

Revisiting of Indian Milieu in Select Novels of R.K.Narayan

V.Jayanthi

(17PEN004)

Thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education

for women,Coimbatore-641043

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

Master's Degree in English

April 2019

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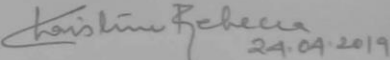
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Chapter-I
Introduction

Chapter-I

Introduction

Indian writing in English is a definite contribution to the composite culture of India. It is primarily a part of the literature of India like other literatures written in various regional languages. It has come to be a part of world literature growing steadily in variety and maturity. Indian English literature has now caught the attention of quite a number of readers and literary scholars both in India and abroad. The creative writing has a bearing on our socio-political consciousness; therefore, it is likely to be more authentic. Except for a few who use English as their mother-tongue Indian writers in English by and large are bilingual and their best writing are concerned with the socio-economic problem of the country. It spontaneously and powerfully expresses the varying shades of emotions of typical Indian people. Fiction in India has been a graphic chronicle of varied vicissitudes of the people as they pass from economic, sociological, cultural and political subjugation of various hues and shades.

The Indian writing in English consistently concerned with religion, culture, tradition and modernity under the Indian milieu is of great literary and social value. The deep sense of concern with the changing tradition of the fact of modern India and abiding faith in individual freedom, human rights and the cultural values of India is reflected in the works. It aims at an imaginative unification and a fictional identification of the fast changing countenance of

India in crucible time. India has had its own tradition and ancient religion and culture and tradition since time immemorial. It has had its own cultural heritage and milieu besides having its own language and literature. The adoption of English as a medium of communication and the adoption of English as one of the official languages stimulated a new consciousness among the people of political and cultural nationalism.

The Indian English Fiction has a sense of belonging and strain of history where race, religion, culture and caste can decide the course of a love affair with different societies under foreign domination bring their own behavior characteristics into play. In the traditional cultural history of India, all Indians are not Hindus but all Indians much reckon with Hinduism. Hinduism has been the dominant setting and provides the social and psychological platform for the other religions such as Christianity and Islam. When religion and culture are subject to dramatic changes, there is a kind of conclusion and conflict in the Indian consciousness and sensibility. This one could trace, when India was subject to various kinds of invasions. Under this cultural atmosphere and political environment, it is the duty of the conscious artist to bring all these elements alive in his writing.

There are many cultural changes that have taken place in the traditional Hindu dominated society due to the advent and invasion of western culture are manifold. At this juncture, the very question of direction and treatment of theme is highly irrelevant, when the migration of cultures is open ended and when the migration can take place without even leaving one's identity and soil.

It is unpredictable where one culture begins and another ends, when they are housed in the same person. These characters placed in the novels move forward in the same way that the Indian society moves forward. The woman characters in the novels have a mind and a will of their own. They are attracted by things deeper than those visible on the surface.

Moreover they are bold and have no inhibitions in breaking away from the established norms of society. That it is why one finds in Indian English Fiction the defying and even breaking away from the bonds of marriage to finds a new life of fulfillment. In India a very interesting situation operates. India being a multilingual country, English serves as a link language across the nation. It is also a language in which a lot of Indian literature is being written that is to say literature by Indians about India but in English. This is what has come to be termed Indian literature in English. While viewing Indian English literature from historical perspective it has passed through several phases. In spite of India having its diverse cultures, races and religions, Indian writing has successfully recaptured and reflected the multi-cultural multilingual society. As a result of it, it has aroused a good deal of interest at home and in foreign countries also. The works of various writers get to a vast category of readers but it also receives a vast critical acclaim.

The term Indian writing in English is the body of works, by the writers whose mother tongue is one of the languages of multilingual India. Consequently, a large number of Indians are greatly moved by the genuine desire to present before the western readers- an authentic picture of India

through their writings. They use Indian Writing as a medium to express their inner desires to native and foreign authors. Many Indian writers have English as a medium of expression and left a great impact on different forms of literature. For example Toru Dutt, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati, Sri Aurobindo, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Nissim Ezekiel, Nayantara, Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Deshpande, and some recent Indian Writers such as Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Aravind Adiga, and Chetan Bhagat. Indian Writing in English expresses a shared tradition, cultural experiences and Indian heritage. Early Indian Writers have used many Indian words and the experiences and Indian heritage.

R.K. Narayan was born on 10th October 1906 in Madras in a Brahmin family. His father was Rasipuram Krishna Swami Ayer Narayanswami. Narayan's family was from a village named Rasipuram. Since his father was in the Government Education service there raised a necessity for his family to move from place to place. Therefore, he lived with his grandmother mostly time. His grandmother taught him arithmetic mythology classical Indian music and Sanskrit. Narayan's grandmother had the deepest influence on his life and most of his female characters of his novels are centered on her. He had a younger brother named R.K. Lakshman who was a very famous cartoonist. R.K. Narayan is always well known for his simplicity which is evident in his writings.

R.K. Narayan is always well known for his simplicity which is evident in his writings. R.K. Narayan published fourteen novels, several essays, short stories, a memoirs and some translations of Indian epics and myths. His works were translated into every European language as well as Hebrew. In his personal life it is seen that he believes horoscope and stars it is reflected in the later part of his novel *The English Teacher*. *Swami and his friends* his first novel was published in 1985. *The Financial Expert*, publication in 1952 is considered to be his master piece. He began his career by writing novels as his first genre. R.K. Narayan won the Sahitya Academy Award for the novel *Guide*. He was awarded Padma Vibushan in the year 2000. He writes Indian novels with an Indian touch that shows his love towards the nation.

The setting of R.K. Narayan's novels is the south Indian town of Malgudi. It is an imaginative place which is similar to his beloved place Mysore. The name Malgudi comes from R.K. Narayan's favourite places Malleswaram and Basvangudi in Bangalore. His friend Venu is said have created this fictitious town of Malgudi where he set his novels. The most evident place borrowed by R.K. Narayan from his imaginative place Malgudi is the Lawley Extension which is prominently seen at many places in *The English Teacher*. As Narayan's novels cover a period of almost five decades the characters have been pushed to experience both the colonial and postcolonial situation. The place and the setting have been changing according to the colonial and postcolonial period. Even though *The English Teacher* was written

before Independence there are no traces of any British rule or colonialisation in the novel. The characters have the freedom of choice and living in the novel.

