known as South India . Punjab sees a rise in those movements and in Bengal these movements get predominance during its partition in 1905. In Bengal it was the educated, intelligent and enthusiastic youth of the urban Middle Class society that came forward to take part in those activities, while Punjab got immense support from their rural and military society. Groups like 'Jugantar' and 'Anushilan Samiti' were formed in the guise of fitness club by a gathering of local youth in the 1900s. Initially the task of organizing the revolutionaries was taken up by Bhupendranath Dutta, Aurobindo Ghosh along with his brother Barin Ghosh . Jugantar was formed as an internal sphere of the Anushilan Samiti which was already present in Bengal with the motive of rising a revolutionary society in the guise of a fitness club.

Michael O'Dwyer, who was held responsible for the massacre of innocent peoples in Amritsar, was shot dead by Udham Singh in London on 13th March 1940. By 1930s the political scene of India began to change with majority of the leaders who are responsible for the revolutionary activities earlier began to consider the opportunity offered by the British ,with this the revolutionary activities started to decline. Many

leaders of the revolutionary groups joined Congress and other parties, especially communist ones and came to the mainstream politics. The others who did not abide by the British policies were jailed or kept in house arrest.

In 1937, Congress came to power in eight of the eleven provinces after winning the provincial which was a strong indicator to the British that Indian people want complete independence. On the onset of World War II, Viceroy Linlithgow makes a one sided decision of declaring India as a hostile state on the side of Britain without any consultation with the Indian elected representative which angered the leaders and in protest the entire Congress leadership of the local government councils resigned from their post . During the war of 1940, Gandhi was insisted by the people of his party and from outside to take out a massive civil disobedience movements, but Gandhi resisted those calls by stating that as Britain is fighting a war, he did not want to build his nation on the ruins of a destroyed nation. In 1942 the Congress initiated the Quit India movement or *Bharat Chhodo Andolan* which saw some violence but it was suppressed by the British Raj by arresting almost ten thousand leaders from Congress party which include the leaders of importance in national and provincial sector. Those leaders were kept in jail until the war ended in 1945.

The Quit India Movement (*Bharat Chhodo Andolan*) or the August Movement was a civil disobedience movement in India launched on 9 August 1942, during World War II. Gandhi give his “Do or Die” speech on the eve Quit India Movement (*Bharat Chhodo Andolan*) and urged the people of India, for a mass British withdrawal. He called for a firm and passive resistance on the part of the people. He urged all the Indian

teachers to leave their jobs in schools run by the British, and others to leave their government jobs and take part in Quit India Movement. This call of Gandhi was responded by a major portion the people which was due to the huge political influence of Gandhi's. This prompted the British officials and they acted immediately by arresting nearly every member of the Indian National Congress party. England made some consideration on their part, to be granted after the World War, the right to make independent Provincial constitution, which was right away rejected. After the rejection of the British proposal the nation once again entered into a mass civil disobedience which was marked by anti-war speeches and its refusal to assist England in the war. This movement begin to give idea to the British that they might not able to hold on to their position for a longer period of time.

The sole aim of the movement was to compel the British Government to come to the negotiating table. Gandhi's call for a firm but passive resistance signified with certainty what Gandhi foresaw for the movement which can most excellently explain by his speech 'Do or Die', given on 8 August at the Gwalior Tank Maidan in Bombay, which was renamed *August Kranti Maidan* since then. However, the British Government imprisoned almost the entire Congress leadership in less than twenty-four hours after Gandhi's speech and a larger number of the Congress leaders had to spend the entire period of war in jail.

The India's entry into the war was strongly opposed by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose initially he joined the non-cooperation Movement but was not satisfied with the principles of non-violence of Gandhi and supported Motilal and C.R. Das in the venture

of organizing the Swarajist party. Bose was appointed the Chief Executive officer of Calcutta by C.R.Das, the Mayor of Calcutta. The progressive activities of Subhash Ch. Bose invited the displeasure of the Government and were deported to Mandalay. Bose represented the young and extremist elements in the Congress. He was elected as the President of the Congress twice, in 1938 and 1939. He could not make any compromise with Gandhi and thus resigned his president-ship and organized the famous Forward Block. After protesting against the participation of India in the war, he started a new party, the All India Forward Block in 1940 after resigning from Congress in 1939. The war broke out after a year and the British put Bose under house arrest in Calcutta. However, he escaped and made a brave journey changing names and looking different he proceeded from there to Moscow and finally reached Berlin in March 1941. The German dictator Adolf Hitler did not like to help him for the cause of Indian independence. In Germany the Indian community hailed him as Netaji and greeted him with the slogan “Jai Hind”. From Berlin radio he regularly broadcasted to India urging his countryman to rise against the British. He very soon felt that South-East Asia would be a suitable ground for his grand scheme of raising a national army to free India from the British oppressive rule. The golden opportunity for him came when Japan joined the war. He came to prominence with Rommel’s Indian POWs which came to be known as the Free India Legion, this was initiated by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Ultimately, Bose went to Japanese South Asia, where he formed his Azad Hind Government, an interim Indian Government in exile, and organized the Indian National Army with Indian prisoner of war and Indians with knowledge of South-East Asia, with the help of the Japanese. He wanted to defeat the British Raj by reaching India as a powerful fighting force which will inspire the spirit of revolt among Indian soldiers.

The Indian National Army ultimately fails in their mission, owing to poor logistics by not seeing the larger picture, lack of support and training and due to poor supply of arms on the part of the Japanese. The believed death of Bose is also the cause of failure of the entire Azad Hind Movement. Subsequently Japan surrenders and a number of members of The Indian National Army were charged with treason after they were brought to India. Although Bose failed in his mission but his attempt caught the imagination of the people in India and turned the leaning of the native soldiers of the British Indian forces towards the British Raj who believe them to be their acquaintances.

The wind of change blowing steadily across the Indian subcontinent during more than half a century after the great Revolt of 1857 had left tell-tale marks on the political and social geography of the country. The end of the first World War-a watershed in European history -proved to be an equally significant period in Indian life, when the Gandhian whirlwind began to sweep over the length and the breadth of the land, upsetting all established political strategies and ushering in refreshingly new ideas and methods which shook Indian life in several spheres to the core. As Nehru puts it , ‘Gandhi.....was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths.’¹

Gandhi, fresh from his Satyagraha triumph in South Africa had returned to India in 1915. After a year of probation prescribed by his guru Gokhale, Gandhi successfully tested his new weapon of non-violence in the Champaran campaign against the exploitation of the tenants of the Indigo-planters in 1917, the Kaira Satyagraha against

unjust land assessment demands during the famine of 1918 and the Ahmadabad Labour dispute in the same year. In 1919, agitation against the revolt bills led to Jallianwala Bagh slaughter which remains as black a blot on the British escutcheon as the notorious Bibighar massacre of 1857 was on the Indian. By this time Gandhi's leadership had already assumed an all-India character; and it was almost symbolic of the fact that an age had ended and another begun, when on the day Tilak died in Bombay, Gandhi launched the first country-wide Non-Co-operation Movement. Though it petered out soon, the Movement created an unprecedented awakening, the most important feature of which was that it had converted Indian nationalism 'from a middle class movement to a mass emotion.'² The movement proved to be 'a baptism of fire which initiated the people into a new faith and new hope, and inspired them with a new confidence in their power to fight for freedom.'³

Gandhi launched the Civil Disobedience movement in 1930, which differed substantially from the earlier Non-co-operation movement, though the goal remained the same. Among the acts that captured the imagination of the people, most was the illegal making of salt. Gandhi with seventy-nine chosen followers took twenty-four day march; from Sabarmati Ashram of Gujarat to Dandi to break the Salt Law Which has been imposed by the British in March 1930 electrified the entire nation. The Salt Satyagraha roused the people of India to action as never before. Ten years later came the third and last Satyagraha campaign of 1940 which, after the historic 'Quit India' resolution of 9 August 1942, led to violent underground revolutionary activity, while Gandhi and his followers languished in jail. Soon after the end of World War II, the political and

economic imperatives of the day compelled Britain to concede independence to India on 15 August, 1947.

The entire period of nearly three decades of the Gandhian age was one of far-reaching changes not only in the political scene but in practically all areas of Indian life. In the social sphere, the Gandhian movement led, among other things, to an unprecedented awakening among women who responded whole-heartedly to Gandhi's call, which according to Akshay Ramanlal Desai, in his magnum opus titled *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, "was unique in the entire history of India, to see the spectacle of hundreds of women taking part in political mass movement, picketing of liquor shops, marching in demonstration, courting jails, facing lathi charges and bullets."⁴

The emergence of Gandhi on the political scene in the 1920s as the nationalist leader had tremendous impact on women. His ideas about women's roles in the nationalist movement were considered 'revolutionary' for the period. Though he believed in gender-specific roles, he was very critical of those roles that confined women in ignorance and affected them adversely, like *purdah* (the practice in certain Muslim and Hindu societies of screening of women from men or strangers), dowry and the *devadasi* (temple dancers) tradition. He realized the significant role women could play in the nationalist movement by their active participation. He argued that the qualities of self-sacrifice and 'silent suffering' were ingrained in Indian women. Thus women were ideally suited to participate in his movement, the core concepts of which are ahimsa and Satyagraha. Gandhiji's take on the practices like *purdah*, etc. was that it leads to the

ignorance of the women and hence blocked the way towards modernization of the country. But Gandhi too could be critiqued on the idea that he possessed regarding the role of women in the nationalist movement, although he wanted the modernization of the women but still he wanted to confine them to their gender specific roles in the society.

The most important aspect of this movement for independence from a historical point of view was that it saw mass participation by Indian women, women who had till then been confined to the domestic sphere. The contribution of women to the Independence movement was significant. They were involved in diverse nationalist activities, both within and outside the home. Within the home they spun and wove *khadi* cloths .The educated women held classes to educate other women and contributed significantly to nationalist literature in the form of articles, poems and propaganda material. Shelter and nursing care were also provided to nationalist leaders who were in hiding from British authorities. Outside the home *Prabhat-feris* (morning rounds) were organized in which women from all castes and classes would walk to the local temple singing songs to rouse the nationalist and patriotic feelings of the people. In addition they held meetings and demonstrations, took part in *satyagraha* (holding onto truth), picketed toddy and foreign-cloth shops, went to prison and also suffered brutalities at the hands of the British police.

Gandhi never talked about lifting up the women from ensnares of the social evils and injecting these newly liberated women into the nationalist movement as prominent leaders as per with the male nationalist leaders who could through their ideals of the ‘new women’ act significantly towards the nationalist movement. Although Gandhi brought

the women out of the homely space but still attributed to them the success of certain gender-specific roles like self-sacrifice and silent suffering , spinning and weaving *khadi* , these were certain functions that the women were already performing within their family spaces under the patriarchal system of the society before being subjected to the notion of the ‘new women’ , the difference was just that these contribution of women came to be counted as a contribution to the nationalist movement after the construct of the ‘new women’, without particularly bringing any significant change to the type of contribution made by the women. Hence when one follows Gandhian lines of women participation in the nationalist movement the notion of the ‘new women’ comes under question because the women were never made anew as far as the social setting was concerned but it was just that the women were, after the introduction of the new phrase, being looked at from a different angle by the national leaders like Gandhi which attributed the importance to the role that the women were already playing since the start within their so called ‘Womanly Duties’.

The greatness of Gandhi was no sudden overwhelming greatness but rather the greatness of an ordinary man who, through a long process of trial and error, aspiration and endeavor, achieved a greatness which without doubt was his own. Although Gandhism is no close system or dogma, it does involve an anxious concern for means, and it does take its stand on a firm faith in God. Of ends and means Gandhi thought a good deal. He once remarked that, “while God has given us some limited control over the means; we have none over the ends”. In his philosophy of life, ends and means were convertible, meaning that the far vision and the near vision are complementary, and one shouldn’t be set up against the other. The Gandhian theory and practices of Satyagraha

directly issued from this acute sense of personal and moral responsibility for our day to day actions, irrespective of the distant goals.

The rise of strong youth movements was another notable result of the Gandhian upsurge, and was a clear indication of how the entire social structure was being stirred by the new forces at work. Another indication of this was provided by the awakening among the depressed classes. Religious reform movements like the *Brahmo Samaj* (the societal component of Brahmanism) and the *Arya Samaj* (Hindu reform movement) had already made a plea for equal rights to the untouchables; and in 1906 Depressed Classes Mission Society was founded in Bombay. The Congress under Gandhi made the uplift of the untouchables an important part of its program. The All India Harijan Sevak Sangh was founded by Gandhi in 1932 and significant acts of legislation towards the amelioration of the lot of the untouchables were undertaken by the Congress Government which came to power in the provinces in 1937. In B.R. Ambedkar, the scheduled castes found a doughty champion from among their own ranks. He established the 'All India Depressed Classes Federation' and the 'All India Scheduled Castes Federation', besides launching agitations like the Mahad Satyagraha for the right of use of water- tanks.

In the economic sphere, the period of the First World War saw a rapid development of Indian industries, and, soon after the Russian Revolution, Marxist ideas reached India. The All India Trade Union Congress was founded in 1920. After the economic depression of 1929 -1933, the Second World War gave a further impetus to the growth of Indian industries.

Mahatma Gandhi's educational insights had a fundamental sanity of their own, especially in the context of the largely rural character of India and the constant economic backwardness of the people. Gandhi put forward a scheme that placed the main emphasis on education through a basic craft. One of the undesirable consequences of the British system of education had been the creation of an 'educated middle class,' detached from the hard actualities of life in the country. Aversion to all forms of manual work was a consequence of this education, and this in turn led to what Rajagopalachari has aptly called "the stupidities of the middle class." Gandhiji said, 'Do and Learn.' 'Basic' education was meant to make the child participate in the creative life of the region, the local crafts, industries and occupations and acquire an intimate understanding of his environment. Through such purposeful participation and understanding the child was expected to cultivate self reliance and develop a sense of responsibility for the well-being of the community. And if education was to touch the heart and soul, it had to give primacy to the mother tongue, and therefore written or spoken language should alike aim at the ideal of precision and simplicity so that what is said might prove an invitation and a challenge even to a child.

With self-realization and progressive world- realization would come '*Sarvodaya*' (progress of all), the splendid fulfillment in the personal, social, national and international spheres of the art of simple and wise living, benefiting all and exploiting none. And '*Sarvodaya*' (progress of all) was to be no distant inaccessible Utopia but the practicable enfolding of a full and happy life for India's teeming millions.

As we dwell on the phenomenon of Gandhi's life and martyrdom, we come to realize at last that he was indeed a Mahatma. For him there was no hiatus between private morality and public policy, between ethics and politics, between material and spiritual health. Endowed with something akin to a sixth sense, he inferred our deep-rooted ills and prescribed simple remedies to end them. He didn't think that the wand of science and technology would work the same wonders in a sub-continent like India afflicted with an ever increasing population as in smaller or more fortunately situated countries like Britain, Canada or the U.S.A. The aim of human life is happiness, not luxurious living; and true happiness is attained only through work and good fellowship, and the expulsion of cowardice and violence from our hearts.

The period of near three decades of the Gandhian age was one of far-reaching changes not only in the political scene but practically in all areas of Indian life. In the political sphere, while the great mass-awakening generated an all-pervading-national consciousness which facilitated the assumption of a distinctive national identity after independence, a disruptive force was the continuing growth of Muslim separation culminating in the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Apart from an all too brief period of Hindu-Muslim unity at the time of the Khilafat agitation, the march of events during these three decades led inexorably to partition and its holocaust.

The Gandhian impact on contemporary Indian literature has brought about results at various levels, and in various directions. As regards writer's choice of language, it was seen that one result of Gandhian influence has been a general preference for the mother tongue or the regional language, and occasionally a purposeful

bilingualism , the same writer handling with mastery his own mother tongue as well as English. Besides, whatever the language medium chosen, the stress had been more on simplicity and clarity and immediate effectiveness than on complex, profound or arduous artistry, and this has been as marked in English writing as in writing in the regional languages. As regards the choice of themes and the portrayal of character, the Gandhian influence has been no less marked. There has been more or less conscious shift of emphasis from the city to the village, or there is implied contrast between the two - urban luxury and sophistication on the one hand and rural modes and manners on the other.

Indian English literature of the Gandhian age was influenced by a new era of developments in Indian life. A highly significant feature was the sudden flowering of the novel during the 'thirties,' when the Gandhian movement was perhaps at its strongest. It is possible to see the connection here if one remembers that by this decade, the nationalist upsurge had stirred the entire Indian society to the roots to a degree and on a scale unprecedented earlier, making it acutely conscious of the pressures of the present in all fields of national life; and it is out of this consciousness that fiction, in Lionel Thrilling's own words, 'for our time the most effective agent of the moral imagination,' emerges. The works of K.S. Venkataramani, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao would not perhaps have been possible had the miracle that was Gandhi not occurred during this period. It was during this age that Indian English fiction writers have come up with some of its most powerful subject matter in their writings like the suffering of the people of India in the hands of the British during the freedom struggle, the relationship of East and West, the common problems, the sufferings of the untouchables and the landless poor people, the down-trodden, the economically exploited and the subjugated.

Gandhi has eluded many intellectuals who have addressed him in varied tones as ‘Mickey Mouse’, or ‘*Avatar*’, or ‘the beloved Master’, or ‘the man of God’, or ‘the fool of God’, or ‘the light’, or ‘the man’, “responsible for the country’s vivisection”⁵

Nehru comprehensively expresses Gandhi legend thus:

“Where he sat became a temple, where he walked the ground was hollowed”⁶

Sarojini Naidu’s “Lotus” is an emotional outpour of a poet on the legendary figure of Gandhi. In her sonnet on Gandhi, she describes him as an eternal lotus who is a source of guidance and strength for billions. As a matter of fact, he had completely identified himself with the Indian masses and emerged as the voice and aspiration of these teeming millions. He spoke their language, lived their life and wholly dedicated his life to their cause, “The good of all people.” The great leader of freedom movements like George Washington, Lenin, Mou Tse Tung, and even Nelson Mandela of our times, after the freedom of their countries, held vital position of President or Prime Minister in the government of their countries. But in this respect as well, Gandhiji uniquely stands out. When India won her independence on 15 August, 1947, the red letter day of India’s history, he was not present in New Delhi and his whole day was exclusively devoted to fast and prayer in a remote village in Bengal.

Political prose predominated during the Gandhian age. The pride of place here naturally goes to Mahatma Gandhi who was born in a higher middle class Vaisya family of traders turned administrators. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had an upbringing in

which the example of his upright father, the influence of his devout mother, the impact of the sensitive and earnest mind of ancient Sravana, the model of filial devotion and Rama were important shaping factors.