R.K. Narayan's writing is simple, unpretentious and witty with a unique flavour as if he writes in the native tongue. He is viewed as an accomplished sensitive and prolific writer. His writing is a distinct blend of western techniques and eastern material. His novels are characterised by Chekhovian simplicity and gentle humour. Characters in his novels are very ordinary. The Indians trying to blend tradition with modernization often result in tragic-comic situation. He presents reality in his stories that end happily. He reveals the ironies of life impressively. R.K.Narayan was also an editor of a issues of the journal during the second world war. The journal came to an abrupt end because of the war. R.K.Narayan married Rajam and they are blessed with a baby daughter Hema. After few years, Rajam succumbed to typhoid after which his days felt terrible for him. R.K.Narayan passed away on 13th May 2001. Both his wife and daughter meant a lot to him in his life and without them he lost interest in living his life.

Narayan's life was his family so when he lost them it is clearly seen that he lost the reality of his life. He felt he would never be able to regain his inspirational sense that would never be able to regain. This pressure on him would have been the major key for him to pause his writing which was his passion and profession. His novel *The English Teacher* based on his own wife's death and his dark days after the sad event. The novel describes the life of Krishna who is in reality R.K.Narayan. Krishna is a teacher of English in

college. The major part of the novel centers around the love between Krishnan and his wife Susila. During his dark days, music was his main source for his survival. R.K. Narayan was a self-taught player. He was good enough to earn comments from the Maestro of Mysore palace, Vidwan Duraiswamy Iyengar. Out of his personal experience he wrote the novel *Swami and Friends*. It is the story of a classical school boy. The novel describes the life of the boys in the south Indian schools.

Narayan's novel *The Bachelor of Arts* tells the story of a Hindu household in South India. The novel gives true insight into the Hindu mind, manners and customs which are followed throughout India and especially in Tamil Nadu. His novel *The Dark Room* deals with the tragedy of domestic life. The novel suggests no solutions to the problems but still it brings out his concern for the woman of our country. In this novel he also shows the inner feelings and real sufferings of an Indian woman who is oppressed by her husband. One of his most famous novels *The Financial Expert* is considered to be his masterpiece. This novel tells us the story of the rise and fall of the financial expert. In all his novels he adds the essence of Indianism. In any particular point of the novel, the writer clearly points out the lifestyle, culture, tradition, food and many other cultural practices, traditions, customs, rituals of Indian tradition and life.

Most of Narayan's protagonists are from the middle class whom Narayan considers to be more active people than any others. He feels that the consciousness in them is more vivid and harrowing. Narayan's heroes are filled with confidence and modesty. The female characters always represent custom

and reason. R.K. Narayan's writing is down to earth and is very easy to grasp on. Only a little effort is required from the readers. His novels also pose a wonderful start up for the beginners. It proves that reading isn't complicated.. R.K. Narayan had believes in the aesthetic or creative pattern of art rather than its suggestive moral appeal. Being aware and having substantial knowledge of Hindu myths and beliefs, he found it essay and necessary to express Hindu belief system. In this works he minutely traced modernity in the changing face of India and attempted to be very India in his effort.

As a writer he contributed for many years and continued to write till his death. He was discovered by Graham Greene and they both remained close till he end. The common view of R.K. Narayan is a supreme ironist who exposes the absurdities of the people's situation with his gentle humour. M.K. Naik noted critic, wrote a whole book celebrating R.K. Narayan's ironic vision. R.K. Narayan begins his first novel on Vijayadasami day because of its auspiciousness. His grandmother who is a firm believer in astrology selected this day for him. The auspicious beginning here highlights that the writer himself is believer of Hindu customs and traditions. R.K.Narayan refer to his personal experiences in a number of his novels and short stories. His beloved wife died of typhoid in1939 only five years after their marriage. This was a great shock for him. Life became meaningless. But passing through this dark valley of the shadow of death he gained inner illumination that increased his knowledge of life and its mystery which comes only through intense suffering.

Narayan's concept of human relationship is not bound by the four walls of the home. He has a broader vision of humanity. Relationships beyond family also shape the lives of his heroes. They may be instrumental but their very presence at crucial moments makes all the difference the postmaster in *The Bachelor of Arts*. Chandran's realisation at the end of his folly and his wish to return to the normal life giving up the stance of a sanyasi is brought into reality with the help of the post master to whom Chandran confesses everything. Man-Woman relationship is also another prominent theme of Narayan's novels. He portrays different types of woman characters who are rooted in social reality.

The Indian house-wives such as Susila in *The English Teacher* and Savitri in *The Dark Room* are simple, modest, gentle, loving and obedient. They are religious and traditional in their ways. They are the upholders of the ancient Indian way of life. Their only anxiety is the welfare of their husbands and children. Of these two Susila is fortunate enough to enjoy the love and of her husband. There is proper coordination between husband and wife. In *The Sweet Vendor* (1967) while continuing on the lines of *The Guide* in presenting the ambivalent development of its protagonist significant in fusing the comic with the serious, and to achieve this Narayan resorts to such familiar themes of his as the father-son relationship domestic life, the Indian paradox of attachment to wealth and a desire for total renunciation. Added to these in *The Sweet-Vendor* is a kind of East- West encounter.

Narayan's ever-alert eye for the comic does not spare even the epics-the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. His *Gods, Demons and others* (1964) an

earlier work is noted for any reinterpretation of myth or legend. There is an unmistakable freshness of approach and insight in the presentation of some characters. The choice of material by and large suggests a writer's vision. The Narayan has chosen such as characters as Narada and Ravana in his *Gods, Demons and others* who reappear in his *The Mahabharata* (1977) and *The Ramayana* (1972) only defines the contours of his comic version. The characters and situations that lend themselves to comic treatment are the very stuff of Narayan's art. Narayan has strayed outside fiction to everyday life which is after all full of fictional possibilities. His *Dateless Diary* (1960) and *Reluctant Guru* (1965) the later a collection of fascinating essays on variety of subjects such as the postman cows and milk and on educational policies and his autobiography *My Days* (1974) which brings out vividly his painful college days and their demand of much effort and preparation for examinations all these are recollected in a tone which is pleasantly reminiscent and because of the novelist's preoccupations in his life and fiction one does not see anything surprising in the autobiography.

Narayan's entire works one comes across novels and short stories which really as native as *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955) or *The Painter of Signs* (1977). The Gandhian impact on Narayan's fiction is not restricted to *The Waiting for Mahatma* and that the Gandhian concept of experiments with truth can very well be identified in the simple explorations the protagonist in *The English Teacher*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The Guide*, *Vendor of sweets* and others. C.D. Narasimhaiah's pioneering essay R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* which

appeared soon after Narayan got the Sahitya Akadami award generated a lively debate on the self-divisions and self-identity of the protagonist from the Railway Raju to the widely revered saint who sacrifices his life to underscore the interest of the community.

Other essays mostly consisting of close critical readings of the major texts of Narayan carry the underpinnings of varied features of his art for instance the locale of Malgudi the intricate yet delicate blend of his problematisation of traditional Indian values the extent of the notarisation of language for cross cultural significations his women as markers of social change his profound perception of the ordinary and others. It is sincerely hoped that the anthropology will interest and benefit the students of Narayan the academics and the common reader. In *The Vendor of sweets* and in *A Tiger for Malgudi*, *The Gita* and the puranas are freely quoted for the guidance of worldly life. Jagan the vendor of sweets despite his being a rebel against rites and celebrations seeks life essentially within the framework of Hindu tradition and draws his inspiration from its scriptures. The ascetic in *A Tiger for Malgudi* quotes *The Bhagvad Gita* for purpose of taming the tiger's ferocity and savagery.

In *The Dark Room*, Narayan projects the trials, tribulations and torments of a traditional Hindu wife who is unable to challenge her bullying husband and sulks in her darkroom too often. Such is the simple novel dealing with the sorry fate of Indian womanhood. Savitri in the novel *The Dark Room* is a typical Indian house wife. She is simple, modest, gentle, loving and obedient.

She is religious and traditional indeed she is the upholder of the ancient Indian way of life. It is noted that R.K. Narayan has the touch of Indian writing in all his novels. In *The English Teacher* the writer brings forth complete touch of Indian life in family life and job. Narayan's portrayal of orthodox and modern concepts of marriage is appraised in *The Dark Room and The English Teacher*. R.K. Narayan use Hindu mythology and interprets the modern or contemporary life through a mythical parallel. That is why one clear feels the contemporariness in the modern integration of his use of myth.

Narayan weaves his themes around Hindu myths and legends and Indian social reality. Narayan is not a critic of society but he has an extraordinary power of presenting the multiple facts of life. He is certainly a keen observer of life and manners. He creates his comedy by employing all the devices of the humourist both traditional and innovative. Narayan has always used Indianness in his language and this made his language highly comprehensible. Narayan sets an adequate mirror of reality in the simplicity of the dialogues and first person narration. It can be said that in his use of language Narayan is simple readable and without any patches. He has a kind of humour strange in Indian writing. In Indian English Fiction R.K. Narayan is duly regarded as one of harbingers of a new age. He takes it far from the immature, imitative, romantic, and nationalistic narrative of early phase and gave it a firm native footing and brought it close to socio-cultural life which people live. Narayan is primarily preoccupied with tradition and environment.

Narayan's novels explore the theme of tradition and unconventionality not only by showing the individual in conflict but also by depicting a whole nation in a state of conflict, uncertain of its way ahead questioning the value of many new and conventional attitudes and institutions and yet absorbing in to its system whatever seems to be good, perhaps the most valuable element in Narayan's novels for modern man caught up in the craziness of materialistic and commercial world is his rejection of sheer materialism. Narayan seems to point out implicitly and obliquely the value of the past for the welfare of the present. Whatever the *Shastras* have prescribed is good for everybody. A life based on the sound footings of tradition and custom is conducive to inner peace and contentment whereas the transgression of the established norms is bound to lead one to untold misery.

R.K. Narayan has suggested that the genesis of his novel lay in his sympathetic response to the women's movement in the west as typified by Ibsen's Nora Helmer. Savitri's peaceful afternoons are described in the following words odd noises of cows and sparrow in the garden broke the stillness of the hour. Over the pages of the magazine Savitri snatched a brief nap. The serenity of Savitri's afternoons are however disturbed by various factors the talkies which have just come to Malgudi, the England Insurance company decision to take women probationers most intrusively, the strident car horn of Ramani the self-made man who beliefs that proved one was right and needed no advice from others and least of all from a wife. Narayan's satire fully exploits the correspondence between Ramani's middle school ambitions

at work and his ill tempered aggression at home the novelist is not wholly able to extricate himself from a Ramani's limited way of seeing. Savitri's and Shantabai's marginal function in Ramani's world.

The latter's precarious position in the office is also shown as analogous to that of other dependents like Ranga the servant and of course the children. Shantabai's dark room and presage the unit shanty outside the temple in which Savitri finds it so difficult to sleep. R.K.Narayan can mimic exactly the half-baked notions of the small town Shantabai and in a sense this freezes the current of sympathy. Thus the other woman remains the other in the novel and is never humanised completely but left exotic through her romantic excess. Savitri is rescued predictably by a man whose comic failure at robbery serves as reductive parallel to Savitri's suicide attempt. Savitri's tragic self-discovery and her subsequent odyssey is qualified by further hints of the farcical. Savitri's failure is then to be seen as the logical conclusion of the reality principle as it operates in the social realism of the novel. The readers of confronted by the problematic relationship between gender on the one hand the generic impulse to portray the existent female situation. The contradictory impulse to remake reality and produce new forms of moral character on behalf of the suppressed female is also evident.