The story of his adolescence which he has told with pitiless honesty in *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* an autobiography, which was marked by a sharp conflict between quest for self - improvement and an equally strong temptation to disobey the family code of conduct by experimenting with meat -eating, smoking and petty theft. After an undistinguished school career, he spent three years in England, studying law. Unable to make a mark as a lawyer on his return home, he sailed for South Africa, in search of his fortune and discovered his life's philosophy instead. His encounter with the severe racial discrimination practiced by the white against the Indians there- a traumatic experience of which he himself had the bitter taste more than once- turned the shy and timid brief less barrister into a brave fighter against injustice and a confident leader of men. He soon put into practice his political, social and economic theories by launching Satyagraha movements and making experiments in community living. Within five years of his return to India he led his country to freedom through a series of Satyagraha campaigns. His death by a Hindu fanatic's bullets in 1948 ended one of the most significant epochs in modern Indian history. Raja Rao's fiction especially '*Kanthapura*' acquires a new significance, as it embodies an earnest record of freedom struggle and the essential Gandhi who led the Indian people and became a part of country's Levy. Today, it is to benighted Indians what Tennyson's 'Ulysses' must have been to the Victorians.

Raja Rao, like R.K. Narayan, is an eminent novelist. Where the youth witnessed a new national upsurge under the leadership of Gandhi in the midst of wide- spread orthodoxy, ignorance, slavery, class-distinction and deep- rooted old customs. Rao's recognition of the forces and ideals of this unique event and Gandhi's impact on the Indian people with their rich traditions have been creditably documented in his first novel '*Kanthapura*'. Like Lord Ram, Gandhi was born to crush the forces of evil (Ravana). His return from prison was always hailed as Rama's return from Lanka. Even in his earlier work, like *Jawane* (1933), Gandhi is present in the background of his villages. But *Kanthapura* catches the real freedom struggle run on what Gandhi thought, said and did. A record of the historical impact of Gandhi on Indian life (even carried to the remote villages), the novel is a true exhibition of Gandhi in theory and practice.

Kirillon remarks about Gandhi "Gandhi whose presence in simple dhoti and country sandals, the stick in hand and with God on his lips, appears to the Indian mystical mind.... Gandhi may well turn out to be our man but not yet."⁷

Thus Raja Rao who has a passion for philosophy, expresses his respect for Gandhi and his philosophy through his novel.

Gandhi's writings, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Rule*, *Key to Health*, which are reflective of his philosophy are a mine of stimulating thought on political, social, economic, cultural and spiritual issues. He was no learned scholar, by no means an original thinker with a razor- sharp mind, not a brilliant theoretician, but he was solidly grounded in the ancient Indian tradition. He possessed a

profound moral earnestness which enabled him to rediscover the ethical values of this tradition; and with his convictions supported by similar trends in ancient and modern western thought, he boldly applied his findings to the political and social realities of colonial India. As he himself stated that, 'I have presented no new principles, but tried to restate old principles'; and 'I have nothing new to teach the world'. Truth and non-violence are there in our Indian tradition from the time immemorial; it has been tried on a large scale by Mahatma Gandhi. A basic element in Gandhi's political thought was his faith in the right of every country to evolve a system best suited to its genius; and in India's case it was what he called *Ramraj*, i.e. 'Sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority.' The 'Swaraj of his dreams was self-government based on adult franchise, to be attained by 'educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.' It recognized 'no race or religious distinction', nor was it 'isolated independence' but 'healthy and dignified independence' making for fruitful international co-operation. This 'Swaraj' could only be attained by the practice of purely non-violent means.

Social reform was for Gandhi only an inevitable part of the struggle for true Swaraj. He believed that 'social re-ordering and political Swaraj must go hand in hand.' His social ideal was 'an equalization of status', with class distinctions being abolished. He championed the cause of women's freedom, denouncing child marriage, the dowry system and enforced widowhood. He opposed birth-control by artificial means and advocated self-control and voluntary chastity instead. A stern critic of the evil of drinking, he said that complete independence was impossible of attainment by people who were slaves of intoxicating drinks and drugs. He found that British system of

education in India was defective as it was ‘based on a foreign culture to the almost entire exclusive of indigenous culture’; it ignored ‘The culture of the heart and the hand’, and confined itself ‘simply to the head.’ Its use of a foreign medium was another great drawback. He advocated free, compulsory and self - supporting education through the mother tongue, basic education which taught dignity of labor and led to character - building and prescribed craft-centered training at the lower level and education related to ‘ national necessities’ at the higher.

In the economic sphere, Gandhi totally rejected the concept of the ‘economic man’, and refused to divorce economics from ethics. He preached ‘*sarvodaya*’, which means ‘the good of all’, ‘ethical socialism’ which was to be achieved through decentralization of industry, the established of rural communities composed of small, manageable units co-operatively knit together, ‘*swadeshi*’ and khadi- spinning and the implementation of the Tolstoyan doctrine of ‘bread- labor.’ He advocated the voluntary acceptance of the ideas of ‘trusteeship’ by the capitalists in order to prevent the economic exploitation of the weaker sections of society.

Gandhi’s ethical and religious philosophy was shaped not only by ancient Indian philosophy, the *Upanishads*, the *Gita*, *Vaishnavite* and *Jaina* ideals but also by Western Philosophy of which the New Testament of the Bible bore much influence on him. He subscribed to the traditional Hindu doctrine of *Varnashrama dharma* but regarded the *varnas* (type) as ‘a healthy division of work’ and not a rigid caste system. Hence untouchability for him was ‘a plague which is the bounden duty of every Hindu to combat.’ He declared that ‘there is no religion higher than Truth and Righteousness.’ The

only path to Truth was non-violence which was ‘the first article’ of his ‘faith’ and ‘the last article’ of his ‘creed.’ He held non-violence to be ‘the law of the human race’ and ‘infinitely better and superior to brute force.’

During the years that have elapsed since Gandhi’s death, many of his ideas have been put into practice with remarkable success, both in India and abroad. Some of them like ‘*Panchayati Raj*’ have been implemented by the government, while Vinoba Bhave’s land- gift movement of the 1950s revived the Gandhian magic for a time. Outside India, Martin Luther King in the U.S.A, and Danilo Dolci in the Sicily have employed the principle of non-violent resistance in the social sphere with spectacular results; and the idea of trusteeship in industry has all roused some interest.

As we dwell on the phenomenon of Gandhi’s life and martyrdom, we come to realize at last that he was indeed a Mahatma that for him there was no hiatus between private morality and public policy, between ethics and politics, between material and spiritual health. Endowed with something akin to a sixth sense, he inferred our deep-rooted ills and prescribed simple remedies to end them. He didn’t think that the wand of science and technology would work the same wonders in a subcontinent like India afflicted with an ever increasing population as in smaller or more fortunately situated countries like Britain, Canada or the U.S.A. The aim of human life is happiness, not luxurious living; and happiness is won only through work and good fellowship, and the expulsion of cowardice and violence from our hearts.

It has proved difficult to separate Gandhian novelists from the Mahatma himself, the Freedom Fighters, or the first years of India's independence. Gandhi and the school of literature he inspired seemed to be so much at one with each other that many literary critics assumed that the school which has taken over in form and content the whole of Indo- Anglican writing wouldn't survive its master.

Gandhi could survive his own message only if its universality were brought into focus. The philosophical value of his teaching had to find a field of application in a context other than that of the struggle for independence. Narayan in his novels try to impart to his readers that the real meaning of Gandhi's teachings can be found in the daily life of the people of India.

The themes developed by Gandhian novelists are easily summed up because they are textbook applications of what the Mahatma ceaselessly repeated. The novelty they introduce into the literature of the subcontinent comes from the fact that they blend philosophy and art in their efforts to amend and reform people's way of life.

To Gandhi, art had to fulfill some kind of useful purpose and contribute to the general education of the people. Aesthetics could only be a means and not an end. Indo- Anglian novelists have to be given credit for insisting on that aspect of Gandhi's philosophy which has often been underestimated and which links the accession to independence with a moral and spiritual revival of the country. To bring the Raj to an end was essential for Gandhi only because its existence forced Indians to regard themselves as an inferior and subdued race. Gandhi insisted upon the need for a moral

revolution among his fellow countrymen; a revolution necessary in itself regardless of the British presence and which would have to be carried on after the occupying power's departure.

R.K. Narayan through his novels has established himself in a class of his own among the Indo-Anglian novelists. In his writings he has stressed those points which stand out in Gandhian Philosophy, removed from political and temporal context which gives an extra dimension to his writings. The characters of his novels are the representative of the Gandhian ideal. They symbolize the greatest virtues of the Indian way of life, which Gandhi has followed throughout his life. They are in a journey in pursuit of truth.

Narayan based his novels in Malgudi which is a small municipal town; it can be any town or village in India. All his characters comes from this place, be it a school going boy, teacher, businessman, guide or a housewife. Narayan through his novels shows that Gandhism is a moral value that can be practiced anywhere if a person's heart is willing. Gandhi wanted to renew the spiritual values of Vivekananda or Ramakrishna to free India from the religious superstition it has fallen into.

In *The English Teacher*, the hero, Krishnan, becomes a victim of misapprehension. His first illusion is linked to his position as a college lecturer. And the second is related to his spiritual illusion which rose from his superstitious beliefs. After the death of his wife he started to understand life in religious terms. He thought that religion only can make man conscious of his position in the universe and it can help him

excel in life until he becomes one with the individual and the nonexistence. This very interpretation of life is the foundation of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy which itself has its part in India's religious past all the way in its *Vedantic* (one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy) origin.

In *The Vendor of Sweets*, Jagan's philosophical and religious journey is even more striking. At the start of the story he is quite a happy man, successful in his business and deeply convinced that he lives according to Gandhi's principles to which he believes always adhered and for which he was imprisoned as Freedom Fighter. Yet the reader is soon made aware of the fact that Jagan deludes himself and is the very embodiment of everything Gandhi fought against. He goes by the word but his heart is dead. His would-be philosophical system based on religion turns out to be nothing but mere idiosyncrasy of little value. There is nothing Gandhian in the simplicity of his life, only sheer routine and deceit.

In reading *The Vendor of Sweets*, we see a man (in Jagan) conditioned by Gandhian principles but without really understanding the significance such values hold. For example, when Jagan is asked the idea behind the 'conquering of the self', he has no answer.

In *A Tiger for Malgudi* the message is even more distinctly spelt out. The tiger man's arch enemy has only known two masters. The first who lived by the sword and so, logically met his death at the tiger's claws. Food was given in exchange for obedience

and work. The second master spoke of love only and radiating it all around, brought about more love.

Narayan portrays his heroes as an average person whose very existence take on a spiritual aspect at some point of time in his life. Their inner self become transformed to be a better human being in the end. Narayan wanted to remind us that Gandhi's messages has the ability to plead one person towards spirituality.

As a humanist, Narayan could not perhaps able to accept a division between town and country. According to him man is the same everywhere, each one born with his own individuality, he can be good or a bad person; the environment plays an important part in molding of one's personality. In Narayan's villages we can find every character: good, bad, evil and even murderers.

In India these town or village divisions begin with Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma has often objected to the displacements which unavoidably occur with the shift from country to town. Malgudi is no better or worse than any other Indian villages. Corrupt officials and their inefficiency to do their job can be found at every stage. The corruption that is found is not a work of art, it is not something linked to a certain class or to a specific social condition; the corruption is not even part of life but it is life itself. This corruption can only be eliminated if a person's heart can be changed. Malgudi is a representative of any village or a town in India upon which the outside world still has little influence. Malgudi's problems are India's problems at larger perspective and in that

respect the society that is shown in Malgudi is far away from the societies of Gandhi's dream.

People put into practice many principles of Gandhi to balance the effect of corruption and truth in the traditional rhythm of Shiva. Lord Shiva was known as the destroyer of evil. He couldn't tolerate injustice. Shiva is called a Maha Yogi because he meditated for hours for the well being of the universe. His calm state of mind was disturbed only due to extreme reasons, thus, highlighting the fact that half the battle can be won by just being calm. Narayan uses the same method in his novels of giving his casual remarks wherever he sees any corruption or misconduct like good policemen still exist, pujas are never forgotten and *sanyasis* are respectable person in a society even if they borrow flowers from other people.

Mahatma Gandhi's influence can be seen in every page of Narayan's novels. Faith will save India from evil influences and a person's faith right away cannot be crushed. Belief goes further than the town - village differences because it is an individual issue. It only concerns the self and so it can be found anywhere and everywhere. It belongs to the heart of a person but it has to be reconsidered. Narayan does not show Gandhianism only as cotton spinning but give it a contemporary vision to help it locate itself in time.

Literature of Gandhian age came to existence with a new language or, to be more precise, it gives a new height to an old language. At that time Indo-English looks

like a new language on the whole with its own vocabulary and grammar. However, Narayan's English has a class of its own without any pretension with a natural flow.

Narayan write his novels in very simple and lucid English. He portrays in his novels, India and its people he is familiar with and uses the language he masters well. He expresses only those points which are needed for the writer's purpose. Narayan uses his own English all through the sixty years of his writing career, and this serve his purpose to perfection. It helps give the impression of an intangible world in which language would fill up a perfect meaning, left unaffected by education, cultural background or even fits of temper.

Many novelists of the Gandhian age departed from the oral tradition that was prevalent in India and write down long novels crowded with characters. It appeared as if they have done nothing new, they only covered themselves in Indian clothing but their writings mostly remain a western form of literature. On the other hand, from the very beginning Narayan decided to stick to the Indian tradition of village story teller with their customs and composition. Their structure is short and linear. He tried to avoid long narrations as they make the audience tired and they lose the thread of the story. Narayan gave an Indian form and an Indian content to the novels he wrote. While other Indo – Anglian novelist of the Gandhian period only Indianized the approach but kept on the original form and structure of the novel.

Narayan wanted to reach the core of Gandhi's teaching. He wanted to give Gandhian philosophy a literary existence by separating the noticeably transient

suggestion from what that was everlasting in it. Narayan treated his subject matter from philosophical point of view rather than a revolutionary, he wanted to cast a light on Indian independence movement and the significance of the events which preceded and followed it. Narayan took up his pen to show the universality of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and its connection with all time and all places.

R.K. Narayan's is a pure Indian in both belief and character and these characteristics of his can be seen in his writings. His fiction summarizes the means of accomplishment for Indian literature in English.

R.K. Narayan's novels are abounding with social awareness. K.N. Singha says about Narayan that, "he is keenly aware of the fundamental irremediable incongruities which life and world are confronting with us."⁸ Narayan do not criticize, comment or attempts to correct things. He observes the society in a detached manner and accepts the reality without any grudge towards anyone Narayan's characters shows us everything that is happening in each and every corner of an Indian society. Narayan's art and object of fiction writing is rightly observed by R.S. Singh and he explains:

Narayan's heroes are aware of social and political changes, but they do not take sides, nor do they commit themselves to any ideology. Narayan imbues them with social awareness and sense of responsibility only to the extent it helps him to bring out their human qualities. His vision is comic and

his central concern vivid presentation of the ironies
of life.⁹

Indian fiction writers have been using god men in their fiction right from its inception. Narayan and most of the Indian English writers have a traditional approach towards such characters. In Narayan's novels, genuine god men are of different types. First of all, it is proper to discuss true *sanyasi* (a Hindu religious mendicant) or spiritualist. They are called 'true' because they bring about spiritual changes in other people's life without expecting returns from them. They lead a very simple life keeping themselves away from the material world, and thinking always for the welfare of human beings as well as of the whole creation of god.

R.K. Narayan gives his own concept of *sanyasi* saying:

When one is seized with a passion to understand oneself, one has to leave behind all normal life and habitual mode of thought, one becomes an ascetic *sanyasi*. A *sanyasi* is one who renounces everything and undergoes a complete change of personality.¹⁰

Vivid and clear examples of *sanyasi* (a Hindu religious mendicant) protagonist appear in most of Narayan's novels including *The Guide*, *The Financial Expert*, *A Tiger for Malgudi*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *Waiting for the Mahatma*. In *The Guide*, Narayan not only exposes the modern man's hollowness but also explores those saintly qualities of man that raise him above the self with no binding of logistic compulsions. Here, man carries an unfractured psyche and stays in the realm of real only to act as a redeemer of

mankind. Though his actions are not always guided by any religion or anti-religious inspirations, his transformation takes place under circumstances beyond his control and access. The protagonist's worldly life, the life of desiring self, appears just meaningless and futile once he attains spiritual elevation. It is a fact that his suffering becomes a kind of 'payment for his spiritual health and honour'.¹¹ He reaches a desire free world of cosmic consciousness radiant with the principles of austerity, universal love and sacrifice. Raju's life illustrates man's continuous quest for happiness, which he attains only after transcending the limitations of the ego and the lure of worldly pleasures to seek fulfillment in universal love and sacrifice.

The Financial Expert also focuses on the question of human desire that completely destroys the hero. It is towards the end that the eyes of the hero open and he realize that nothing carries significance in this world which is full of illusion. He believes that neither wealth nor love for one's son or of any possession earns a permanent joy or pleasure for a person. According to him the real joy lies in staying desireless and away from all worldly concerns.

Narayan's novel *A Tiger for Malgudi* is influence by philosophical Indian myths, symbolic mask and religious allegory. It shows people's belief in the pure spirit of Hinduism, a better understanding of the story of *Bhasmasura* from Hindu mythology. *The Vendor of Sweets* is also written under the influence of Hindu theory of recurrence of souls, as it is believed that souls never die and the four stages of a human life. The religious tradition is the prime concern and the spirits of social consciousness remain in the backdrop. In *A Tiger for Malgudi*, Raja, the tiger, is the hero of the novel who comes

out better than most human beings. The novel opens with an aged tiger lying in its cage thinking about its past, its cub hood and wild days in the jungle, and later life in a film shooting camp. One day he wanders into the town. The terror-stricken public attempts to get it shot; an ascetic appears on the scene and adopts it as a companion after protecting it. Its master becomes a *Sanyasi*. Religion is once again a major concern in the novel and Narayan probes into the sanctity of the terms *Sanyasi*, *Yogi* or *Swamiji* indicating more or less the same state. Narayan says that a sanyasi is one who renounces everything and undergoes a complete change of personality.

In the novel *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Narayan brings to the reader the actual character of Gandhi: Gandhi as an ideal leader as well as a spiritual guide.