Savitri's emotions are shown to be engaged especially towards her son who according to an Indian custom will be her protector in the future. Savitri's power is illusory not only because the entire weight of traditional attitudes in the person of Janamma the servants and the priest are weighted in Ramani's

favour but also because for the children Ramani is the admirable role model. The novel is inescapable that the genetic processes in every individual text cannot be seen as following immutable and mechanical rules nor as emerging from the writer's subjectivity. The sum of the arguments about the self-critical heterogeneity of narrative voices in *nashtanir* and the reformation of patriarchy at the fantasy level of Narayan's text are only the first analytical steps towards the construction of a theoretical model about genre and gender. It seems to me that the construction of this theoretical model is a task which must be undertaken not only by literary critics but also by woman activities anthropologists, historians and economists in order to question the modes of representation that are accessible to them and to reveal the hidden assumptions which these modes naturalise the enabling the collective forgiving of an alternative relationship between genre and gender.

The English Teacher is a story of Krishna an English Lecture at Albert Mission College. Krishna an English Teacher dedicated to teaching. But by nature he is a poet and his aspiration is to write poetry in English and establish himself as an English poet. Krishna declares so confidently and optimistically about his cherished dream always fancied that he was born with the publication. He has taken to teaching as an English teacher at a college just to make a living against his nature and the cherished dream of his life. Though he carries out his duties perfectly as an English teacher at college and earns sufficiently to lead a comfortable life with his wife and only daughter a vague dissatisfaction nags him and a guilty feeling of having chosen a wrong

profession against his nature he experience. He feels he lives a cow, eating, working, walking and talking. He wishes to rebel against this sort of monotonous routine and to outgrow the existence of a cow to achieve something. But he cannot do so simply because he is middle class man with a family to look after and is completely dependent on salary and can hardly purse his dreams. This is how a middle class man's life goes on. The novel *The English Teacher*, thus open with the distinctive feature of the life of middleclass people.

The English Teacher presents so vividly the academic environment with teachers and students. Gajapathy an Assistant professor in English Rangappaa philosophy lecture Gopal mathematics lecture and brown the principal of the college constitute the typical college staff with lively discussion on academic issues. For instance a student's mistake in the spelling of word honour noticed by the shocked principal brown the subsequent discussion on spelling of English words and the principle lecture on the importance of English language mirror the academic environment of the college. Krishna apart from being a teacher of English is a family man dedicated to his wife and only daughter. He is a loving husband and caring father. As a husband and father he is an ideal and a perfect role model. To have a house of one's own is the dream of the middle class people. This fond dream typical of Indian middle class people Krishnan and his wife Susila nurture and to realize this dream Krishna approaches a contractor and both the couple in search of their dream house.

Krishna serves his wife so dedicatedly during her sickness. He emerges as the most caring and loving husband. His love for his wife is so great that he cannot bear his wife being referred to as a patient by the doctor. She would no longer be known as a wife or mother or Susila but only as a patient and all this precautions was she an untouchable it was a painful line of thinking for him. His wife's sickness does not weaken their marital bond. Instead it strengthens this loving bond between his wife and himself and offers him immense satisfaction. The only relief Krishna has in his world of blankness and emptiness is his only daughter. To his daughter Leela he becomes father and mother. He lives for her only. In his daughter he glimpse a miniature of her mother. Krishna is the most loving mother and caring father to his daughter after the death of his beloved wife. As a mother he bathes her combs her hair dresses her feeds and plays with her. As a father he takes her to schools and looks after her studies. Krishna is portrayed as a fine blend of ideal husband and the most loving and caring father for his daughter.

The most signification feature of Narayan with which the writer has often been identified is the non-committal stance. It is particularly here that Narayan stands out in the company of his fellow novelists. The only commitment which he has been following with a religious zeal is the writer's commitment to his art. As far back as in 1953 Narayan had clearly voiced his views regarding the role of an Indian English writer in the context of the Indian Narayan pointed out that the subject matter of fiction during the nationalist movement. R.K. Narayan writes his novel as a true artist. He is therefore

basically different from both Mulk Raj Anand the progressive humanist and from Raja Rao the philosopher novelist R.K.Narayan tries to give his readers the joy of a purely creative artist. He loves humanity but does not take sides. In his novel we have no didacticism no philosophy and no propaganda he interprets Indian life aesthetically with unprejudiced objectivity.

Narayan exposes the ills of society and probes them too but never for sadistic pleasure or for scating disgust in readers. His chief aim is to highlight the hypocrisy of deals ambition and pride and not to guide the society in any particular direction but simply to make us realize. Narayan's early novels are a sociological study of people's manners and mentality in pre-independence days. In *The Dark Room* demonstrates the typical Indian attitude to family life and exposes the predicament of common housewives. The heroine Savitri typifies all suffering housewives of our society who are exploited by all means in their life. *The English Teacher* tells a tragic love story of the divine separation of two souls with an anterior motif of satirizing the fault in existing education system which makes us morns, cultural morons, but efficient clerks for all your business and administrative office. Most of all she contrasts with Savitri because she lives from day to day on a make shift philosophy without apparent commitment or responsibility.

It is clear at the same time that Shantabai manages to keep afloat only through her comic illusions of emotional independence her financial position is entirely precarious and depends on Ramani's attachment to her. For the purpose of the novel and because Narayan wants our sympathy for Savitri,

Shantabai with brutal insights as a prostitute she changes her men, but a married woman doesn't. But both of them earn their food and shelter in the same manner. R.K.Narayan's novels offer an exciting and intriguing avenue for research especially in today's time. The complexity of characters up in concerns who are placed in a different society are still presented as caught up in concerns which are strangely immediate and relevant. The emotional graph of the characters in the context of their struggles offer a delightful scope for study. The dissertation studies two of his cult novels *The English Teacher* and *The Dark Room*.