“In Indo-English writings the character of saint is more idealized than wrapped up in mystery, particularly when their influence is described as beneficent. They then, represent true India and are the leaders of their community.”¹²

Gandhi is presented here as a saint who gives directions not only to Sriram or the people of Malgudi but also to the thousands of people of India. Like Jesus Christ, he teaches the people of India the lesson of truth and non-violence.

Gandhi wants a revolution to bring about changes in our society, but his is a non-violent revolution, which is a unique idea indeed. He wants the welfare of the people of

India as well as of the Englishmen. When he encourages the people of India to launch a non-violent revolution, he is not only saving their lives but also saving the Englishmen of criticism which they are sure to receive if they try to quell the violent revolution through violent means. The function of a saint is to think about the welfare of others and he is doing so by adopting non-violent means.

Gandhi is presented as a man of enormous spiritual strength. He represents in his concrete, dry and thoroughly human way, absolute simplicity, total integrity and complete disinterestedness. His genius is made to appear as one of utter honesty and unqualified ordinariness. He is one in whom maturity ripens into wisdom, common sense into a mystic perception of quality and ordinary kindness into a rare and sensitive responsiveness.

“The racial and spiritual wisdom which is implicit in the fiction and is usually absorbed into the details, is concentrated in this novel in the figure of Gandhi. Gandhi is both a man, a real, a worn, ordinary person and a God, who, as Lawrence said, knows what the realities are and never fails in that Knowledge.”¹³

As Gandhi's presence is felt throughout the novel *Waiting for the Mahatma*, so is the presence of the tiger's master in *A Tiger for Malgudi*. They both have immense spiritual insight and pervade the novel from the beginning to the end.

While Gandhian literature is vast and is rapidly growing, it must be admitted all the same that the impact of Gandhi at the deeper levels, provoking a transvaluation of current values, has been effective enough to produce lasting results. Gandhi is often being cited more as a matter of form and convenience than of deep conviction. Gandhi laid stress again and again on moral and spiritual values in contrast to material advancement, although this had its place too. He knew that too much industrialization would spell disaster to the seven lakhs of Indian villages; and he adopted the loin cloth and the Savegram way of life because he felt that, for the teeming millions of Indians, no other way of life was possible - yet he knew that even such bare colorless life could be made reasonably full and purposive.

Through *Waiting for the Mahatma* Narayan wanted to present the Socio-economic condition of the people of India of pre-and post- independence age, it is the story of young man Sriram and Bharati written in the background of Mahatma Gandhi's image. The novel highlights the impact of Mahatma Gandhi and his movements on the people of India. The impact of Gandhi and his philosophies was different on the different section of the society. In the novel different motives prompt the characters to join the Mahatma and his movement. The characters like Natesh, Jagadish and the contractor act out of expediency and not of principle. The Mahatma remains insignificant to Sriram's grandmother. She does not understand Gandhi and his political mission. She feels that he and his followers are trying to disturb the smooth-running stream of life. She does not want her grandson Sriram to invite any trouble upon himself by associating with Gandhi and his dangerous preaching. Narayan wants to remind his readers that significant parts

of the common people of India are somewhat unenthusiastic about Mahatma Gandhi and his National Movement. The consequences of the National Movement and its effect on the people are the real theme of the novel. All the events of the novel move around its central character of Mahatma Gandhi. The novel shows us a realistic picture of National movement which is written in the background of Gandhi's image. Narayan portrays the novel in a very interesting and lively manner by minutely studying the scenes, state of mind and nature of people during the National Movement. The novel appears to be suggestive of Narayan's own understanding of life.

The entire period of near three decades of the Gandhian age was one of far-reaching changes not only in the political scene but in all areas of Indian life. In the social sphere, the Gandhian movement led, among other things, to an unprecedented awakening among women, who responded whole-heartedly to Gandhi's call. The rise of a strong youth movement was another notable result of the Gandhian upsurge, and was clear indication of how the entire social structure was being stirred by the new force at work. Another indication of this is provided by the awakening among the depressed classes. Religious reform movement like the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj had already made a plea for equal rights for the untouchables.

The novel as a genre of Indian literature in English was gaining ground during the 'Gandhian age', for it seemed to be the best mode of projecting the new era of developments in Indian life. A highly significant feature is the sudden flowering of the novel during the thirties, when the Gandhian movement was perhaps at its strongest.

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Chapter IV

Influence of Gandhian Philosophy on Indian novelists writing in English.

Gandhism is a body of ideas and principles that describes the inspiration, vision and the life work of Mahatma Gandhi. The term ‘Gandhism’ also encompasses what Gandhi’s ideas, words and actions mean to people around the world and how they used them as guiding principles in leading their lives.

However, Gandhi himself did not agree with the term ‘Gandhism’, in Gandhi’s own words:

“There is no such thing as Gandhism, and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truth to our daily life and problems..... The opinions I have formed and the conclusions I have arrived at are not final. I may

change them tomorrow. I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills.”¹

The progression of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi into the ‘Mahatma’ (great soul) was based on his non-violent philosophies which served as the guiding light of his life. These philosophies of Gandhi are referred by the collective term ‘Gandhism’ which he fearlessly holds on to till his last breath. Mahatma Gandhi’s thoughts and his philosophies over the years have inspired generations across the world and they have often been the basis of civil rights movements waged against oppressive administration. Martin Luther King Junior emerged as a leader of the Civil Rights movement. Civil Rights activities launched the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955. The non-violent approach of King’s activism, which was proved to be highly successful and sincerely regarded, was based on his study and understanding of Gandhi’s experience in South Africa and India.

The pivotal and defining element of Gandhism is truth or *satya*. Gandhi’s life was a never-ending journey to find out the truth and which is marked by trials and testing on himself and learning from his own experiences and mistakes. Gandhi developed a way of life by his constant experimenting with truth. He was prepared to learn through trial and error, often admitting to mistakes and changing his behavior accordingly. Gandhi considered truth is above and beyond of all other things and a person must consistently hold on to it throughout his life without fear. Gandhiji initiated the term *satyagraha* which interpret to as an endeavor for truth which was popularized during the Indian independence movement. The doctrine of truth or *satya* and non-violence are pivotal to

the *stiyagraha* movement and Gandhi make certain that the millions of Indians seeking an end to the British rule must stick on to these basic principles steadfastly.

The belief on non-violence or *ahimsa* (non-violence) has been an integral part of many Indian religions and Mahatma Gandhi also take up non-violence as a medium to free India from the clutches of British Empire. The concept of non-violence and nonresistance has a long history in Indian religious thought and has had many revivals in Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Muslim and Christian contexts. *Ahimsa* or non-violence was a key tenet of Gandhi's beliefs. He held that non-violence would rid a person of anger, obsession and destructive impulses. While his vegetarianism was inspired by his rearing in the Hindu-Jain culture of Gujarat, it was also an extension of *ahimsa*.

Gandhi espoused an economic theory of simple living and self-sufficiency. He envisioned a more agrarian India upon independence that would focus on meeting the material needs of its citizens prior to generating wealth and industrializing.

Khadi (homespun cotton cloth), a humble piece of handspun and hand woven cloth is the representative of the simplicity synonymous with Mahatma Gandhi. His adoption of *Khadi* or homespun cloth was intended to help eradicate the evils of poverty, social and economic discrimination. The clothing policy was designed to protest against British economic policies in India. Millions of poor Indian workers were unemployed and entrenched in poverty, which Gandhi linked to the industrialization of cotton processing in Britain. Gandhi promoted *khadi* as a direct boycott of the Lancashire cotton industry, linking British imperialism to Indian poverty.

To Gandhi, fasting was an important method of exerting mental control over base desires. In his autobiography *My Experiments with Truth*, Gandhi analyses the need to fast to eradicate his desire for delicious, spicy food. He believed that abstention would diminish his sensual faculties, bringing the body increasingly under the mind's absolute control. Fasting would also put the body through unusual hardship, which Gandhi believed would cleanse the spirit by stimulating the courage to withstand all impulses and pain.

The end of the first world war proceeded to be an equally significant period in Indian life, when the Gandhian whirlwind began to sweep over the length and the breadth of the land, ushering in refreshingly new ideas and methods which shook Indian life in several spheres to the core. The entire period of nearly three decades was one of far-reaching changes not only in the political scene but in practically all areas of Indian life also.

Indian English literature of the Gandhian age was inevitably influenced by the epoch-making developments in Indian life. Educated people with nationalistic leanings looked up to him with a degree of high hopes. The writers found a natural icon in Gandhi, an icon who was in dire demand as he had a discerning mind that was not shy of fusing thought and action, ideas and experimentation, philosophy and politics. While the novel flourishes, Indian English poetry unaccountably fails to register any single gain. The works of K.S. Venkataramani, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao would not perhaps be what they are had the miracle that was Gandhi not lived. Other forms of literature, with the

exception of prose, did not seem to keep pace with the great strides the novel took during this period. While the novel flourished, Indian English poetry unaccountably failed to register any significant development.

The Gandhian impact on contemporary Indian literature has brought about results at various levels and in various directions. As regards the writer's choice of language, one result of the Gandhian influence has been a general preference for the mother tongue or the regional language and occasionally a purposeful bilingualism, the same writer handling with mastery his own mother tongue as well as English. Besides, whatever the language medium chosen, the stress has been more on simplicity and clarity and immediate effectiveness than on ornateness or profundity or laborious artistry, and this has been as marked in English writing as in writings in the regional languages. As regards the choice of themes and the portrayal of character, the Gandhian influence has been no less marked.

Gandhi is of the view that literature can achieve a larger purpose rather than an end in itself. He believed that literature is meaningful only when it serves a concrete social purpose which is firmly based on the values of good life. Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* which is universally valued as an English classic and his autobiography is regarded as a priceless treasure of Indian English literature. Gandhi has contributed immensely to Indian literature, his philosophies has influenced many of the Indo-Anglian writers in their approach to their writings and who analyzed the country's situation with concern and concentration and attempted to portray in their writings the transition of the country from a British ruled one to a free country.

Gandhi's philosophies and his non-violent independence movement have influenced different literatures in various aspects and intensities. His impacts on the nation are also many-sided. The style and the themes of the writers have also changed, now they turned their focus from town to villages. They started to write about the problems of common people's life and of rural areas by shifting their attention from elite of the cities to the villages. The Gandhian philosophies has to face opposition at different levels, but this conflicts become the motivational force for the writers to present their writings in a new light.

Simplicity, directness and clarity are the three things that are found in Mahatma Gandhi's writings. They became characteristics of Indian English writing. The writers attempted not the style but directness, day to day language with a practical purpose. Gandhi went from village to village, he moved all over India. The plight of peasants, the poor and the downtrodden was horrible. There were many causes for such a condition. Urbanization, ignorance, illiteracy were some of the causes of these horrible state. Gandhi wanted to reform the villages as, according to him, true India lived there; his works presented all these things. Following Gandhi the other writers also selected the same path. Their themes have now changed, instead of city life; rural life was presented and emphasized in their literature.

There are many writers who have written novels, poems, short-stories, biographies and essays on Gandhi. One such poem is Sarojini Naidu's sonnet '*Lotus*', in which the poet uses the lotus as a metaphor to praise the virtues and greatness of

Mahatma Gandhi. Lotus is associated with Gods and Goddesses in our country. It is regarded as a symbol of knowledge, beauty, creation and purity. Sorojini Naidu in her sonnet has used 'The Lotus' as a metaphor for Mahatma Gandhi who is an embodiment of inspiring thoughts and actions. Her poem is an expression of her patriotic zeal. In her poem she speaks about the magnitude of Mahatma Gandhi's personality in a very symbolic term. Our nation can never forget Gandhi. The philosophies that Gandhi espoused are immortal and our nation will always be grateful to him for that.

Gandhi was no emperor or a military general; neither did he possess the attributes of a Shakespearean hero. He was just an ordinary man who was able to identify himself with struggles, and pains of the common people of India. This ability to identify himself with the people, coupled with the ability to project himself as a messiah of hope was what made him a figure to be reckoned. From an ordinary man, he was transformed into a Mahatma contrary to his physical posture, he radiated strength and fearlessness. Gandhi, the Mahatma gave the signal and a whole nation awoke from its suspended animation and felt the blood-streams of a new life coursing through its veins. He said, "Awake, arise, and realize this truth that you are free" !²

Gandhi had been a great soul to our national life-politics, economics, education, religion, social life, language and literature. Gandhi exercised a potent influence on our language and literature, both directly through his own writings in English and Gujarati and indirectly through the movements generated by his revolutionary thought and practice. His revolutionary thought which has achieved universality is as relevant today as it was during his life time. The writers started drawing their characters from him. As

regards the choice of themes and the portrayal of character, his influence has been no less marked.

Mahatma Gandhi is introduced into the Indian English fiction in various ways. The Indian English novels of the period were deeply influenced by the epoch-making political, social and ideological ferment caused by the Gandhian movement.

The fiction of KS Venkataramani, one of the earliest novelists of the period, is a copy-book example of this. His first novel, *Murugan, The Tiller* (1927), narrates the story of two young South Indian friends- Kedari, a showy materialist who is at last ruined by his own chicanery, and Ramu, an introvert, whose spirit of public service brings him spectacular reward after an unpromising beginning. The novel ends with Ramu's founding of an ideal rural colony based on Gandhian principles to which he retire with his repentant friends.

In *Murugan, The Tiller*, Ramu is portrayed as an ideal character that follows Gandhian principles and the story revolve around his character. Like Gandhi, Ramu leads a very modest life. He works as a clerk in a Government office and attain goodwill and appreciation through steadiness and sincerity in his work. He realizes that his work in an office will gradually snap his ties with his village but he knows that if a work is started he has to do it till it was finished and the long and hard way is the best one. His friend, Kedari, however, is very different from him in character and conduct. He is a lawyer and wishes to achieve speedy success and prosperity. He become adventurous at the height if his carrier and suffers a serious fall. Even Murugan, the tiller of Ramu's fields and

gardens, to whom Ramu has given an chance to lead an honest life of bright potential falls in evil influences and which ruined his life. In the end it is Ramu who rehabilitate both Kedari and Murugan as the creator of the clever scheme of building a reservoir across the river Arni. He also works for the citizenship rights for the outlaws of the hills and turns them into constructive social workers. Venkataramani in this novel was influenced by the Phoenix settlement and the Tolstoy farm of Gandhi which he incorporates in his novel.

Kandan the Patriot, published in 1932, is much forward in technique than his earlier novel, the plot is complex and many threads are woven into it. The novel was serially published in a daily newspaper the *Swarajya*, which was edited by late Sri Tanguturi Prakasm, the great Andhra leader. At that time the national situation is also changing. Gandhi attended The Second Round Table Conference as the single representative of the Indian National Congress, but the conference proved to be a failure. With the failure of The Second Round Table Conference the Civil Disobedience movement again resumed which resulted in large-scale suppression and mass arrests.

Ramu in *Murugan the Tiller* gets an opportunity to become the Collector of the area at the end of his career but he turns down the offer. On the other hand Kandan starts his career with an act of repudiation for which he gives up his coveted I.C.S. His mental ability reminds us of Kedari and his modest and total obligation to his fellowmen, reminds us of Ramu. Rangan, one of the characters in the novel, who is a friend of Kandan, in his selfishness and worship of showiness, thinks that one can change the Government even by working under the same Government. There is, Rajeswari Bai, for

whom marriage does not hold any importance in front of the sacred cause of freedom of the country. In these characters one can find resemblance in real life. There are many great patriots who sacrificed their lives and wholeheartedly responded to the call of Gandhi and plunged into the freedom struggle.

In the novel there are several other characters that reproduce and sustain action at different levels in the novel. Each character has their own definite implication in the perspective of their action. The event which leads to Kandan's death also has its own implication. Kandan dies as a martyr when a stray bullet kills him. The incident takes place when a large number of *Satyagrahis* (a person dedicated to truth) gather for a public meeting by breaking the rules of prohibitory orders by the British rulers. The police ordered the crowd to leave the place in two minutes which is impossible to obey and when that is not done there is lathi charge and firing. In the end of the novel all the characters undertake a transition of roles and there is the hope in people's heart that freedom of the country would soon be a reality. Certain terms and expression are used in more than one sense. The action of the novel also races at an incredible pace but it has a fine harmony about it. The log of wood that Kandan pushed into the river is symbolic of the predicament of the country, which too is in need of purposive push. Kandan dies thirsting for water and this thirst of his is referred to as one for freedom. These similes and symbolic addition fit so aptly and effortlessly into the context and it add to the charm and depth of the novel.

Venkataramani described Murugan *the Tiller* as a novel of Indian rural life and *Kandan the Patriot* a novel of new India in the making. While the former give emphasis

to the Gandhian message of rural reform and reconstruction, and the later novel mirrors the anguish and uncertainty of a nation in the hard struggle of resurgence. Vekataramani through his novels creates an atmosphere of pure patriotism and boundless humanity which is very appealing to the contemporary readers.

Mahatma Gandhi is introduced into the Indian English fiction in various ways. He appears as a character in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, *The Sword and the Sickle* and *Little Plays of Mahatma*, K.A. Abbas's *Inqilab*, R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* and Nagarajan's *Chronicles of Kedaram*. Though Gandhi does not appear as a character in K.S. Venkataramani's *Murugan the Tiller* and *Kandan the Patriot* or Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, but he is the driving force and is represented by idealized characters. Gandhi's followers appear in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers*, Mrs. Sahgal's *A Time to be Happy* and R.K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*.

In the twenties and early thirties of the last century, Gandhi was not the undisputed leader of the masses. There were many who did not have faith in his non-violent non-cooperation movement. But his social reforms like eradication of untouchability and picketing toddy shops and *sarvodaya* (progress of all) ideals received the attention of one and all. The humiliated and long neglected section of the society at last found one who championed their cause. Many Indian English novelists like K.S. Venkataramani and Mulk Raj Ananda felt that Gandhi was more effective as a social reformer. By the late thirties and forties, Mahatma Gandhi with his successful Salt Satyagraha proved to the world the effectiveness of non-violent struggle for

independence. Apart from his Ahimsa, his love of truth and spirit of sacrifice made him the guiding spirit of the Indian freedom struggle.

Gandhi regards untouchability as a big scar on Hinduism. Mulk Raj Anand through his novel *Untouchable*, which was published in 1933 condemns of this social evil which is prevalent in the society. Mulk Raj Anand portrays Gandhi as a character in *Untouchable*. He has a purpose of portraying Gandhi as a character. His purpose was to make the innocent victim, Bakha, listen to every word of Gandhi in rapt attention, with the hope that his misery and humiliation would come to an end by listening to his words. But Gandhi's words suggest no instant or direct solution to Bakha's problems. This novel is one of the most successful works of Mulk Raj Anand which satisfy the necessities of art. He is one such writer whose writings are outstanding for its dynamism and brilliance and for him productiveness does not mean a fading of force. He is committed to certain values of life and lives totally to the social situation around him. For a writer like him writing becomes an effective medium of social action.