The objectives of the dissertation is to study the portrayal of woman characters, the explore the elements of Indian sensibility as reflected in the novels and to highlight the relevance of such a great writer even today. The second chapter of this dissertation studies the women characters in the selected novels for study. The women are seen from the perspective of their stance in society and their struggle and aspiration to become social markers of change is explored. The third chapter the essence of Indian sensibility as depicted in both the novels chosen for study. The final chapter summaries the findings highlighting the irresistible charm and relevance that Narayan's works carry even today.

Chapter-II
Women as Markers of Social Change

Chapter-2

Women as markers of social change

R.K. Narayan's novels are a mirror of social change particularly in South India. This chapter will focus on the presentation of women characters in the select novels taken for the study, many of whom are depicted by R.K. Narayan as crucial markers of change in a modernizing world. In each of these novels Narayan's women characters mostly stand both for change and for resistance to change. The struggle by society to accept new modes of living and being are presented very subtly and delicately by a series of external contrasts and counterpoints between outsiders and local people. It is also presented through a series of symbols which reflect or suggest the inner conflicts of the women protagonists themselves. Women are markers of change but at the same time are aware of the devastation such a change might bring the ambiguity which mirrors the conflict in a traditional, patriarchal society, with new notions of selfhood is the theme of the novels under study *The Dark Room* and *The English Teacher*.

R.K.Narayan is neither angry like Mulk Raj Anand nor philosophical like Raja Rao. Narayan's social consciousness is conspicuous in his novels yet his awareness is covered with a blanket of irony. He maintains a frontier of norms in his fictional writing and therefore is free from all partiality. Narayan minutely observes the society and presents the most realistic picture charged with gentle irony and light humour. His approach to subject matter is always marked with intellectual inspirations. His artistic excellence lies in his

authentic explorations and straightforward manner. Narayan's novels are teemed with social consciousness in human relationships. R.K. Narayan is particularly aware of the fundamental irremediable incongruities which our life and world confront us. Narayan accepts the reality as it presents before him. The writer sees the society and its developments with an ironic detachment but accepts reality ungrudgingly. He sees no point in attempting to criticize or correct things because as he remarks in that it is seems to him a futile and presumptuous occupation to analyse, criticize and attempt to set things right anywhere. Narayan's central character shows us everything that occurs in every walk of society.

His 1945 novel *The English Teacher* does follow his pattern up to a point, since it deals with a further phase in the coming of age of a Tamil Brahmin protagonist, and it has been published along with *Swami and Friends* and *The Bachelor of Arts* as a loose trilogy. It is, however a very different kind of novel from *Swami* and *The Bachelor Of Arts* and ultimately resists classification as a buildings roman about progression into the second asrama and it was not Narayan's next novel after *The Bachelor of Arts*. In 1938 he published *The Dark Room* a work which moved away from the male viewpoint of his first two novels and in doing so also demonstrated considerable ambivalence about gender roles in Tamil Brahmin society. In *The Dark Room* takes a mistreated wife as its protagonist and main focalizing and is in many ways the most surprising though by no means the most accomplished, novel in Narayan's whole oeuvre.

In *The Dark Room*, he ventures into incipiently feminist territory, in its concentration on the situation of a wronged wife. Critics writing from a variety of backgrounds have been quick to comment on this aspect of the novel. William Walsh in R.K. Narayan conveniently choosing to ignore the first wave of twentieth-century Western feminism and, more importantly, the Gandhian ethic's championing of women's roles in the independence movement, has seen it as projecting an image of the Indian woman as a victim some thirty-five to forty years before the current talk of women's liberation. Usha Bande sees it as Narayan's first major work on woman's predicament text which dramatizes two alternatives open to women, both of which are rejected as unsatisfactory. Nilufer E. Bharucha refers to it as his most woman centered novel and, discussing its attack on patriarchy with reference to a number of western gynocritics, sees it as progressing for its period and setting.

The most pertinent comment on Narayan's putative feminism comes from the novelist himself. In a letter to Graham Greene, he outlined his intentions in terms of a view of 'woman' which was as much metaphysical:

I was somehow obsessed with the a philosophy of woman as opposed to Man, her constant oppressor. Thus must have been an early testament of the 'Women's Lib' movement. Man assigned her a secondary place and kept her there with such subtlety and cunning that she herself began to lose all notion of her independence, her individuality stature, and strength. A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society was an ideal victim of

such circumstances. My novel dealt with her, with this philosophy broadly in the background (44).

A concern with gender relations informs every aspects of the *The Dark Room*. It is central to the novel's main story of the protagonist Savitri's marriage and her husband Ramani's adulterous affair with another modern Brahmin woman. Against the backdrop of the prevalent gender norms, is placed in a contrast pairing of Savitri's two closest friends Gangu, who aspires to a place in the wider world, whether it be as film star, professional musician or political activist, and Janamma, a woman who prefers to stay at home and stresses the importance of women's submissiveness in marriage. Marriage and more specially women's roles inside and outside of marriage is discussed at length. Although Savitri's plight is compassionately portrayed, sympathy for her predicament is achieved through contrasting her with Ramani's mistress, Shantabai, who can equally well be viewed as a type of the modern Brahmin woman. Their aspirations also dramatize the struggle of educated, independent women of her class and caste.

Interviewing candidates for positions as trainee agents to attract women to take out policies with the insurance company for which he works, Ramani's initial response to the applications he receives is informed by his usual dismissive attitude towards "the fair sex" (45). However, his attitude changes in an instant when he is struck by the beauty of the final applicant, Shantabai. He plies her with intrusive personal questions, pleading the excuse that head office will need to be reassured that family commitments will not prevent her from

carrying out the duties of the position. She tells him her life history, a story of marriage at the age of twelve to a cousin who was a drunkard and gambler, of leaving this husband when she was eighteen, of being disowned by her parents and of having turned to education, which she hoped will help her to find fulfilment. Narayan's depiction of her character is far from subtle, but it locates her as a type of the new woman endeavouring to find a niche for herself in a society in which the workplace remains a male-dominated domain:

I passed my B.A three years ago. Since then I have been drifting about. I have had odd teaching jobs and I have also been companion to a few rich children. On their it has been a very great struggle. It is all nonsense to say that women's salvation lies in education, It doesn't improve their lot a bit We struggle hard, get our B.A., and think that there are thousands like us. (45)

In short, Shantabai is very explicitly presented as a type of the modern Brahmin woman, whose intelligence and education leave her displaced within the transitional world of Malgudi, where the orthodox basis of traditional gender relations is less settled than previously. However, unlike Savitri, she is represented negatively: as a character who has no real interest in or aptitude for her work, but is adept at staging temporary breakdowns and affecting the perfect Garbo manner the temperamental heroine and the impending doom and her modernity and independence are further compromised by the depiction of her as a woman dedicated to achieving her ends through feminine wiles rather

than feminist self-sufficiency. The contrast with Savitri is fairly stark and although, Narayan is clearly also intent on presenting Savitri as a type of the modern Brahmin woman who has been rendered a victim by changing social norms.

Narayan retells the mythic Savitri's story in *Gods, Demons and Others*, where he relates how she confronts Yama, the personification of death, and saves her husband's life, partly by suggesting that if she is widowed she will be left without a role in life and partly by persuading Yama that he is king of dharma. He elaborates in the same book on follows:

Dharma maybe defined as the ultimately code in thought, world and deed for each individual-that which alone is right for him.

The word also carries the meaning of duty, as well as the code, at all levels. Evil arises when one deviates from the path of dharma.

All stories and parables taken together illustrate the eternal importance of dharma. Although it varies from one individual to the next, according to birth and mental equipment, there is a dharma for everyone, whether he be a king or a Chandala, and he must live according to it. (46)

The narrative action of *The Dark Room* is played out against this mythic backdrop and the concept of wife's dharma. The clear suggestion is that leaving home involves a repudiation of the traditional role of a 'Savitri', that she effectively becomes a new woman through this transgressive act; and the

text underscores the extent to which she has broken with the *dharma* that consigns women to be victims in a patriarchal society:

One definite thing in life is fear, from the cradle to the funeral pyre, and even beyond that, fear of torture in the other world. Afraid of a husband's displeasures, and of the discomforts that might be caused to him, morning to night and all night too. Afraid of one's father, teachers and everybody in early life, afraid of one's husband, children and neighbours in later life-fear, fear, in one's hear till the funeral pyre was lit, and then fear of being sentenced by Yama to be held down in a cauldron of burning oil.

(47)

In *The Dark Room* seems to be attacking such subjugation by suggesting the possibility of a transformation that would allow the heroine to escape from the role assigned to her by her mythic name. So, in part at least, the novel interrogates the fixed roles assigned to women in classic Hindu discourse. Modernity has unsettled the basis of gender relations in 1930 Malgudi and Narayan's novel responds to this by pleading the case for a reworking of the mythic archetype of Savitri says *R.K.Narayan Contemporary World Writers* by John Thieme in his book. In *The Dark Room* seems then to be undermining the stereotype of wifely devotion that Savitri's name evokes and in its early sections, where Ramani's domineering behaviour leads her to withdraw into the eponymous dark room in the family home, this retreat seems to be a physical expression of her sense of psychic alienation.

However, seen as an expression of Savitri's mental condition, *The Dark Room* is an ambivalent space. If one compares it with classic western uses of the room as a trope for either the repression or empowerment of women's desires, it seems to leave her poised somewhere between, say the attic imprisonment of Charlotte Bronte's seen by critics such as Gilbert and Gubar as a metaphor for the situation of nineteenth-century women, and Virginia Woolf's room of one's own. In the book *R.K. Narayan Contemporary World Writers* by John Thieme says (48). The novel presents Savitri's withdrawal into the room as a defining moment in her attempt to liberate herself from her husband and the gender codes he embodies. So, rather like the seamier side of Madras, to which Kailas introduce Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The Dark Room* acts as a catalyst for a change in the protagonist's state of mind.

The house seems to be a trope for the established orthodoxies of Malgudi, a supposedly timeless, patriarchal South Indian world, where traditional values are maintained and affirmed; the presence of *The Dark Room* as a traditional space inside its walls suggests that such a world sanctions moments of separateness for women, but only within the domestic sphere and only as a temporary retreat. Savitri's occupancy of it does, however, suggest the possibility of transforming it into a more permanent site for female autonomy. Savitri sympathizes with her misfortune, but not to the extent of allowing her enjoyment of the film's superhuman splendours to be spoiled by this aspect of its theme or its many irrelevant episodes. The contrast is, once

again, fairly clear-cut. The cinema is a metonym for the modernity which has come to Malgudi and which has unsettled women such as Savitri.

Narayan's critique is more concerned with the forces that are destabilizing the traditional balance of gender relations within society. Savitri's plight remains central. When she eventually leaves Ramani, the novel dramatizes alternative possibilities open to woman of her caste and background. She is saved from an attempt at suicide by Mari, a locksmith cum-burglar, and offered refuge in the lower-caste household he shares with his wife, Ponni. Food taboos discourage her from accepting this offer as it would involve transgressing caste divisions as well as the gender codes of her background. Ponni and Mari are presented as a practical, well-suited couple and as such their union provides a foil to Savitri's marital situation. One further avenue is explored as a possible escape-route for Savitri. Mari suggests she could become an attendant at an old village temple and, after some hard bargaining with its priest, Savitri is assigned this role.

The novel ends with Savitri back in the marital home, having reached an impasse. True to her name, she has returned to the role of wife and the pessimistic conclusion is that this is the only option available to her. The ending is low-key to a point where it is almost anti-climactic. In one sense this is typical of Narayan's habitual resistance to closure. However, in another respect it is at odds with the method that will later characterize his major works. In *The Dark Room* ends as it begins, as Narayan negotiates the middle ground between myth and modernity. Seven years elapsed between the

publication of *The Dark Room* and *The English Teacher* and it has been suggested that the tragic death of Narayan's wife, Rajam, to whom *The English Teacher* is dedicated, from typhoid in 1939 was an obstacle that prevented him from writing during this period.