Anand's first novel, *Untouchable*, which depicts a day in the life of a young sweeper Bakha who is from an outcasts' colony of a North Indian cantonment town; this day proved to be very eventful in his life. This particular day brings him his daily torments even more. In the end of the novel it also suggests three options; a missionary tries to persuade him to embrace Christianity by which he can free himself from social stigma; he listens to Gandhiji, who advocates social reform; and he also hears of mechanized sanitation which can be the answer to his problems. The novel ends with

Bakha thinking of everything that he had heard during the day but he could not understand them all.’

In *The Sword and The Sickle*, which was published in 1942, Anand shows how Lalu, the protagonist, though impressed by Gandhi’s peasant-like appearance and sincerity, refuses to be convinced of the effectiveness of Gandhi’s non-violent struggle. Both in *Untouchables* and *The Sword and The Sickle*, Anand questions the effectiveness of Gandhian solution to the problems of untouchables and the peasants.

In *The Sword and The Sickle*, Anand brings in Gandhi as a character. The novel deals with the theme of peasants’ exploitation in the hand of the landlords and the British Colonialist. In the novel two plots runs parallel to each other. One is the struggle of Lal Singh as a revolutionary who after his return to his native place after participation in war and the second deals with Lalu and Maya’s love story. He returned from war with the hope that he will be re-establish and will be given due honour for his services but nobody cared for him or his services. When he arrived at his village there is not much of a home left as his mother had died and his father Nihal Singh has become blind. His ancestral property and land has also gone. His love Maya is now a widow. These exploitations by the Colonial Rulers turned him into a revolutionary. He went to Rajgrah to fight for the peasants. He and his likeminded friends pursue the path of revolution with the sole ambition of eliminating the oppressive rule which are based on property and of freeing the country’s people from the tyranny of foreign rulers. During one of such adventures, Lalu had a chance encounter with Mahatma Gandhi at the Anand Bhavan in Allahabad. When he entered the room of Mahatma Gandhi he sees him preoccupied with a note that

he dedicate on non-violence and the environment there did not make an impact on Lalu at first. Lalu become conscious of his revolutionary ideas and understands that the Mahatma is not to be approached unless they follow his ways. He becomes aware of his own limitations and misdeeds as a revolutionary. But such is his pride that he disapproves his non-violent ideals and develops a feeling of disregard for Gandhi. He goes in his own way of revolution and in irresponsible resolve lands himself in jail.

Through this novel, Mulk Raj Anand tried to stress one of the fundamental principles of Gandhi. Gandhi said that one's fiercest enemy is one's fear and that should be eliminated if freedom is to be own. The people who follow the path of revolution do not realize the need and importance of inner discipline and evolution but they only depends on physical force which ultimately carries them to confusion and destruction. Anand in his novel do not portray a mere political document but an close and genuine picture of Indian life during the British rule and holds the mirror up to his readers to one of the most confused and turbulent period of Indian history.

Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* is unique in depicting the transforming effects of Gandhi's enunciations on Indian village life. By adopting the mythic technique Raja Rao has given a large perspective to Gandhian ideology. He sees him as an incarnation in the tradition of Shiva, Rama, Krishna and Buddha who came upon this earth to liberate it from demons and provide happiness to their devotees. Gandhi is always in the background of *Kanthapura* which undertakes the freedom struggle under the leadership of Moorthy, who is Gandhi's staunch devotee. It describes the period in which the struggle against the British rule was dominating the political scenario in India. At that

time Non-Cooperation Movement was in vogue. Congress under the leadership of Gandhi was leading the movement. Raja Rao supported the ideas of Gandhi thus *Kanthapura* as a political novel is totally influenced by the principles of Gandhi. In the beginning of the novel, we come to know about the structure of village.

We find that the village of *Kanthapura* is a cast-ridden village and the houses of the people are separated on the basis of cast. The caste system is so prevalent in Kanthapura that if a Brahmin visits a Pariah's house, he has to go to Kashi for purification. Moorthy, the protagonist of the novel, who is a Brahmin, gives up his studies after being influenced by the Gandhian Philosophy by going through different pamphlets and newspapers. Hence we don't see Gandhi in actual but his ideology and principles in the novel and Moorthy is the avatar of Gandhi. Like Gandhi, Moorthy believes in non-violence. He asks people to make their struggle non-violent. They should love their enemies even if the later may hate them or even act violently. As Gandhi influences the politics at the national level, Moorthy becomes the Gandhi of Kanthapura and does the same things. Thus, Kanthapura is a mini-nation with a Gandhi of itself i.e. Moorthy.

R.K. Narayan's fiction outlines the standard for Indian creative literature in English. R.K.Narayan preferred English over his mother tongue to write his literatures but in spite of that he is a pure Indian both in his thought and spirit. M.K.Naik in his book *Ironic Vision* writes about Narayan that, "R.K. Narayan is the novelist of the individual social man, and Raja Rao that of metaphysical man."³

Mahatma Gandhi appears prominently in R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*. Narayan's Gandhi loves truth and children, enforces discipline, lives with the untouchables, preaches non-violence, stays where people are suffering and inspires people to take part in the freedom movements. *Waiting for the Mahatma*, is written in the background of Mahatma Gandhi's image and a story Sriram and Bharati. It is a political novel which highlights the socio-economic condition of pre- and post independence period and the impact of Gandhi and his movement on the people of India. Narayan through his novel shows that the influence of Gandhi and his movements has different impact on different sections of society. He also shows that the common people of India are ignorant of Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophies. In the novel Gandhi is portrayed as the central character and all the events that happen in course of the novel revolve around him.

Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets* continues to follow the Gandhian philosophy after the *Waiting for the Mahatma*. The novel portrays the Indian society of the 'sixties'. Narayan writes about the leaders of free India who takes a vow to follow Gandhian principles but actually leads a life opposite to it. He writes about such persons in his novel as, "Interested in personal gains, they twist the preaching's of Gandhi and the 'Gita' to suit their corrupt practices."⁴

In *The Vendor of Sweets*, Jagan is a well-off owner of a sweet shop, who calls Gandhi as "my master". Jagan looks like a caricature of Mahatma Gandhi; he wore khadi cloths and he sits in his shop with the 'Gita' in his hands, sells sweet in Malgudi. His son Mali is an average young man who has no goal in his life. He is the representative of such

a class of young Indian men who are captivated by the culture and riches of America make light plans to improve their prospect and in the process sometimes criticize his own country. M.K.Naik in his *Ironic Vision* writes about Narayan that, “His aim here is to examine the validity of Gandhism and the Hindu ideal of life in post-independence India”.⁵ In the novel Narayan illustrates the Jagan’s supposed belief in Gandhism and his abandonment of social life in the end of the novel in a very beautiful manner.

The novel is a fine sociological study of India after independence and the changes that took place in the life and society of India. The novel also shows how people for their own personal gain take advantage of Gandhian philosophy. The novel also shows the difference of opinion and outlook of the old and new generation. Narayan’s intention in this novel is to show Gandhi’s impact on the average Indian and to present an ironic portrayal of the response of some persons to Gandhi’s teachings. Sriram, the protagonist of *Waiting for the Mahatma*, does not know the difference between Subhas Bose and Gandhi. He becomes a follower of Gandhi so that he can be near Bharati, the foster daughter of Gandhi, whom he loves. When India becomes a free country, he feels proud of himself because he has contributed his mite to the freedom struggle. The timber-contractor has Gandhi’s portrait in his house, donates five thousand rupees to the *Harijan* (a member of a hereditary Hindu group of the lowest social and ritual status) fund. But he does not apply Gandhian ideology in his daily life. The Municipal Chairman spends a lot of money in welcoming Gandhi. He belongs to the group of people who want to raise their stock by staying close to the Mahatma. If Sriram in *Waiting for the Mahatma* becomes a follower of Gandhi for the sake of the woman he loves, Jagan in *The Vendor*

of Sweets becomes a follower of Gandhi because he ardently desires to be revered as a follower of Gandhi.

Unlike Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao does not present Gandhi as a character in *Kanthapura*. He gives a vivid and faithful account of the impact of Gandhi on rural India. The image of Gandhi as presented by Raja Rao is an exemplary image, because to him Gandhi is an avatar of Vishnu. Through his novel Raja Rao attempts to turn Gandhian philosophies and his movements to a more artistic way. The novel illustrates the whole variety of Gandhian revolution. The village portrayed by Raja Rao can be any village of India and the narrator of the story can be anyone's grandmother or an elderly woman of the village with a gift of interesting and endless storytelling. The novel shows a realistic picture of rural India with its own traditions.

Kanthapura offer a glimpse of the Gandhian invasion on a South Indian village. The Gandhian invasion aimed at the total awakening of the country to eliminate the racial discrimination that is prevalent in the country. Here the country meant the village because the majority of Indian people live in villages. The movement for independence lead by Gandhi has gained momentum and all the principles that Gandhi advocated are working out. Raja Rao portrays in his novel the clash between the old generation and the new, the orthodox prejudice towards certain section of the society and the exploitation of the innocent villagers in the hand of the arrogant system of government.

Raja Rao presents Gandhi in the novel as a divine person because to him Gandhi is an avatar of Vishnu. Moorthy in his dream sees Gandhi and had a conversation with

him as if in a wakeful state of mind. This incident inspires Moorthy to set the process of revolution in his village.

Moorthy bows down before Gandhi and his philosophies and seek his command in his path of rebellion towards the oppressive regime. Mahatma tells Moorthy to give up foreign cloths and work for the benefit of the people and to follow the non-violent ways of resistance. He kept his promise and gives up foreign cloths and foreign education and return to his native place. After his return to India he shows the way and guides the villagers and initiated various Gandhian programs like *Harijan* upliftment, picketing of toddy shops, etc.

As in *Kanthapura*, in *The Cow of the Barricades* also, Raja Rao deals with the fight for India's freedom and Gandhi's impact on people. In this short story Raja Rao deals with the fight for Indian's freedom in highly political, almost mythical terms. Gandhism is the dominant theme and the Mahatma is in the background. The Master in the story, who is the prototype of Moorthy in *Kanthapura*, strives hard to cling to the path of absolute non-violence and goes into medication to avert bloodshed. The people and the soldiers are ranged against each other. The tense situation appears to make Gauri the cow, the central figure of the story sad. When the city is about to be assaulted by the red-men's army, Gauri climbs the top of barricades. The crowd, the workmen begin to chant 'Vande Mataram'. Soon, the red-men's army joins the crowd and all of them begin to shout "Victory to the Mahatma, Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!" Angered at this, the chief of the army fires a shot and kills Gauri. Then, peace comes back to the people. Gauri symbolizes Mother India, Mahatma Gandhi always wanted India to be a land of peace with unwavering faith in ahimsa and love every one like a mother with infinite

compassion. Raja Rao makes Gauri verily, the Mother, herself, Bharat Mata, Mother India.

Bhabani Bhattacharya as a writer is greatly influenced by Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi's ideals of truth and non-violence, and his love for the poor and peasants left deep impact on the novelist. The themes and characters of almost all his novels reveal Gandhian influence on him as a writer and thinker. His character Devesh in *So Many Hungers*, Jaydev in *Music for Mohini*, Satyajit in *Shadow from Ladakh*, all follows Gandhian ideals. They all praise Gandhian views regarding self-control, chastity, honesty, celibacy, simplicity and asceticism of inner as well as the outer life like Mahatma Gandhi.

Bhabani Bhattacharya believes in the inherent goodness of the human heart. He also believes in the efficacy of Gandhian device of using faith to attain social and political as well as purely human objectives of life. *Satyagraha* (satya-truth, graha-insistence), non-violence, and peaceful strikes are the Gandhian means to fight against the socio-political injustices of any kind. *Shadow from Ladakh* is deeply rooted in Gandhian thought and practice of life.

Like Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhatrtachearya in his novel *So Many Hungers* presents the impact of Gandhi on people through the idealized character, Devesh Basu: A truly Gandhian character-is precept as well as practice. Devesh Basu stands for love, truth and non-violence. He is called *Devata* (deity) by the villagers. Though more than seventy, he is energetic and always inspired by Gandhian ideology. He runs a school for the villagers.

Devata is non-violent both in thought and action. As with Gandhi, his love embraces all. He dislikes the British rule in India but not the British. *Devata* is not only inspired but inspiring. Consequently, Rahoul a budding professor and Kajoli, a peasant-girl, join the liberation movement.

While the young Rahoul in Bhabani Bhattarchary's *So Many Hungers* sacrifices his job for the sake of his country. Sixteen years old Raja Raman in Manjeri Isvaran's short story *Between Two Flags*, sacrifices his future in response to Gandhi's call. Though Raja Raman is only sixteen, he loves India so much that he does not like the presence of British in India. The novel originated from his profound response to the Indian situation in 1942-43 during which, he felt, the soul of India underwent a sudden development through a multi-dimensional experience. Set against the background of the Quit India movement and the Bengal famine, the novel deals with the theme of exploitation-political, economic and social. The novel deals with many things that are depressing, but still it is not a depressing book. On the one hand is the panorama of men and women emaciated by hunger and in rags, but on the other, we have glimpses into the heart and souls of human beings and find therein abundant love, purity, strength and hope.

'Bhabani Bhattacharya is a champion of social change and human betterment. He is a realist, and his writings are about exploring the realists of life in the country. He has a deep understanding of the problems of contemporary Indian society. He has acquired it from his keen and critical observation of the life of the common people, especially the rural folks and tribes of India. In his novels, Bhattacharya explores the social and political life of the people. His novels are but an imaginative picture of life. War-hunger and

freedom, redemption of the common man are the major recurring themes of Bhabani Bhattacharya's novels. He is a novelist with a highly developed social consciousness. With the exception of Mulk Raj Anand, he is the only novelist writing in English who has made a conscious effort in artistically highlighting the problems of the poor, and in eradicating superstitions, blind beliefs, taboos and other unwholesome aspects of rural society. He has successfully exposed in terms of fictional art the perpetration of cruelty and injustice on the rural masses.

K.A. Abbas, s , *Inqilab* presents Gandhi as a votary of Hindu-Muslim unity with his unflinching faith in the oneness of religion and as an apostle of non-violence. The protagonist, the young Anwar's Baptism into Gandhism takes place at the highly impressionable age of eight. Every day, Anwar sits besides his father and listens to the elders talking about Rowlatt Bills, Martial Law, *hartal* (strike), Congress, Muslim League, Gandhi's *Satyagraha* (satya-truth, graha-insistence) and *ahimsa* (non-violence). He learns from his father the meaning of *Swaraj* (self-rule). Anwar is influenced by Gandhi even before he meets him. He decides to meet Gandhi in spite of his father's newly developed hatred of Hindus.

The image of Gandhi as presented by Abbas is objective. He presents an estimate of Gandhi both by his admirers and by people who differ from him. Nehru disagrees with Gandhian theory of trusteeship. Some are angry with Gandhi for supporting the Railway labourers and they call Gandhi 'bania'-seller of flour and pulses. Even Anwar does not approve of certain actions of Gandhi. He wonders why Gandhi does not dissuade people from touching his feet or carries away the dust "sanctified by his bare feet": Anwar found

his earlier feeling of exultation considerably chilled by the religious aspect of the Mahatma's *Satyagraha* (satya-truth, graha-insistence). Perhaps, this is the view of Abbas also.

In *Chronicles of Kedaram*, K. Nagarajan has given a convincing picture of life in South Indian district town during the nineteen thirties. In *Chronicles of Kedaram*, Nagarajan presents an exemplary image of Gandhi. Like Jagan in *The Vendor of Sweets*, Vanchi in *Chronicles of Kedaram* subverts Gandhian ideals to feather his own nest. Nagarajan presents characters like Nirmala who adore Gandhi and adopt his teachings in their daily life to the last dot.

In *Chronicles of Kedaram*, Gandhi appears in just two scenes. He accepts the invitation of Vanchinatha Sastri, the president of local Congress Committee and visits Kedaram. Then, he addressed the people and resolves the long-standing dispute between the two Iyengar sects. Nirmala, under the impact of Gandhi, begins to work for *Harijan* welfare. Later, she gives away all her assets to be used for the uplift of *Harijans* (a member of a Hindu group of the lowest social and ritual status) and joins Gandhi in Sabarmati. Nirmala, having experienced failure in marriage and love, having lost both her parents, she seek a sanctuary in the Mahatma's Ashram at Sabarmati. This decision of hers brings out the power of Gandhi's personality much better than his physical presence at Kedar. Not one Nirmala, but scores of them, perhaps hundreds of them, have found in the Mahatma's love the salient of their own private aches and viperous frustration.

There are other novels too that have tried to catch some of the accents of the Gandhian Age: the idealism, the agony, the violence, the shock of defeat, and the fleeting spasms of victory. For example, Anand Lall's *The House of Adampur*, Lambert Mascarenhas's *Sorrowing Lies My Land*, it is about Goa's struggle for liberation, and Nayantara Sahgal's *A time to be Happy* are all interesting to read; there are also the plays *The Well of the People* and *Two Women* by Bharati Sarabhai, there are numerous poems – long or short - inspired by Gandhi.

While Gandhian literature is already vast and is rapidly growing, it must be admitted all the same that the impact of Gandhi at the deeper level, provoking a transvaluation of current values, has not been effective enough to produce lasting result. Gandhi is often being cited more as a matter of form and convenience than of deep conviction. Gandhi laid stress again and again on moral and spiritual values in controls advancement, although this had its place too; he knew that too much industrialization must spell disaster to the seven lakhs of Indian villages; and he adopted the loin cloth and the *Sevagram* way of life because he felt that, for the teeming millions of India, no other life was possible-yet he knew that even such bare colorless life could be made reasonably full and purposive.

Mahatma Gandhi has influenced each and every facet of human perception and there is not any subject; be it related to human nature or about the society that he had not commented upon. His personality is such that it is impossible to for anyone to forget or overlook. He is an immense source of writing himself and has influenced different discipline and many writers from different fields like history, politics, philosophy,

literature, sociology, have him as their central themes. M.K. Naik comments, “Indian Writing in English literature of the Gandhian age was inevitably influenced by these (the then political and social) epoch-making developments in Indian life.’’⁶

Gandhiji’s influence may have on political and economic spheres of the country; there is hardly any doubt that he has left a deep impression on our literatures. He is a mine of themes for writers and commentators though he himself never worked on any literary topic or genre. Dramatic reconstructions of Gandhiji’s life in film and fiction range from Richard Attenborough’s academy award winning film, GANDHI, in 1982 to Indian English novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K Narayan, who portrays Gandhiji himself or his philosophies in their novels. Gandhi gave new strength and new confidence to Indian languages that suffered contempt, neglect, indifference, and disgrace for a long time. Gandhiji insisted on high thinking and simple living which was reflected and highlighted by the literary English authors of the time, who in their novels and short stories, portrayed the real pictures of the then society from various sides, thereby presenting the influence of Gandhi on Indian villages and towns, letting us a scope to probe how Gandhiji’s ways of developmental communication created effects on human lives, bringing a sea change in their thoughts, views and living. Almost all of their novels represent, which distinctly correspond to the examples of acted incidents, and teachings that Gandhiji’s in real life encoded during his visits at various places. The writers working in different languages in those days either were mostly persons who had come directly under Gandhis influence, many had even taken part in freedom movements, or they were highly influenced by his ideals. Their writings were immensely burdened with Gandhian idealism, life-style, his teachings and anti-colonial stands. Mahatma Gandhi

was so much part and from of any literary genre of that period that he made appearance in many dramas, novels, stories and in poems. In most of the cases, the Gandhian writers, especially the novelists and short story writers, made Mahatma Gandhi an important, guest character or they made a local Gandhi replica and presented him in the light of Mahatma. Not only did the Indians turn Gandhiji into a variable cult but also a flesh and blood Rama or Krishna who could change the society by his single finger's touch. P. Rama Moorthy in '*Gandhi's letters to the West*' quotes: "For me there were only two- God and Bapu, and now they have become one". Mahatma Gandhi was a gigantic man. He was an organization. For India he is an '*avatar*'(a manifestation of a deity). Such a huge man naturally influenced India and Indian literature. Whatever was his principals and opinions, qualities, service and reforms, all found place in literature, his writing style was simple so it also influenced the literature.

Gandhi's economic views and practice changed India completely as he stressed self independence in every sense. We find him a man of economics, minimum expenditure, finding out sources, use of money, investing or demanding he had his views. Equal distribution and trusteeship was his concepts. Setting up ashram and *Khadi Udyog* has remained permanent in Indian life. These found expression in Indian writing. K.S. Venkateramani's *Murugan The Tiller* is an exponent of Gandhian economics. Idleness and poverty as Gandhi criticized. Then the writers too did the same, Gandhi was against industry because it will ruin village industry. Villagers began to run towards the cities. Gandhi believed that emphasis on *swadesi* things would make strong Indian economy, formed the essential content which is the works of Narayan, Raja Rao, Manohar Malgonkar, Venkataramani, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Mulk Raj Anand.

Mahatma Gandhi gave new strength and new confidence to Indian language which suffered contempt, neglect, indifference and disgrace for a long time. In his relation to art Gandhi describes, "I can make no literary pretensions. My acquaintance with Gujarati, and, for that matter, any literature, is for no fault of mine, next to nothing."⁷

The inspiration and influence which our literature of all languages have imbibed from him is well noted in the theatre, folk activities and literary writings based on his life, preaching's, and ideologies and welfare activities nationwide. Such a medium produced an immediate feedback from the audience from all parts of the country, as things got well assimilated into their hearts and minds, and the whole of India could respond unitedly at his call.

The literary writers of the period could not escape from the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. The writers working in different languages in those days were mostly persons who either directly come under Gandhiji's influence and many had taken part in the freedom movements, or they were highly influenced by his ideals. Their writings were immensely influenced by Gandhian idealism, life-style, his teachings and anti-colonial stands. Bhabani Bhattacharya specifically sums up the elements that the then writers incorporated from Gandhiji: "In every Indian literature a new thinking emerged. There was to be shift of emphases from the rich to the poor, from the intellectual to the man of character and inner culture, from the educated to the illiterate and the voiceless, and deep rooted in these revaluations was social reform."⁸

Gandhi was so much part and form of any literary genre of that period that he made appearances in many dramas, novels, stories and in poems. The myth of the Mahatma was a result of the projections of the existing patterns of popular beliefs about the worship of the holy miraculous sages in rural India. Gandhi's teachings become so popular that they were pronounced as everyday bread and butter facts and the more they got discussed the more did they gain in importance, magnitude and matter.

Mahatma Gandhi insisted on high thinking and simple living which was also reflected and highlighted by the English authors of that time, mainly Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, who in their novels and stories portrayed the real picture of the then society from various perspectives, thereby presenting the influence of Gandhi on Indian villages and towns, letting us a scope to probe how Gandhi's ways of developmental communication create effects on human lives bringing a sea change in the thoughts, views and living. Almost all of their novels represent events which distinctly correspond to the examples of actual incidents and teachings that Gandhi in real life encoded during his visit at various place. The crux of the moral or bottom spread of Gandhism, which the novels often portray by vicarious means as events are unity among all religions especially Hindu-Muslim unity. Secondly, people should not adhere to extreme means of protest, they should be non-violent. Gandhi is very much against the practice of untouchability, castism, enmity among class, hatred, lying, swearing but spread brotherhood and unity among all races instead. Gandhi appealed to the people to take up the initiative to spin, weave, cultivate, study, learn and teach, lead a simple living,

self sacrifice and self purification, believe in the truth, face the truth and apply it in life, realization of sear grace of God.

The most important and common fact we find in the Gandhian novels is that they talk of a distinct village, a representative of all villages in rural India and the rural folk same as others, immersed in their Gandhi-their savior, their god. Mahatma's image takes from within pre-existing patterns of popular belief and ritual action corresponding to their demographic customs. There are few who oppose him and are swept away in importance and deeds by the Gandhi followers and the whole lot take Gandhism as their life irrespective of any troublesome consequence. The procedure of development was through group communication, through the political meetings held by the Mahatma or occasional visits by him at various places to perform a righteous deed for a great cause i.e. freedom. Gandhi is transformed into 'Mahatma', a great soul, whose words is like that of the Lord and must be adhered to, and the authenticity or the purpose, the deep rooted meaning is never to be questioned. Such feeling was common to most of the ignorant people and women folk of the village who, went on chanting stories and songs about the Mahatma, without even properly understanding them; such is the scene in R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*, where we find the hero Sriram becoming a blind follower of Gandhi and join the freedom movement but not at all understanding what Gandhism is actually about. There are people who still remain a Gandhian even if their leader leaves them or the Mahatma is defeated, severally criticized or if the *Sahibs* (white government officials) put them behind bars. In Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*, Jagan considered himself a staunch *Satyagrahi* (a person who practices the policy of satyagraha) , spins the chakra regularly, and equates himself with achieving *Nirvana* (blowing out), like the Buddha, by

following the principles of Gandhism. Bakha in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, is introduced to Gandhism in the end, as redemption from the social evils of untouchability and casteism. After listening to the speech of Gandhiji as a counsel from God, Bakha's life becomes more tolerable from the next day.

Kanthapura sketches the step by step social development of South Indian village, and its people who following Gandhiji became successful not only in forming a *Swadesi* or anti-colonial group and performing anti-colonial protests, also redeeming their village from the social evils of untouchability, castesism, women backwardness, toddy or wine drinking.

Indian history never saw such an upsurge of faith, unity in action, united will, community feeling and social will, community feeling and social development, without any expensive spending as in the Gandhian age from the grass root level. He himself was a means of communication for the people between the British and the Indians. He spoke the language that the common man understood. Gandhiji meant to purify politics and human relations by means of trust, goodwill, openness, and selflessness, loyalty to truth and commitment to non-violence. He gave importance to the basic freedom of man, dignity of human labour and the uplifting of the backward classes of society. He had a well formed conception about the motherland and her people, their needs and their mind set. His greatness lies in making the opponents understand their mistakes and learn lessons from others. He believes that, personal sacrifice, in the proper direction, was a much more effective weapon than any other method of fighting a powerful opponent.

The philosophies that Gandhi adheres to are based in the different religions that are respected and treasured are there from the time immemorial, but the unique thing about Gandhi is that he combines the values with those that are ancient to suit the demand of time. He is the leader of the masses who knows how to strike a chord in the heart of the common people to raise them against the powerful British Empire. He through a process of trial and error developed his policies and programs, to him his inner voice holds supreme. Gandhi is a strong believer in God, he regards God as truth. His commitment to his principles did not mean inflexibility on his part because he is always willing to modify his position if such was the promoting from within. Gandhi's ideas or philosophies cannot be captivated within any system, he is for all and everyone.

Gandhi and his revolution sweep the entire nation and its impact can be seen on every aspect of the life of the people. Literature too was influenced by this phenomenon that is Gandhism. His influence has been felt almost all over the entire field of Indian writing in English, in various forms, appearing either as a character or as a pervasive influence upon other writers. He exercised a great influence on our language and literature, both directly through his own writings in English and Gujarati, and indirectly through the movements generated by his revolutionary thought and practices. The writers of the regional languages also tried to communicate in the new terminology and herald the new era of Gandhism. He has influenced different disciplines and many writers from different fields like history, politics, philosophy, sociology, and so on. All through his life he believed and lived as a man of ideals. This was instructed and educated to all the individuals of India, through the writings of various writers. R.K.Narayan Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and also many other Indian writers explore Gandhiji's views in their

writings. The main things which attract these writers to write about Gandhiji are his truth, satyagraha, simplicity and his non-violence. These Gandhian philosophies were well established by R.K.Narayan, one of the best writers in Indian English. In the novels of R.K.Narayan, *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The English Teacher*, *Waiting for the Mahatma*, and *The Vendor of Sweets* his characters one or the other way exhibit Gandhiji himself or his vision.

Notes

1. Gwilym Beckerlegge. *World Religious Reader*. U.K: Psychology Press, 2001. Print.
2. K.S. Iyengar Srinivasa. *Mahatma Gandhi, Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishing Private Limited, 1995. 248. Print.
3. M.K. Naik. *The Ironic Vision*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1983.1. Print.
4. R.S. Singh. *Indian novel in English*. New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1977.67. Print.
5. M.K. Naik. *The Ironic Vision*.1.Print.
6. M.K. Naik. *A History of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1982. Print.
7. *Gujarat and its literature*, by K.M. Munshi. H.M. Nayak ,welcome speech.
8. *Seminar on Gandhi in Indian literature*. Mysore: University of Karnataka Press, 1970. Print.
9. Bhabani Bhattacharya. *Gandhi the writer*. India: National Book Trust, 1969. 226. Print.

Chapter-V

Gandhi's influence on the characters of R.K. Narayan's novels.

The British had primarily come to India to pursue their trade and economic interests. The British followed such economic policies which led to rapid transformation of Indian economy into a colonial economy, whose nature and structure were determined by the needs of British economy. The British policy not only kept the Indian economy poor, but also blocked the way for systematic development of modern industry in India. With liberal and duty free access to the British imports, the traditional artisans and craftsman in India were ruined.

The condition of the peasantry was no better while the rates of agricultural produce were low and a large majority was engaged in contract farming at low remunerations, the demands of land revenue were large. As a result, the poor farmers were left with very little to feed their families, many of them plunged into debt with traditional moneylenders who gradually grabbed their land and the poor peasants ended up working as hapless agricultural laborers on their own lands. During the centuries of economic exploitation, the drain of Indian wealth was so high that the agrarian society of India was pushed to the verge of starvation.

The movement for independence was spreading everywhere in the country. People were becoming aware of their political rights and hence more and more people

joined the nationalist movement, especially the Indian middle class whose historical development may be located in the colonial period. The middle class has been an important sociological category in modern India. This class included professionals like lawyers, doctors, teachers, writers, journalists and those employed in the British administrative service. This class of people was instrumental in ushering in social reforms in their respective communities. Many of the writers during this period, including R.K. Narayan draw his characters from this class of Indians. Dealing with middle class society, Narayan is at his best when he pitches their struggle, their economic stringency and standard of living. Narayan through his novels portrays an authentic picture of a conservative Hindu society. He portrays a variety of characters covering the whole gamut of life.

Narayan is from a conservative Hindu society, is committed to Hindu ideology. Narayan built his themes around Hindu myths and legends. His novels *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelors of Arts* and *The English Teacher* are more or less autobiographical in content with many of the major events being occurred in the life of Narayan himself. Narayan's psychic contact with the spirit of his dead wife, the theme of Narayan's *The English Teacher* is an example to support the contention. The story of the *The Guide* is based on the Hindu idea of a sinner becoming a saint. Savitri in *The Dark Room* is the projection of a Sita- Sati- Savitri image of India's past. Through Shrivias in *Mr Sampath*, and Natraj in *Man Eater of Malgudi*, Narayan depicts that the Malgudians are mere puppets in the hands of fate and they have nothing in their hands that they can do or undo in this world which R.K. Narayan has created for them, Natraj and his friends appear to be helpless before Vasu, the taxidermist that they just do what other orthodox

Hindus undertake in their life, fasts and prayers to propitiate Gods or Goddesses and wait for their blessings. *Waiting for the Mahatma* is replete with Hindu ideals the Mahatma represents in his life.

All major characters, especially the protagonists in Narayan's novels belong to middle class families. Swami, the school boy ; Chandran, the Bachelor of Arts, Krishnan, the English teacher; Savitri, the docile Hindu housewife; Shrinivas, the Journalist; Jagan, the vendor of sweets; Raju the Railway Guide; Margayya, the financial expert; and Raman, the painter of signs..... All those come under the category of average income group. They have to work to maintain their livelihood. Swami, the son of a headmaster, is of course, dependent on his parents. Chandram has to take up the reporter ship of *The Messenger* as Narayan himself has done to support his family. Krishnan earns his hundred a month mugging Shakespeare and Milton, and then teaching them to the students at Albert Mission College. Jagan's has a strenuous business. He wakes up at 4.00 at dawn, works on the frying pan and sells his commodities within a short period of time.

Narayan, has given interesting glimpses of Indian social life impaired by the demoralizing effect of the materialistic civilization. People have sold out their souls, and do not hesitate to make money for the disposal of an unclaimed dead body. Narayan writes, "They even haggled with the grave digger and were left with so much money at the end of it all that they drank and made merry for three or four days and gave up temporarily their normal jobs."¹ Balu in *The Financial Expert* and Mali in *The Vendor*

of Sweets get completely spoiled, While Balu becomes the cause of his father's ruin. Mali makes his father, Jagan, leave his business and home and go out in wilderness.

Narayan shows that in the modern society which is burdened with great stress and strain, a healthy philosophy of money merits serious consideration. Money is a mixed blessing which can become a curse if not judiciously understood and used. Set against such social background, amongst the people of low economic position, there is a class labeled in Indian society as the untouchables of which there is a glimpse in the *Waiting for the Mahatma*. The picture of a sweeper's colony in the novel is most horrifying. "It is probably the worst area in the town. All crowded in anyhow, with scratchy fowls crackling about and children growing in street dust."² Mahatma Gandhi called them *Harijans* (a member of a hereditary Hindu group of lowest social status) and praised their profession as the noblest services to society.

Indian society is divided into castes and sub-castes. Each cast tends to live in a separate part or street of the village with sweeper's colony entirely separate from the rest, which is shown in *The Waiting for the Mahatma*. In this way a large section of the Indian population was kept away from the mainstream of life. Since the Hindu religion demanded that the untouchables should not be allowed to acquire property, it was but natural that they had to pull on somehow on begging, entirely at the mercy of the so-called high caste people. Mahatma Gandhi has said "The *Shudra* (a Hindu of the lowest caste) who only serves as a matter of religious duty, and who will never won anything is deserving of thousand obeisance. The very gods will shower down flowers on him."³ The religious sanctity given to the profession and ennobling it still further by no less person than Mahatma Gandhi is a conspiracy against mankind. Gandhi's idea of using the word

Harijan (a member of a hereditary Hindu group of lowest social status) was to avoid other words like ‘untouchables’ or ‘*bhangis*’ which were then used to refer to *Dalits* (a term used for the castes in India that have been subjected to untouchability), because they were strongly stigmatized. He used the word *Harijan* (a member of a hereditary Hindu group of lowest social status) to bring the untouchables closer to god, and thereby to those who believed in god, which was the rest of Hindu Society. When Gandhi started using the term, many including B.R. Ambedkar objected to it, stating that it was condescending and obscurantist in nature, an attempt to sidestep the real issue. By using the word *Harijan*, (a member of a hereditary Hindu group of lowest social status) Gandhi was making *Dalits* (a term used for the castes in India that have been subjected to untouchability) more acceptable to the rest of the society. Instead of dealing with the real problem, which was the mindset of the upper castes, he chose to make it more suitable for the upper castes. And in doing so, Gandhi wanted to make sure he did not upset the influential Hindus, for he needed their support for his movement for independence. All that the ‘renaming’ of *Dalits* as *Harijan* did was to side-step the issue. It only removed ‘the offence to the ear’ and did nothing more.

Narayan presents in his novels the middle class society. Members of the middle class are also seen reduced by some fatality or family quarrel or commercial disaster like Margayya in *The Financial Expert*. The way Margayya reacts to his dizzy heights, the fortune he makes and losses overnight, is typical of average Indian. And he has no remorse for it, nor does he learn anything from his downfall, for he has a faith “the lord gives and takes’ away, praised be the lord!”⁴

Most of the Indians are blind followers of traditions, and the adherence to irrational tradition has been largely responsible for the ruin of several families. Dowry system is one such social evil which has rocked the Indian Society. In India from the days of *Atharveda* (V1-2-3)⁵ “the birth of a girl, grant it elsewhere here grant a boy-----.” Down to the Middle Ages then to our times, the birth of girl has been looked upon with resignation if not with sorrow, because the dowry system which has come down to us, has impoverished the parents. Narayan could not overlook the evil and portrayed it realistically in *The Financial Expert*. Margayya tell his followers how his father has to face the evil while marrying his daughters. He says that his father has three daughters; five cartloads of paddy used to come to them every half year, from the fields. We just heaped them upon the floor of the hall, we have five bails to our house; but where has it all gone? It went to the three daughters. By the time my father found husbands for them there was nothing left for us to sit at home!”⁶

Narayan’s through his novels portrays the conservative Hindu society with all its beliefs and shortcomings. In a society a person follows the age old practices that have been passed on to them from generations. The social standards along with the religious belief he had been taught from his childhood are difficult for him to forget or mend. Narayan also comes from a conservative Hindu society and he is committed to its ideology. These traits of his can be seen in his writings though he gets his formal education during British Rule in India.