His first three novels had been published in England, where book publication was severely curtailed during World War II and so this outlet was now effectively closed to him. He did however; continue to produce a steady stream of work for local publication. By 1939 he was contributing regular fortnightly stories to the leading Madras newspaper *The Hindu*, and he continued to send stories to the paper at the time of Rajam's death. Then, in late 1940, he turned his attention to editing and publishing three issues of a quarterly magazine, *Indian Thought* to which he also contributed. So the seven-year hiatus in Narayan's career as a novelist can be attributed to a variety of factors. Nevertheless Rajam's death was the most traumatic event of his life and eventually his attempts to come to terms with it found expression in *The English Teacher*.

Narayan saw the novel as an attempt to attain philosophical understandings. So, although *The English Teacher* initially seems to be a continuation of the story of Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts*, it takes a different direction in its second half, where the autobiographically based account of the protagonist's attempts to establish contact with his deceased wife lead to encounters with the paranormal. In the opening chapters *The English Teacher* links with *The Bachelor of Arts* are so pronounced that it does

seem to be a sequel to the novel. The protagonist's name, Krishna, has been changed, but his wife is still Susila and his colleagues include Professor Brown and Mr. Gajapathy, both figures that had previously appeared in *The Bachelor of Arts*.

Narayan's use of the trope of the house relates Krishna and Susila's quest for a house to ancient thinking on the progression into the second *asrama*, but when Susila contracts typhoid and dies halfway through the novel, this is abruptly terminated. However, just as marriage does not provide a happy ending in *The Bachelor of Arts*, Susila's death, an event that might have terminated a Victorian novel, does not provide an ending here, despite the sense of closure and the feeling of existential emptiness that pervade the text when it occurs. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar sees the attempts at psychic communication as introducing a whimsical or fantastical element into a story that has so long been transparently true to life.

The consequence that it is difficult to feel that the first and second novels of *The English Teacher* blend naturally and make an artistic whole. Lakshmi Holmstrom conceded that the psychic experience is treated seriously and in detail but finds that it contradicts the most moving and most credible parts of the rest of the novel. Perhaps most significantly of all, in *My Days* Narayan himself gives his opinion about the novel *The English Teacher* and summed up the change of direction and the responses it occasioned:

That book [*The English Teacher*] falls in two parts—one is domestic life and the other half is 'spiritual'. Many readers have

gone through the first half with interest and the second half with bewilderment and even resentment, perhaps feeling that they have been baited with the domestic picture into tragedy, death and nebulous, impossible speculations. (54).

In *The English Teacher* is the most thematically unified novel of Narayan's first period. Formally it represents a new departure in Narayan's fiction. Written in the first person, it is his first sustained attempt to explore his Brahmin protagonist's psychology from the inside. Its chapters are longer, making for more continuity in the narrative, and there are less of the seemingly abrupt shifts of emphasis and the launch that characterize the previous three novels. In *The English Teacher* is a dialogic text, which juxtaposes and assesses the rival claims that various approaches to life make on the individual. Once again location is central: the particular properties of rooms and building link the social themes of the first half of the novel, which not only centers on domestic life but also Krishna's place in Malgudi's colonially oriented educational system, with the second, which moves into psycho-spiritual terrain.

A concern with the dialects of space runs through the whole novel and Narayan introduces a series of sites that allow him to debate the competing claims of the social, political, psychological and spiritual. This debate is particularly conducted through a focus on the physical and psychic properties of space. As in *The Dark Room* houses and rooms are accorded a central prominence and they become the sites for both a Brahmin-based view of cleanliness and pollution and for an exploration of the individual's quest for an

appropriate *dharma*. He is impressed by its pleasant garden and its view of Mempi Hills, another site that will come to assume a central role in Narayan's mapping of Malgudi and its environs. Rousing himself from his self-preoccupation, he notices that Susila, who has gone off to look at the backyard, has been absent for rather too long and the mood begins to darken.

She has undergone a deeply disturbing experience, but Narayan's understanding, circumstantial style and apparent immersion in domestic issues initially obscure this. Susila has locked herself in an unclean outside lavatory, which she has entered barefoot in the expectation that its interior will be as clean as its brightly coloured door. It is easy to read the episode as commentary on the discrepancy between the housing developers' versions of properties they are trying to sell and their underlying shoddiness. Susila's illness, which leads to her subsequent decline and death from typhoid, appears to stem from this moment. With characteristic ambivalence Narayan stops of categorically identifying the experience as responsible for her death. While Susila has been undergoing her ordeal, Krishna has been busy debating the sanitation of the house's surroundings and the clear inference is that the strange combination that it represents the challenge represented by the coming of modernity to Malgudi is the cause of the tragedy.

Narayan's technique leaves all this implicit, but later references to the psychic and spiritual properties of place that establish a pattern. This makes it hard to resist the conclusion that it is the transgression of Brahmin codes of cleanliness that causes Susila's death. It is contrasted with Krishnan's own

room, a study into which Leela is allowed, while being banned from the forbidden space in which her mother has died. The room seemed too closed and it is a sickroom. Both are associated with heterotopian sites which are crucial tropes in the novel's debate about the relative merits of different approaches to life. There is another deeper contraction during the period of Krishnan's oscillation between total despair and the hope of finding out the meaning of existence. He comes to terms with his loneliness and accepts this as the law of life. At this stage, he readily agrees to part with his daughter Leela is the only means of emotional stability since the death of his wife.

R.K. Narayan has engraved a position for himself in the galaxy of Indo-Anglican novelist. He is a seminal figure in the field of Indian fiction in English. His impeccable style of story-telling has established him as one of the best story tellers in India and abroad. Narayan is the minute observer of society presenting most realistic pictures charged with gentle irony and light humour. Narayan's fictional world is replete with experiences tracing the innocent fun of childhood to the sorrow and wisdom of adult life. Thus Swami, Chandra and Krishnan are seen as the three successive phases of an individual's life: childhood, adolescence and adulthood respectively, this pattern that characterizes Narayan's fictional world in novels like *The Guide or The Financial Expert*. It is in this sense that the three novels *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher* may be considered as forming a trilogy.