Narayan writes his novels as a disengaged observer of life, he does not give any remark nor try to judge the situation. He builds his themes for his writings based on

ancient epics; *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharat* ,from which the readers can understand that Narayan follows a Hindu way of life which he portrays in his novels through the South Indian middle class society.

Narayan, through his novels, presents the social values, norms which have been in existence and still continues to play a major role in shaping the life of Hindu people. The Indian society has undergone a considerable change under the impact of Western Civilization; the changes have been vividly national amongst the people. Narayan does assert the validity of traditional Indian values, but the wind from the West has changed much of the panorama. Malgudi's inhabitants are very traditional in their upbringing and outlook; they are rooted in family and religion. They have not changed much with time. The people still treasure the custom of faith and values, rituals and belief and sometime superstitions.

Almost all of Narayan's novels deal with middle class people and not with politics and other issues. At a time when the country was going through the travails of the struggle for freedom, he wrote simple stories about the domestic life of the middle class people living in or around Malgudi, Narayan's imaginary town in South India. Befitting an orthodox Hindu, Narayan is primarily pre-occupied with man's filling of the 'life-role' entrusted to him by Hindu philosophy of life. The protagonist in each of Narayna's novels is made to play his life role during the course of which he or she either matures in the process or rebels or simply drifts. He is sometimes destroyed by a characteristic inner weakness as in the case with Raju in *The Guide*. His character has become fatalistic with little or no scope for their talents. The feeble and half hearted attempts they make at self assertion have been largely inadequate for the full growth of their individuality; they

remain for most part of their life captives of the circumstances which have led them to believe that they are mere puppets.

Narayan's through his characters shows the conflict between the old and the new generation with slow but sure loss of old social values. However, a single person cannot change the face of the society; he has to accept the life as it is. However western influence has changed much of its scene, but there is no considerable change in Narayan's view and attitude towards society. But the truth is that young generation wanted to discard the old superstitious beliefs which are preventing the society in its development. Narayan's portrays the society in a realistic manner with his trademark language which is very simple and in half ironic and half comic style.

Narayan's protagonists in his novel are average and common people who can be found in any society but in the end their life takes on a religious dimension. In the course of the novel they transform their inner self to become a better individual. In this way the author reminds us that Gandhi's message is remains valid today and will be so forever.

R.K. Narayan at the starting of his carrier writes novels which deal with the atmosphere of school and colleges. Narayan's first novel *Swami and Friends* portrays the different stages of school age which marks the life of its central figure, Swaminathan and the society of pre independence period. The novel presents a realistic picture of the various stages of evolution of its central character. In the novel Narayan show how the hero, Swami and his friends Mani and Rajam lives in English ruled atmosphere of Malgudi. The varied experiences of these friends are described in a realistic manner. But

the innocence and impulsive Swami lands in trouble when he is carried away by the political movement in India in 1930.

Swami and Friends relates to the subject of education which is one of the important aspects of Gandhian thought. Apparently the novel is an adventure of an adolescent Swaminathan and a group of his friends. Swami is sent to a mission school where teachers are pertinent to convert their boys into Christians and insult Hindu Gods. Narayan is keenly aware of the developments that have been taking place in Indian environment as price of its independence. He is critical of the motivated teaching, the poor and inadequate teaching system of Indian village school where the teacher's interest is in one rupee a month and anything in kind which the pupils brought him. But, simultaneously, Narayan seems to be sympathetic with the pitiable economic dependence of the village school master, because their poverty accounts partly for the poor teaching in the village schools. And it is amidst such motivated or poor academic environments that Narayan's Swami or Raju are seen making their way into the world. Narrating his own experience about the motivated academic atmosphere of Christian Mission School, Narayan in his novel writes about the feelings of young Swami:

Most of the Christian students also detested us. The scripture classes were mostly devoted to attacking and lampooning Hindu Gods, and violent abuses were heaped on idol worshipper as a prelude to glorifying Jesus.⁷

The protagonist's protest is focused, of course, on one aspect of colonization, that is, the education system. The inability of the child to cope with the examination system, his inadequate involvement in the process of learning is shown to be due to unreal and mechanical education system. Right in the first paragraph of the novel we find young Swaminathan shuddering "at the very thought of school, that yellow dismal building, the fire eyed Vedanayagam, his class teacher and the Hindu Master with his long cane"⁸. Life in the classroom is monotonous; terribly bored, "he felt sleepy"⁹. Those first few paragraphs have a vital significance in the scheme of the novel, for Swami's apathy and non-involvement in his classroom is shortly going to be channeled by the Gandhian movement of 1951 in which he and his friends participate.

Indian society was mainly divided into castes when the British came to India. With their coming there was much social change, including a gradual disruption of the caste system with the emergence of a new class – the Indian middle class. Professionals like technical personal, doctors, lawyers, government officials, etc., constituted the Indian middle class. The British had created this class to facilitate their needs but with the rise of nationalism, a large number of government officials left their jobs and joined the movement for India's freedom on the appeal of the leaders. Yet, there were also many Indian officers who still proved their loyalty to the British rulers, and they were providing the aid to the British rule that facilitated the British Raj longer in the country. Dealing with middle class society, Narayan is at his best when he sketches their struggle, their economic stringency and standard of living. The people of this class, for example, generally take tea in an old cup but keep nice crockery for their guest to gimmick a high standard of living. Swami (*Swami and Friends*) too belongs to this middle class.

Swaminathan is sharply aware of the political disturbances of the thirties that affect Malgudi also. The chapter “Broken Panes” in *Swami and Friends* describes a strike in the school, Swami and his friends attend the public meeting organized to protest the arrest of Gauri Sanker, a prominent political leader of Bombay. Swami takes interest in the ‘plight of Indian Peasants’, ‘boycott of English goods’ and chooses to wear home spun *Khaddar* (an Indian homespun cotton cloth). He joins the procession of the agitators and shouts ‘Gandhi Ji Ki Jai’(victory to mahatma Gandhi) and ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’ (victory to Mother India). Narayan’s description of “the brave talk of the youngsters who collect in streets” and “echoed the high sounding words of their elders, most of whom could not have been any more effective than the school boys who employed nationalistic postures to no purpose” brought forth Narayan’s genius as a story teller who adds mirth by his “comic gestures in fiction.”¹⁰

In this simple, transparent, almost reportage announcement by the narrator, we can hear rumblings of the political change that was taking place in Malgudi under Gandhian movement. The thrust of the main speech of the earnest looking man in *Khaddar* (an Indian homespun cotton cloth) is the need of revival of the traditional Indian heritage in order to fight out the cultural and political enslavement by the British. Swami and his friends have stumbled into this meeting. English vs. Indian, a question of identity – is the subject of the speech Swami hears:

We were slaves of slaves just think for a while. We are
three hundred and thirty six millions, and our land is as big as

Russia. England is no bigger than our Madras Presidency, and is inhabited by a handful of white rogues and is thousands of miles away. Yet we bow in homage before the Englishman.¹¹

Stirred by the speaker's eloquence, Swaminathan shouted – '*Gandhi ji Ki Jai* (victory to Mahatma Gandhi). The narrator tells us that Mani and Swami are overwhelmed by the speaker's words. For the rest of the evening Swami was caught in the lecturer's eloquence. Swami and Mani wept over the plight of Indian peasants and were determined to boycott foreign cloths. The crowd burst into slogans "*Bharat Mata Ki Jai*" and "*Gandhi ji Ki Jai*"¹². The evening closed with a bonfire of foreign cloths. Swami watched the red glare. He flung his cap into the fire with a feeling that he was saving the country. The next morning there were protests. There was a call for a strike and schools were being closed down by demonstrators. Swami also became a part of this crowd and could not help following the example of a person who started flinging stones at the panes of school building. He was thrilled when his aim brought down the window panes. After paralyzing work at Albert Mission School the crowd moved along Market Road. Swami also joined the crowd.

Next day, the Head Master's cane also did not show any mercy. Swami had been spotted while breaking the panes and the Headmaster did not spare him for this misconduct. This also became the cause of his leaving the school. The novel portrays the involvement of young wave that engulfed even the remotest villages of India. At this stage of Swami's exposure to Gandhian philosophy, it is too much to expect his young mind to comprehend the full import of the idea of non – violence. And though Narayan's

treatment of Gandhian thought in this novel is comprehensive enough to include its political, cultural and economic aspects, it is treated mainly in political terms; and his focus remains constantly on Swami's character.

The English Teacher at first instance looks like a love story but interestingly different from the other love stories one reads. A traditional love story means the love between a boy and a girl which consequently ends, or may not, into the marriage. But in the novel the love story starts when Krishnan is already a married man and Susila already a mother. It is the love story of husband and wife after marriage. Krishnan is a lecturer of English in the Albert Mission College of Malgudi, he wanted a strong change in the society that he lives in. Krishnan is opposed to the British system of education, but he himself is the creation of such an education, which Krishnan says makes only morons and cultural morons."¹³ To teach the students they used to memorize the notes which are repeated from year to year; which he thinks is a fraud practice for a consideration of a hundred rupees.¹⁴ He believed that the present system of education which is prevailing is crippling the imagination of the teachers like him, so he wanted social freedom and independence of mind. He has studied English literature and admired the wonderful writers, but he could not continue his job as a teacher in a college at the cost of his creativity. His heart revolted against the British education system and he gave up his job to work as a primary school teacher.

Narayan's understanding of the evils of illiteracy, which is the one of the serious problem of India, comes to the surface in the novel. Since independence much had been said and done for the development of the standards of education in India but there is a

huge gap between the theory and practice. Many eminent philosophers and educationist have given theories and definitions regarding development of education, but education in India is still confined to the classrooms. Narayan, through his heroes Swami or Krishnan shows his anger and displeasure in the present system of education which have failed to fulfill the dreams of the people of India.

Narayan through his novel *Waiting for the Mahatma*, wants to point out that the influence of Gandhi and his philosophies are different on different sections of society. Narayan in his novel wants to highlight the impact of Gandhi on the people of India but at the same time wanted to point out that a considerable part of Indian people are ignorant about the greatness of Mahatma Gandhi and his national movement. In the novel Sriram's grandmother thinks of Gandhi as a bad influence on Sriram and she does not approve of his policies regarding the untouchables.

In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Narayan shows Mahatma Gandhi as the central character and all the all events of the story move around him. Bharati, the female protagonist of the novel is a devoted supporter of Mahatma Gandhi and his movement, and it is her priority than her affair with Sriram. The hero Sriram is simply a shadow of Bharati, who for the sake of his love, follows her and gets involved in the National Movement. Sriram is an average young man without any definite goal in his life, but he has the instinctive desperation of the youth and without a second thought leaves his home to pursue his love. In the novel the Nationalist Movement is seen entirely not in terms of abstract ideals but in terms of small events and particular situations occurring in the surroundings of Malgudi. The novel shows the effect of Gandhi's call to boycott all

foreign things in the form of picketing of the shop by the people which sells foreign made biscuits. Sriram tries to express his opinion to the boycott of foreign made goods in front of the briskly increasing crowd around the shop. The villagers, who are ignorant of the true values of the National Movement, enjoy the situation as a huge joke. Sriram also was ignorant to the ethics of the National Movement. At first, it is a pretty girl, not Mahatma Gandhi, who attracts Sriram towards a new set of Gandhain principles, and till the end Bharati remains to be the goal towards which Sriram's life moves. There is no mistaking the fact that Sriram's heart teems with the feelings of ideological principles, or convictions, yet his infatuation with the girl provides fresh fuel for his movement in Gandhian way. His separation from Bharati deviate him from Gandhian path to the way of terrorist movement. The agency of the separation turns into the fire of violence and his peaceful protest into the turbulent agitation.

Narayan in the novel depicts in a very interesting and lively manner the scenes, mentality and temperament of people during the National Movement. Narayan is not concerned with the impact of Mahatma Gandhi makes on the millions in India, but rather with one individual very ordinary, mentally and morally, with no pretence to any idealism who reacts to this great man. Sriram, the chief character in the novel, has not understood what the whole non-violent, non-cooperation movement is about. His is the path of blind obedience. Led by Bharati to join the Gandhian movement, he is easily taken in by Jagdish, a terrorist, having no ideas of his own, he is carried away by circumstances, When Gandhi, visits Malgudi and speaks about untouchability and caste system; he becomes reflective for the first time, and realizes that there must be a great deal in what he says.

The old grandmother of Sriram is a realistic portrayal of the custodian of old social values. She bullies and ill – treats the scavenger who comes to sweep the backyard of the house. She does not allow the scavenger to come nearer than ten yards thinking that he would pollute her. Her reaction to the Mahatma’s preaching is shocking. She thinks of Mahatma Gandhi as a person who preaches dangerously and who tried to bring untouchables into the temples.”¹⁵

The novel deals with the theme of the impact of Gandhian thought on the average Indians. The plot is laid in Malgudi. Sriram comes under the mahatma’s spell which Bharati has already experienced. Bharati, that is, the spirit of India may be regarded as symbolic. Gandhi’s impact that was transmitted to Indians at large through Bharati has changed Sriram’s life. In the novel Gandhi is treated as a warm human being who touches the lives of the two young people while retaining historical authenticity. The novel begins around the period shortly before independence and gives glimpses of the political upheavals during this period. The novel also portrays the communal riots which spread in Noakhali and ends with Gandhi’s assassination.

In *The Vendor of Sweets* Narayan presents the protagonist Jagan who is a widower of about sixty years of age as a person of peculiar character with his high – minded Gandhian philosophy which he emerges to have following to suit his own purpose. Largely, he seems to be a fake disciple of Gandhi, totally distressed and disgusted with his son. Jagan is portrayed as a fanatic observer of all the principals of Gandhi without trying to know the deeper meaning of his philosophies. Jagan interprets the principles of

Gandhi in his own way and says: “I don’t drink more than four ounces of water a day and that must be boiled at night and cooled in mud jug open to the sky.”¹⁶ He uses only those sandals which are made of hide of a cow that has died a natural death. As Jagan sits in his sweetmeat shop reading the Gita, he has one ear perpetually cocked at the frying noises in the kitchen, and one ear permanently glued to the front stall where customers and beggars crowd.

Jagan’s hypocrisy is so deeply ingrained that it has become a second nature with him. He keeps double account books and treats parts of sale produce as ‘free cash’ a sort of Immaculate Conception, self – generated, arising out itself and entitled to survive without reference to any tax, thus amassing a huge wealth. And he declares: “If Gandhi had said somewhere, pay your sales tax uncomplainingly, ‘he would have followed his advice, but Gandhi had made no reference to the sales tax anywhere to Jagan’s knowledge”¹⁷ He rationalizes the recycling of stale stuff by saying philosophically “after all, everything consists of flour, sugar and flavour.”¹⁸

Though a Gandhian disciple, Jagan failed to make a compromise with the world. His Gandhian philosophies alienated his brother and sister. Besides, there was no person whom he could address as friends. This had made Jagan confined himself to his sweetmeat soap, and the house shared by his son Mali and Grace who are not married, and yet living there as husband and wife; he was terribly shocked, the result being a complete dislocation of his relations with Mali, his son. The only solace to him in his life was the cousin, a practical man of the town helping Jagan in his difficulties.

Jagan's duplicity had upset Mali altogether, when he declared that he was a poor man and quoted Gandhi to have advocated poverty and not riches. Mali reacted with a vicious simile, "And yet you earn your thousand rupees a day."¹⁹

A participant in Gandhi's non – cooperation movement Jagan continues to practice Gandhi's ideas into his daily life. He wears clothes made of material spun with his own hands. The coarse sandals he wears are made of the hide of an animal which had died of old age, and had not been butchered specially for the purpose. As he is a follower of Gandhi he explains, "I do not like to think that a living creature should have its throat cut for the comfort of my feet."²⁰

Jagan didn't succeed in his college education. He failed several times in his examinations. Jagan proclaims, "I had to leave the college when Gandhi ordered us to non – cooperate. I spent the best of my student's years in prison"²¹

Jagan is a naturalistic philosopher and promoter of natural life and natural diet like Gandhi was. Jagan himself believes in 'simple living high thinking' and wants his son to follow this principle in life. He says, "I hope he will also emulate my philosophy of living. Simple living and high thinking as Gandhi has taught us."²²

Jagan's Gandhian spirit finds its true expression when he puts up a peaceful resistance of Mali's reckless behavior. He refuses to compromise with Mali in a project of story writing machine. He decided to meet the situation by "a sort of non – violent, non – cooperation".²³ Jagan says: "Gandhi has taught me peaceful methods and that's

how I am going to meet their demand.”²⁴ The Vendor of Sweets portrays various aspects of Gandhian ideology not only in theory, but also in practice.

We come across a passing reference to Gandhi and his ideology in *The Man – Eater of Malgudi*. Nataraj, the printer of Malgudi, stands for goodness and nobility. He tries to lead a peaceful life, following a Gandhian way of living. Vasu, the taxidermist, stands for the evil to be eradicated. He has forcibly occupied the attic in Nataraj’s house and takes an undue advantage of his gentlemanliness. He indulges in poaching and womanizing. Pestered by the neighbors’, Nataraj wants him to vacate the attic of the house on the excuse that he needs it for his guest. Vasu refuse to budge and Nataraj is in a fix like Gandhi he does not believe in violence because: aggressive words only generate more aggressive word. Mahatma Gandhi had enjoined on us absolute non – violence in thought violent speech and prevents it from propagating itself.”²⁵

Nataraj genuinely believes in non – violence and avoids all conflicts and confrontations. He does not harbor any ill – will against any one. He confesses:

I could never be a successful enemy to anyone. Any enmity worried me night and day. As a school boy I persistently shadowed around the one person with whom I was supposed to be on terms of hate and hostility..... I made myself object in order to win a favorable look or word from my enemy and waited for a chance to tell him that I wanted to be friends with him. It bothered me like a tooth – ache.²⁶

At last he reconciles himself to Vasu's stay there as long as he likes. In view of the protests from "fussy neighborhood he first desires that Vasu should not bring too many carcasses or keep them too long. But things came to a head when Vasu decides to kill the temple elephant. Rangi, "a woman of the temple", who enjoys Vasu's favor for the time being reveals his insidious plan to Nataraj. He is not able to understand how to tackle Vasu. Several alternatives come to his mind. Non – violence, however, is the last resort: "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."²⁷ Evil being self – destructive, Vasu brings about his end himself while trying to hit a mosquito sitting on his forehead.

Chandran is the protagonist of the novel *The Bachelor of Arts*. He is concerned with the misrepresentation of the Indian history by the imperialists for their own selfish ends. He stood against all sort of injustice, untruth, slavery and the demolition of India history by the British rule. Another interesting character of the novel is Raghavachar, the professor of history. He is also a follower of Gandhi and says, "If he were asked what the country needed most urgently he would not say self–government or economic independence but a classified, purified Indian history."²⁸

Narayan through his novels shows the plight of women in Indian society who are a subjugated and exploited by the male member of the society. The main reason of women exploitation in India is due to their dependence on men for their financial needs. Though constitution of post independence India has preserved several rights and

privileges for women but they are still not able to enjoy those privileges. If a woman is always under the mercy of her husband throughout her life, she is no more than a slave. Savitri of *The Dark Room*, represent such a class of women who says that, “women don’t possess anything in the world. What possession can a woman call her own except her body? Everything else that has is her father’s, husband’s or her sons.”²⁹

Narayan in *The Dark Room* portrays a Indian household which show the typical Indian attitude of life where husband is the master of the house and his wife has to follow every order he imparted to her without any protest or complain. The life of an Indian housewife is vividly presented in the novel. The hero Ramani, belongs to a middle class family, who like the old conservative set of husband, regards marriage as an institution in which the wife has to have implicit obedience to her husband and has to bear his children ungrudgingly. He is a short tempered man. He behaves sarcastically and irrationally with his wife and children. His wife Savitri is a very obedient and loyal women but he never loves her for her goodness.

Savitri can be regarded as the representative of a typical Indian housewife. She tolerates all the ill treatment meant out to her by her husband Ramani without a word of protest. She goes to a darkroom in his house where she moans and sulks. Mahatma Gandhi said about the Indian housewife that, “Perhaps only a Hindu wife, would tolerate these hardship, and that is why I have regarded women as an incarnation of tolerance. A servant wrongly suspected may throw up his job, a son in the same case may leave his father’s roof, and friend may put on end to the friendship. A wife if suspect her husband, will keep quiet, but if her husband suspects her, she is ruined.”³⁰ Savitri finds out that her

husband is obsessed with Santa Bai, his new office assistant. In pride and frustration she leaves her home out only to realize the bitter truth that a traditional Hindu wife of her class is totally helpless in the society, she cannot act according to her will. In the end she gives up her pride and returns to her home, broken and defeated but her husband is still unashamed and unapologetic about his behavior. Narayan uses the character of Savitri's to sketch the status of women in the society and in her own home. The women are a helpless victim of exploitation at their own home and in the outside also. When Savitri leaves her home and does not know where to go, she took shelter in a temple but she is not safe in the temple also; the temple priest seeing her alone and helpless tried to exploit her.

Like the untouchables, womenfolk in Indian society have more or less had the same status of being the slaves of man in her family. They are wholly dependent on the men folk for their daily bread. However, Western influence and the industrialization in modern times have considerably changed their lot and brought about a change in outlook. Shanta bai in *The Dark Room* who struggles herself free from her drunkard husband, and comes all the way from Bangalore to Malgudi to work as trainee officer in the Insurance Bank, stands in complete contrast with the docile Savitri; similarly Shanti in Mr. Sampath who has lost her husband, has taken to acting in the film company established by Sampath, Rosie in *The Guide* asserts her individuality; for which she has to leave her husband Marco to enrich her dance. Daisy in *The Painter of Signs* has revolted against her father and made her would – be – husband sign a marriage contract so that she would get ample time to fulfill her mission on family planning.

Narayans female characters especially Rosie and Daisy are educated and talented, are highly ambitious and did everything to excel in their profession for them money does not matter. While Rosie aspires to be the greatest dancer of Bharat Natyam, Daisy devotes her time and energy to check the population growth of the town. While Savitri remains docile confined to her traditional role of the Hindu housewife; Rangî the temple dancer ascends Vasu's attic losing her shame and honour for her bread and butter.

Bharati, in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, has no background in terms of caste or class identity; she is an orphan, brought up by the Sevak Sangh; her entire life and work consists of carrying out Gandhi's ideas; in the end she makes her home among the refugee children, in the aftermath of partition. Daisy of *The Painter of Signs* shares some attributes with both Rosie and with Bharati. Like Bharati she is a single woman and will remain so, but unlike Bharati she is not directed by the austere ideas of a group; she is directed by herself. Daisy another outsider comes to Malgudi as the head of the family planning centre in the town. One notices immediately, the unorthodox name. It carries faint overtones of Westernization and Anglicization; even, possibly of Christianization. Daisy leaves behind a traditional framework of living and shows how women should be. Rosie, Bharati and Daisy are all committed to their chosen ideologies; they are not merely seeking livelihood like Shantabai. In the end, their commitment to their chosen way of life makes them go their own way.

From the suffering of helpless Savitri to Bharati in *The Waiting for the Mahatma* and then to Daisy in *The Painter of Signs*, Narayan has shown the rise of individuality in woman. Rosie is shown as the representative of a new class of woman who had the

opportunity to release themselves from the conservative bondage of the society and gets an opportunity to join Colleges and Universities in order to acquire a formal education. Rosie is a master's degree holder despite the fact that she belongs to lower strata of the society. Daisy attaches no sentiments to married life. A girl's running away from the family, her bringing up and education in a missionary organization, her acceptance of a social work, and her living all by herself represents the modern trend.

The values that Narayan upholds are Gandhian in character. His values include moral uprightness, truthfulness and other issues that cover man's life in all areas – social, educational, political and economic. A closer analysis of Narayan's novels reveal that he is more of a moral analyst than is usually acknowledged and Gandhian ideology provides a frame of reference to his novels.

The period between 1920 and 1947 is noted for spreading Gandhian philosophy in Indian writing in English. M.K. Naik, an eminent critic regarded the period as "The Gandhian write word" with an unprecedented awakening of "a distinctive national unity" Gandhiji is born and brought up in a normal background, but his principles gained from his experience made him a great individual.

He is an immense source of writing and had influenced different disciplines and many writers from different fields. All through his life he believed and lived as a man of ideals. The Gandhian philosophies were well established by R.K. Narayan, one of the best writers of Indian English. In the novels, *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The English Teacher*, *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *The Vendor of Sweets* his characters one or in other exhibits Gandhi himself or his vision.

The protagonists or the character of these novels are rooted and flourished in the Indian ethics and Indian philosophy. And they are in search of truth who exhibits Gandhi, a man of truth in his own particular manner. When the characters failed it is because they haven't followed Gandhism and if they were hailed, it is all because of following Gandhism. Like Gandhism, Malgudi, an imaginary town plays an important role in Narayan's novels. The novels of Narayan are set in Malgudi. Malgudi is not a place but an experience of soil and soul of India. It is a town which combines traditionalism and modernism.

R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* is systematized attack on Indian Cultural values. Swaminathan is the protagonist of the novel. He was educated in Albert Mission School where Hindu Gods and their rituals were considered as an object of laughter. Swami hates such attitudes so he wants to quit from the school in protest. Swami and his friends show aversion towards western culture. They were struggling to protect the Indian Culture.

Chandran is the protagonist of the novel *The Bachelor of Arts*. He is also concerned with the misrepresentation of the India history by the imperialists for their own selfish ends. He stood against all sort of injustice, untruth, slavery and the demolition of Indian history by the British rule.

Krishnan is the hero of the novel *The English Teacher*; a person who rebels

against English Educational system. He is an enemy of those people who are interested in Westernization. Western educational system in India subsequently leads to the alienation of an individual from his cultural roots. Michel Pousse has pointed out that, “Narayan has stressed three points which stands out in Gandhiji’s philosophy, namely, life is a never ending quest for truth, and secondly, individual peace can only be achieved within a well defined social context and thirdly, the reason for the use of English language by Gandhi as means of communication.

At the time Gandhiji was assassinated he became the theme of each and every writer in India. “*Waiting for the Mahatma*” was written after seven years of Gandhiji’s assassination. Sriram, the protagonist of the novel stands as an example for an average Indian middle class family. In this novel Gandhi appeared as a character. Sriram is an orphan who lived a content life with his grandmother in Malgudi. Sriram’s life get a meaning and direction only after he met Bharati , a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. Sriram falls in love with Bharati who serves as a driving force for Sriram to participate in the Gandhian movement. Sriram attains the height of a true Satygarhi later in the novel. Influenced by Gandhi and Bharati, Sriram’s fancy and fanatic notions are transformed into fair and firm ideas. Bharati is the true exponent and believer of Gandhism in the novel. Sriram and Bharati represent two facts of Gandhism.

Like Bharati in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Jagan the protagonist of *The Vendor of Sweets* also represents Mahatma Gandhi. In the opening of the novel he says to his nephew, “Conquer taste and you will have conquered the self.”³¹ He is a vendor of pure ghee sweets. He is a man who gives importance to purity, thus he said, “Purity that is

important.”³² He never compromise quality for the sake of money. He is presented as a Gandhian in the post-independent India and he follows the Gandhian way of life to the minute detail. He eats natural salt, wears *khadi* (homespun cotton cloth) and shoes made only from the hide of dead animal, spins *charkha* (a spinning wheel), read the Bhagwad Gita, write a book on natural therapy, renounces caste system, very evident from his son’s marriage. His son Mali married to a Christian American lady Grace – all these things serves as an evident that he is a firm follower of Gandhism. Jagan, like Sriram in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, gradually undergoes transformation from a pseudo – Gandhian to a Gandhian in spirit by the help of Dorai Swami. Dorai Swami inspired him very much like Bharati to Sriram in *Waiting for the Mahatma*.

R.K. Narayan seems to be an ardent supporter of Gandhi and his ideology and 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 went to many gatherings he addressed.”³³

Swaminathan, Chandran, Krishnan, Sriram, Jagan – all the protagonists in his novels are true embodiments of Gandhian virtues and principles. Thus, R.K. Narayan has presented an encompassing view of Gandhian ideology and philosophy in his novels. These novels serves as a panorama for the future generations who wants to understand Gandhiji as a whole.

Notes

1. R.K.Narayan .*Waiting for the Mahatma*. Mysore: Indian Thought Publication,
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Chapter – VI

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi has been acknowledged as one of the greatest figures of human history – an indefatigable mass leader, social reformer, pacifist and, above all, a prophet of non-violence, peace, brotherhood and tolerance.

The evolution of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi into the ‘Mahatma’ is based on the principles that he adhered to were the guiding light all through his life. Gandhi throughout his life held on to those philosophies which are referred by his followers as ‘Gandhism’. Mahatma Gandhi’s philosophies have inspired generations of people all over the world and they become the bedrock of civil right movements which are waged against the oppressive governments.

The basis of Gandhi’s pacifism is the supreme value of *Ahimsa* or non-violence. The reinterpretation of non-violence is a major contribution to Gandhi. Non-violence is the means to achieve truth. For Mahatma Gandhi, non-violence is infinitely superior to violence. Non-violence as a strategy of change was developed by Gandhi in South Africa and later during India’s struggle for independence. Gandhi’s *Ahimsa* (Non-violence) is not a negative value of non-injury but a positive attitude of love, sacrifice and forgiveness for the humanity. Forgiveness requires more courage than revenge. The moral power generated by non-violence is infinitely greater than the force of violence and armaments.

Non-violence does not mean mere abstention from physical injury or a negative state of harmlessness. The true meaning of non-violence, according to Gandhi, is love and charity in their most positive forms. It means not hurting anybody in thoughts, words and deeds. It means doing well even to the wrongdoers. It is a weapon of the strong and

the brave rather than of the weak. Gandhi considered violence as an unmitigated evil. It is immoral and repugnant because it violates the principles of truth and non-violence.

Peace, as Gandhi envisaged it, is far more than the absence of war and violence. It implies a state of positive and constructive world order, where individuals, group and nations do not dominate or exploit one another but live in cooperation and mutual aid. Peace is thus cementing force for the society and the world. It is a state of affairs in which men can resolve their differences by talking to each other rather than by using violence.

Gandhi's approach to non-violence places him as a far-sighted, sensitive and perceptive man of peace. He gave a dynamic and flexible meaning of peace in which peace is the best, but not the only way, to achieve good. Despite the inconsistencies of his position and the unsystematic character of his ideas on world affairs, no one can deny the fact that before him few had given such a powerful moral thrust in international relations and argued for justice at global level. In *satyagraha* (holding onto truth), Gandhi gave a morally superior alternative to war as a means of achieving one's goals. His idea that responsible nationalism can be helpful to peace added a new dimension to conventional pacifism which rejects nationalism. Gandhi demonstrated, in South Africa as well as in India, that active pacifism can be an effective force, whether within a society or at the international level.

Non-violence continues to appeal to our world as a philosophy and strategy to bring about change. The 20th century saw several moments of intense political conflict in

which ordinary people embarked on dramatic protests yet remain peaceful. Gandhi had said that being fearless and not giving in to hatred were the two crucial pillars of non-violence. Even after his death, Gandhi has continued to set an example for people all over the world, especially those struggling to change unfair, exploitative, and oppressive conditions in their countries. Leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi found motivation in his beliefs and strategies of non-violent transformation.

Gandhi's long standing commitment to and promotion of passive resistance eventually paved the way for Indian Independence in 1948. The long and arduous struggle that he has engaged with finally culminated in the end of British imperialistic rule that had gripped Indian life for centuries. At this point Gandhi's political and spiritual standing reached an all time high. His life, his struggle his achievements were powerfully unique- inspiring and enriched so many people, not only in his own country but throughout the world. His legacy based on spiritual values came to inspire and influence a young, black student Martin Luther King Jr. who was studying at a theological college in America and helped to support and guide a black population in their quest for greater equality. Whilst at Theological Seminary, king was exposed to the teachings of Gandhi. They made an immediate and marked impact on him influencing deeply, his work in the Civil Rights Movement.

The non-violent approach of King's activism, which was proving to be highly successful was directly based on his study and understanding of Gandhi's experience in South Africa and India. King was bringing a deep awareness of Gandhi's spiritually

pragmatic doctrine to the Southern States of America and beyond. Through his engagement with the civil rights movement King remained faithful to Gandhian ideals. He believed, from a Christian perspective, that justice would eventually prevail for the black community if people were prepared to stand up and unite in the noble cause of non-violent resistance.

Mahatma Gandhi has influenced number of leaders around the world. South African Leader Nelson Mandela is among many leaders around the world who has been inspired by Gandhi for many reasons, the most prominent of them being the Satyagraha campaign that Gandhi advocated. The Satyagraha campaign was a compelling act of passive protest against oppression which later inspired the formation of the African National Congress as well as strengthening Mandela's belief in the shared humanity. Nelson Mandela truly believed that Gandhi's non-violent ways of protesting were inspirational.

The themes developed by Gandhian novelists are easily summed up because they are text book applications of what the Mahatma ceaselessly repeated. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K.Narayan and Bhattacharya are the four novelists who used Gandhian thought in their writings. The novelty they introduced into the literature of the subcontinent comes from the fact that they blend philosophy and art in their efforts to amend and reform people's mores. To Gandhi, art had to fulfill some kind of useful purpose and contribute to the general education of the people. Aesthetics could only be a means not an end.

According to Gandhi, life is a never ending journey in pursuit of truth. In Gandhian perspective it is very difficult to define life and the world. A person must discard the social order of ideal life and must question his position in society. It is generally associated with sincerity of heart. This necessarily implies the discovery of one's own self.

The novels based on the Gandhian thought express unique patterns and presents a clear contrast to the novels written by the writers of the 19th century. Beginning in the 19th century particularly during the height of British control over the subcontinent, Western literary models had an impact on Indian literature, the most striking result being the introduction of the use of vernacular prose on a major scale. Such forms as the novel and short story began to be adopted by Indian writers, as did realism and an interest in social questions and psychological description. A tradition of literature in English was also established in the subcontinent.

The novels based on the Gandhian thought express unique patterns and presents a clear contrast to the novels written by the writers of the 19th century. Gandhian thought gave power and force to Anglo Indian novels. Gandhi was their literary model and also the motivating moral force. Gandhian thought served the intellectual and emotional need to discover National Identity. Furthermore, Gandhian thought brought together East and West as well as the traditional and modern.

Before Gandhian thought become popular, the Indo Anglican novels of the 19th and 20th century did not dwell much on social awareness and had no view of man as a

social being. These novels are highly romantic and did not reflect the realities of the times. In the novels as well as in poems, the decadent romantic model held an influential sway over the Indian literary imagination.

Narayan through his characters presents before his readers the Gandhian ideal. They are the people in pursuit of truth. They represent the supreme qualities of the Indian way of life. Narayan never create his character as ideal human beings, but he let them struggle in their own ambiguities, which they adopt from the society around them. As they live in an anxious world in pursuit of its material dreams, and are torn between their inherited traditional values and their immediate provocations. He creates heroes who are not daring but very ordinary average men.

Narayan's polyphonic style of presenting the world of Malgudi creates a dialogic truth that renders the average Indian, not into any preconceived stereotype, but as part of an unending discourse. The impossibility of any single character to hold the stage is substantiated by a democratic and unbiased treatment of all characters. Thus, Gandhi's humanitarian doctrine is posited on equal standing with grandma's niche of gods and goddesses, the vigour and energy of Vasu's capitalist enterprise equally vies with Nataraj's smooth artistry of an elegant lifestyle. Even in an atmosphere charged with feminist disapprobation and revolt, where wives are betrayed or the beloveds are exploited, as Raju exploits Rosie's talent to mint money, or Raman attempts to violate Daisy's honour, the men too have their own stories. The characters may seem average and common, but they are not vulgarized. Even in their carnal weakness, the Rajus,

Vasus and Jagans create their own unique ideals to bless their erratic lives with a touch of a human and pathetic beauty.

This non-idealistic amoral world is not ashamed of its petty squabbles, tricks and exploitations. The unsentimental rendering of the victims has the effect of stark inevitability; on the one hand the victors too are not left to remain smugly self-satisfied, on the other hand, the seeds of bohemian restlessness in their nature turn their lives unpredictable and irredeemable. The episodic history of Raju's life from the Railway guide to the Swami on the bank of Sarayu launches him finally at the door of death; he leaves behind him an unfulfilled history of cherished dreams woven around Rosie's love, an elevated aristocratic life and also a weak secret corner for his estranged mother – never to be recovered or retrieved. Thus, thrown from one episode to another, swung in the dilemma of unheroic triumph and glory the characters of Narayan with their human fallibility remain indefinable forever.

Narayan's characters are gifted with an overdose of wit and practical intelligence; however, this bounty of nature is balanced by a lack of the other mental faculties leading to the depth in character. So, very often, they display much shortsightedness on their part when faced with problems requiring a depth and richness of understanding. Thus, Raju loses Rosie forever as he proves insensitive to her mental requirements, Jagan's escape in the name of *banaprastha* (departure to the forest) is the proof of his inability to solve the puzzle of his son who has all the maladies of a new generation and the otherwise clever Margayya inadvertently misappropriates his wealth to buy his son's affection while spoiling to all social codes and possess their own unique world views that launch

them in precarious positions in society. For Margayya the value of money outgrows all its material boundaries into the realm of everything noble and elegant i.e. for him, a noble and respectable life entails a history of selfish acquisition. This is in utter contradiction to the official value-system, and the procedure of the idealists against the material. This contradiction with social ideologies turns Narayan's characters ambivalent. This story is forever double-voiced, emanating a sense of praise and abuse, crowning and discrowning, ridicule and celebration.

British imperialism in India instigated the idealistic revolutions for freedom and self governance, the common mass, isolated from the strategies of politics or incapable of the idealized intellectual involvements, pursued the materials. This materialization of human life is a counter revolutionary stance in that the power of laughter was underpinned against all serious, stratified and oppressive regimes. Thus, the ordinary people that swarm Narayan's novels are not passive observers of history, waiting for their intellectual and powerful counterparts to decide their fate, but are active agents who create their own history that would forever sabotage all forms of canonization or totalitarian endeavors of the official world- whether in the form of British imperialism or their own nationalism.

Savitri's story in *The Dark Room* has all the anxieties of feminist text, and along with Savitri's pathetic attempt of committing suicide the message against male dominance could hit real hard. Yet the dialogic nature of the work along with Savitri's own submission to the more practical requirements of life like the duty for one's own

children and the economic security renders a different dimension to her story. It is a story from the heart of middle-class life and it requires no banner to convey the truth.

Materialization and debasement are characteristic that constitute the basic tenets and also the logistics of Narayan's novels. Raju remains the fallible human being beneath his ascetic garb, solidly feeling the crunches of hunger along with a fear of losing his face to the worshipping crowd. The Swami in *A Tiger for Malgudi* performs the impossible task when he befriends the awesome tiger. But Narayan brings him down to earth by supplying a very human story of his past. For Narayan, the solid materiality of human life should produce the ground for all truths; the tendency to legitimize abstract thoughts or ideas by compromising or adjusting human life to fit into them results in confusion.

Narayan wanted to reach the core of Gandhi's teaching. He wanted to give Gandhian philosophy a literary existence by separating the noticeably transient suggestion from what that was everlasting in it. Narayan treated his subject matter from philosophical point of view rather than a revolutionary, he wanted to cast a light on Indian independence movement and the significance of the events which preceded and followed it. Narayan took up his pen to show the universality of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and its connection with all time and all places

The core of Narayan's vision and art seems to lie in awareness in which illusion and reality, the mundane and the spiritual, the cosmic and the human, the tragic and the comic, easily exchange places and what matters is only a change in the mode of perception. When the doors of perception are cleaned life becomes immense and holy.

His matter of fact narrative of a subdued life suddenly explodes into disorder which is the beginning 'of order and reveals depths of reality unknown and unexpected.

R.K. Narayan frames his fictional imagination within the municipal limit of Malgudi. Malgudi is his 'imaginary regional locals' like the 'Lake District', of Wordsworth. As an imaginary South Indian town, it is situated between the Madras and the Thiruchirapalli. Narayan's all characters- students, teachers, artists, *sanyasis* (hermit), dreamers and realists – live within its limits. Malgudi is a mini India as well as a 'micro-universe' with character and complications. It is global village in the sense that the village itself embodies the entire globe. It is a mini India, with its little Ganges and Himalayas, just as its little men also partake of the magnitude of the heroes.

Malgudi has been a subject of greatest importance, hence most ardently discussed, as far as Narayan's fictional writing is concerned. Dr. Iyengar refused to accept Malgudi as a mere geographical expression in Narayan's novels due to its all-absorbing interest to the readers. Iyengar finds it as the real hero of Narayan's novels. Narayan's realistic description of Malgudi produces immense dramatic effects. His informative fiction enriches his imagination. He is able to cohere and analyze the whole pattern of Malgudi society. A strong sense of dramatic situations and propensities of characters are remarkably visible in his novels. He has a very positive approach about the characters and places which makes the scenes of Malgudi alive to our perception. This is the reason that Malgudi has become a sort of legend in Indo-Anglican fiction. Malgudi and its significant situations are found supremely fit according to relevance. Narayan avoids maladjustments and confrontations and hence we see obscenity nowhere in the Malgudi

novels. R.K.Narayan says, “When a couple even if they are characters in my novels, wants privacy, I leave the room”..... And it is why no Malgudian characters are seen going beyond the norm or sanctity of romance in society. Narayan is seen interested in social problems and repercussion of the violated morals and in depicting such problems he does not lack the analytical faculty over the details regarding Malgudi society. He rejects sordid and clumsy facts and therefore, the setting of Malgudi is found smooth, sleek and polished. He paints the Malgudian characters with relevant romance, fantasy, sentimentality, social conflict, follies and foibles of life. He is a true realist and never attempts to deviate from the traditional form of realism. Whenever he describes a particular scene of Malgudi, he succeeds well to convince his readers with the aptness of the situations and scenes.

Malgudi typifies the typical Indian lives, scenes and situations. The old and new Indian society is found interwoven in the novels. In Malgudi there are types of people, one who like traditions and lives accordingly and another who live adopting modern culture. The various facts of Indian life have been painted in the life of the people of Malgudi. The Malgudi novels are the expressions of various problems and predicament of middle class society particularly Narayan’s characters are symbols of wisdom, loyalty and treachery and ideal with the weal and woe of the individuals in their private life.

Narayan belongs to the triumvirate of the earliest Indian novelists who wrote in English, the other two being Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. It is said of Narayan that his novels return to the inevitable Indian values, reinforcing the strength of tradition: whatever happens, India will go on. Narayan’s writing is almost timeless in so far as

historical change is viewed as an illusory transfiguration which much reverts back to solidity and custom. Nearly all of Narayan's novels move around this pattern which can be expressed, in Meenakshi Mukherjee's words, 'Order-Dislocation of order- re-integration of order'. *The Man -Eater of Malgudi* may be takes a demonstrative model in which, Vasu, a taxidermist, visits Malgudi to hunt animals culminating in his grandiose plans to shoot an elephant. Destiny itself struggles to protect the life of the animals and ensure the security of tradition when a blow directed at his forehead to kill a mosquito leads to his own death. As Vasu knocks himself out, Narayan celebrates victory of traditional India that has no place even for Nehru's five-year plans for India's development. Narayan's penchant for the spiritual finds fuller expression in *Waiting for the Mahatma* where religious Hindu fables are advocated, creating some comedies that find hardly any parallel with the 'cruel and overwhelming' reality of India. As in the novel Gandhi told Bharati to Spin charkha and read *Bhagavad Gita*, and utter *Ram Nam* (the name Rama) and then only she will know what to do in her life. The *charkha* (a spinning wheel) is depicted as a devotional symbol or a prayer book. Even the act of going to prison is not political; it is represented as mysterious, religious instruction which Bharati obeys without question.

Narayan's achievement can be perceived in the manner in which he carries forward traditional and spiritual values into the lives of century characters in order to see their viability within a new context which might hold the potentiality of dismantling "eternal" traditions. While Narayan is sympathetic to indigenous culture and its manifestation through myths, there are ironic tonalities at work. For instance, in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, the ironic perspective is highlighted when Sriram endeavors to shorten

the tail of the 'Q' in 'Quit India' while inscribing it on his village walls in order to use up less paint.

Though Narayan's novels are all situated in Malgudi and his characters are inhabitants of this little village, there appears to be no explicit intention to define and emphasize a traditional continuity. It is intriguing in fact, how Narayan and his contemporaries treat national identity in different ways considering that they share the same historical environment: Rao's representation is shaped by metaphysics which Narayan exposes to the comic illusion. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand are also essentially different; while Anand advocates political sentiment which arises out of experience and is settled through action, Narayan emphasizes on retelling myths against a contemporary background, so that even in accepting the timeless relevance of the past, he can test the validity of that past in the present. Narayan has thereby quietly refused to an ideologue; while Anand and Rao prescribe authoritative ideologies in shaping the political consciousness of their readers, it is Narayan who treats identity as a mixture of comedy and serious, neither dismissed as completely farcical, nor sentimentally endorsed.

Narayan's fifty years of writing fiction have left him with a faithful following, a distinguished reputation, and if not a great deal of critical attention- outside India, that is, where he has received pretty well every mark of that country's national distinction. The modesty, endure and workmanlike are so characteristic of Narayan the man, are the marks also of Narayan the writer. Expression follows character, manner, and temperament. In particular the cool clarity with which Narayan considers him; his tastes

and his problems are mirrored in the lucidity and firmness of his account. Just so in the novels the limpid quality of the telling is the result of the calm and unsurprised scrutiny.

It is this inner tranquility and unforced assurance that distinguishes Narayan's fiction from Western fiction. This latter is a fiction which exists in a world of abstraction and technique and which derives its meanings and values from an unappeased appetite for change.

This is the world in which the writer, who needs more than anything else an exact sense 'for the fact of life', has to foster his talent. He has to construct what he needs most in a world where it is most lacking. The influence of this world is hard to resist. Even those who reject it consciously respond to it in a way which belongs to what they are attacking. They will choose some abstract concept, some single dimension like class or sex or alienation or 'anger' or disestablishmentarianism, and with the help of this monopolistic logic observe and interpret a stubbornly plural reality. Narayan's stories are simply exercises in a specialism of the moment. They contain structures larger than lines of feeling, directions of attention, and clusters of nations. The effect on the readers is twofold. The world-or worlds-dealt with in the stories strikes him as enjoying an objective existence independent of the contribution of the author. There it is, existing with a certain solidity and authority. On the other hand, the attitude of the author is modest and unconstructive. It has the air of being dependent on, and responsive to, things outside him. Actuality, one feels, is not be bullied or tricked into false positions. Nor it is being sucked up into some dominating and abstract symbolizing system.

Narayan's novelistic career has spanned over fifty five years, a period that comprises of the most eventful decades in Indian history. His novels provide a subtle reflection of the changing social and historical context, though Narayan himself has never acknowledged any overt preoccupation with such issues. Exploration of some of the changing roles of the female figures of the novel show that they can function as a kind of barometer of changes in the larger Indian context.

From the beginning, Narayan's work registers most sensitively the situation of women uniformly subjected to the seemingly unyielding pressures of a patriarchal society. Bharati is the first female who seems to have full control over her own life. Unlike the other woman in earlier works she does not seem restricted to the traditional roles of grandmother, mother, and wife. She can even take a role in public events. In Bharati, in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, the new woman acquires a different aura. In Gandhi's time many women took part in the political movement. They saw this as their duty. The name Bharati also means India. Bharati's activities whether within the precincts of the Gandhian camp or fearlessly tramping lonely mountain roads with instruction from the leader as evidence of the dawn of a revolutionary new day for the Indian female, her creator saw her as still no less firmly shackled by considerations of duty. Yet whether consciously acknowledged or not the novel reflects that cataclysmic events had encouraged the Indian women to abandon her traditionally passive role. From confining herself meekly to fanning only the embers of her domestic cooking flame or tending the light before the shrine of her Gods, She has stepped out to assist in kindling the flames of national revolution. For the first time the male protagonist Sriram looks on a female figure and admits, "He was frightened of her. She seemed to be too magnificent

to be his wife.” So the novel has proceeded to record these vital changes in the Indian scene.

R.K.Narayan’s novels are teemed with social consciousness. He is keenly aware of the fundamental irreversible absurdity which life and world are confronting with us. He accepts the life realities as it presents before him. He does not judge or give any comments and observes the society and its developments with an ironical detachment and accepts the realities without any grudge for anyone. He sees no point in attempting to criticize or correct things. Narayan’s novels and his characters show us everything that occurs in the every walk of society. He exposes through his novels the evils of our society, and probes them too, but never for sadistic pleasure or to increase disgust in readers. His chief aim is to highlight the hypocrisy of ideals, ambition and pride and not to guide the society in any particular direction but simply to make us realized.

Narayan’s novels are mostly structured around Indian myths and this metaphysical spirit is reflected in his novels. Narayan has his own views on human life and he has his own uniqueness in the placing of human feeling and experiences in his novels. The religious sensibility of Indian myth is part of Narayan’s hold on reality. By reading Narayan’s novels one can say that he represents the pure spirit of Hinduism. Narayan’s writings are free from any prejudice, which we cannot see in the writings of Raja Rao, in all of his mythical novels.

While it can be said that Narayan tries to reveal the deep layers of Gandhi’s thoughts and ideology, it is also true that he, at the same time, refrains from giving a passing judgment or to be swayed with the Mahatma’s revolutionary zeal. He seems to

instead prefer to paint the picture of the Mahatma's universal appeal and be content with being simply a 'witness' who, through his pen, skilfully captures the moments and events of that time in history in which Gandhi looms large. In other words, Narayan builds for the Mahatma immortality by giving him a 'literary existence' through his works of fiction just as John Keats gives immortality to the lovers, forever in love, in his 'Ode to a Grecian Urn'.

Narayan's all characters- students, teachers, artists, sanyasis, dreamers and realists- live within the limit of Malgudi. Malgudi has been a subject of greatest importance, hence most ardently discussed, as far as Narayan's fictional writing is concerned. Narayan's characters in his novels are ardent followers of Gandhian idea. They are people in pursuit of truth. They are embodiments of Gandhian thoughts. In one way or the other, Narayan's protagonists seem to go through the Gandhian 'experiment with truth.' This experiment is what Narayan's novels seem to be essentially concerned with.

Malgudi typifies the typical Indian lives, scenes and situations. It is said of Narayan that his novels return to the inevitable Indian values, reinforcing the strength of tradition: whatever happens, India will go on. Narayan's writing is almost timeless in so far as historical change is viewed as an illusory transfiguration which must revert back to solidity and custom. Narayan's polyphonic style of presenting the world of Malgudi creates a dialogic truth that renders the average Indian, not into any preconceived stereotype, but as part of an unending discourse. The impossibility of any single

character to hold the stage is substantiated by a democratic and unbiased treatment of all characters.

Narayan can be seen as an unidentified social reformer who is keenly aware of the various absurdities and eccentricities of society and suggests ironically the ways for their remedies. Narayan presents in his novels Gandhi's plea for non-violence with a new significance, as one of the paths to attain harmony in life, non-violence in all matters, small or big, personal or national, it seemed to produce an unagitated, undisturbed calm, both in a personality and in society.

On the whole, R.K. Narayan's novels explore the social assumptions and the foibles contained within the society. All his novels, from the simple sad comedy to those of mythical nature are all born in the smithy of social awareness. He is neither an angry old man nor a politician championing the cause of the masses. Rather, he is a merchant of human metaphors, an artist with an observant eye who caricatures life. His fiction is but an extensive metaphor on human being as the centre of society.

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Influence of Gandhian Philosophy on the Novels of R.K.Narayan

ABSTRACT

R.K.Narayan is a writer who has witnessed the rise of Indian nationalism under the charismatic leadership of M.K.Gandhi. Narayan's novels are replete with this moment in the nation's history, when India experienced a revolutionary fervour with a new-found determination to remove the Colonial shackles and take India to a new destination coupled with the rise of nationalistic feeling, there were social reformations and new political and economic awareness. It was as if the country was lifted out of ignorance, orthodoxy, dogmas and replaced with 'new ideas' propagated by the 'Mahatma', collectively termed as Gandhism. This thesis explores how R.K.Narayan, through his novels, explores the concept of 'gandhism' or gandhian Philosophy through his characters who seem to be imbued with this characteristic in different ways. It seeks to analyse the different dimensions in which Narayan takes this ideology beyond the world of the much hyped 'khadi spinning' and *ahimsa*.

While it can be said that Narayan tries to reveal the deep layers of Gandhi's thoughts and ideology, it is also true that he, at the same time, refrains from being passing a judgement or to be swayed with the Mahatma's revolutionary zeal. He

seems to instead prefer to paint the picture of the Mahatma's universal appeal and be content with being simply a 'witness' who, through his pen, skilfully captures the moments and events of that time in history in which Gandhi looms large. In other words, Narayan builds for the Mahatma immortality by giving him a 'literary existence' through his works of fiction just as John Keats gives immortality to the lovers, forever in love, in his 'Ode to a Grecian Urn'.

The core of Narayan's vision and art seems to lie in awareness in which illusion and reality, the mundane and the spiritual, the cosmic and the human, the tragic and the comic, easily exchange places and what matters is only a change in the mode of perception. His matter of fact narrative of a subdued life suddenly explodes into disorder which is the beginning of order and reveals depths of reality unknown and unexpected.

R.K.Narayan frames his fictional imagination within the municipal limit of Malgudi. Malgudi is his 'imaginary regional locals' like the 'Lake District', of Wordsworth. Narayan's all characters- students, teachers, artists, sanyasis, dreamers and realists- live within its limit. Malgudi has been a subject of greatest importance, hence most ardently discussed, as far as Narayan's fictional writing is concerned. Narayan's characters in his novels are ardent followers of Gandhian idea. They are people in pursuit of truth. They are embodiments of Gandhian thoughts. In one way or the other, Narayan's protagonists seem to go through the Gandhian 'experiment with truth.' This experiment is what Narayan's novels seem to be essentially concerned with.

Malgudi typifies the typical Indian lives, scenes and situations. It is said of Narayan that his novels return to the inevitable Indian values, reinforcing the strength of tradition: whatever happens, India will go on. Narayan's writing is almost timeless in so far as historical change is viewed as an illusory transfiguration which must revert back to solidity and custom. Narayan's polyphonic style of presenting the world of Malgudi creates a dialogic truth that renders the average Indian, not into any preconceived stereotype, but as part of an unending discourse. The impossibility of any single character to hold the stage is substantiated by a democratic and unbiased treatment of all characters.

R.K.Narayan's novels are teemed with social consciousness. He was very much aware of the fundamental incongruities of life. He accepts the realities as they are to come to terms with life. He looks at life with an ironic detachment, an observer who does not complain without a grudge. His primary objective is to highlight the hypocrisy of ideals, ambition and pride present within humankind with a touch of humour and his motive is not to guide the society in any particular direction; rather, he seems to simply point out the incongruities and foibles to his readers.

Thus, Narayan can be seen as an unidentified social reformer who is keenly aware of the various absurdities and eccentricities of society and suggests ironically the ways for their remedies. Narayan presents in his novels Gandhi's plea for non-violence with a new significance, as one of the paths to attain harmony in life, non-violence in all matters, small or big, personal or national, it seemed to produce an unagitated, undisturbed calm, both in a personality and in society.