Although R.K. Narayan is not a feminist, he has shown his sympathy towards the exploited and oppressed class of women in India society. The helplessness and miserable condition of a Hindu house-wife is brought to the forefront in Narayan's *The Dark Room*. In *The Dark Room*, Narayan utilises Savitri's familiar pattern of domestic disharmony to sketch the status of women in Indian society. In *Dark Room* is the story of conjugal conflict with three principal characters. Savitri, the traditional wife was silently sobbing and suffering. Ramani, the cold hearted and philandering and Shantabai is the flirtatious woman taken together represent a situation which is not uncommon in the domestic life in Indian society.

In *The Dark Room* is an authentic picture of a traditional Hindu housewife. Among women characters, Narayan generally portrays two kinds of women: typical Indian housewife and fashionable and butterfly type of women. His female characters like Savitri finds her place in the first category. This woman is docile, modest, gentle, religious and loving. Her only anxiety is the welfare of her husband and children. Narayan does not lack sympathy for his characters. Each one of his characters whether wicked or virtuous is drawn with extraordinary delicacy and tenderness. In his sympathetic hands they turn into interesting figures and make the earth very meaningful by their presence and actions. His philosophy of life seems to be that it is foolish to worry about evils that one cannot prevent. Life at best is only an imperfect affair and it has to be lived what makes life delightful or sad does not depend on the real texture of life itself but on the way one lives or on the attitude that one has towards it.

His novels depict the irony of modern Indian life where women on the one hand are regarded as deity and on the other are benefit of their basic rights. That is why women in the novels of R.K. Narayan present the true voice of endurance. R.K. Narayan is a product of the Hindu middle class. The whole corpus of his fiction is populated by the Hindu middle class people of his own province differing in their attitudes, habits, manners, customs and conventions from the rest of the lower class and upper class. His early novels are all domestic in tone presenting psychological studies of the relationship of husband and wife, parents and sons, brothers and sisters. Even in his last novels, he returns to domestic relationship exploring and delineating them to their considerable limit and presenting men more in relation to each other than in relation to God or some abstract idea of politics.

Narayan is frequently criticised for his exclusive concern with the middle class. He is very often called treacherous for not having dealt with the Indian poor and the dominantly peasant characters of the country. But such criticism sounds not only meaningless but also baseless when his sincere point of view to deal with the class is taken into consideration. In *The Dark Room* Ramani continues to be the hypocritical husband and the unmitigated tyrant of the dark room. He is an exception which can be located in the real society populated by ultra-modern people uprooted from their old culture. His early novels present students and teachers bank managers and domestic servants, Femi-fatale and the doting lovers who achieve maturity in the restricted limits of their operative zeal.

Human relationship is one among the most important of human existence. It is an unbreakable bond that binds human beings intimately, emotionally, sentimentally, spiritually, and intellectually. In the present day world nothing is more vital, important, real and enduring than those human relationships of human and family. Love and marriage are the joys of parenthood and family ties are the fundamentals of all that. It is best in life and that which gives supreme happiness. R.K. Narayan is duly regarded as one of the harbingers of a new age in Indian English Fiction. He took it far from the immature, imitative, romantic and nationalistic narrative of early phase and gave it affirm native footing and brought it close to socio-cultural life of the people. Narayan is primarily preoccupied with man's filling of the life-role entrusted to him by tradition and environment.

In the novels of R.K. Narayan are can find comedies of characters as well as comedies of situations. The characters are all drawn from middle class and Narayan creates comedies by imaginatively recreating their oddities and eccentricities. He is extremely successful at characters drawing in his novels. Narayan characters are life like and have been drawn from the middle or lower middle class of society. Narayan openly tackles the problems in family relationships and has beautifully portrayed its emotional tangles. R. K. Narayan's heroes are almost aware of the social and political changes but they do not take sides but they do not commit themselves to any ideology. Narayan has portrayed all sorts of the human relationships in which he depicts his strong sense of tradition which he respects too much. It is important to note that

Narayan is a conservative Indian both in thought and spirit, it is especially in the presentation of human relationship. In all the novels of Narayan one can find the Indian setting like depiction of school life and college life, family relationship, traditions and religious customs, superstitious, humour, irony.

The husband-wife relationship presented in the novel *The English Teacher* clearly shows that the separation and loneliness are the two natural agents of human relationship. The presentation of relationship between Krishnan and Susila is the basis of the novelist's new philosophic understanding of life as well as death. R.K. Narayan in the novel, *The Dark Room* concentrates on the on the problems in the relationship among the family members. *The Dark Room* is one of the rare of novels R.K. Narayan which deals with social consciousness. In *The Dark Room* Narayan has presented the husband-wife relationship in somber manner. The novel is an account of marriage from the point of view of a Indian wife's which the image that has been projected is as a victim. Savitri is a middle class woman who is not well-educated and who is loaded with the immense weight her multifaceted duties as the wife and the mother.

In this novel Narayan is very critical in presenting the relationship between a devoted and submissive wife and a cruel husband. His characters mostly belong to India's wisdom and ignorance, profusion and poverty, joys and sorrows. Narayan's style of writing is simple and unpretentious with a natural element of humour about it. The portrayal of life is engagingly realistic. It blends both the tragic and comic aspects of life. Even through the plots and

characters in his novels are not annihilated the technique of the stream of consciousness that retards the full free flow of his stories. The novels of R.K. Narayan are a unique mix of myth and reality. Both have been so deftly fused together that they seem to coalesce as in actual life. Narayan's realism is psychological and sociological. Narayan penetrates the core of Indian mind and reveals it with the use of myths and fables all its bewildering contradictions, superstitions and traditions.

Narayan weaves his themes around Hindu myth and legends and vivifies Indian social reality. Narayan has an extraordinary power of presenting the multiple facts of life. Narayan creates his comedy by employing all the effective devices of the humorist both traditional and innovative. Narayan has made his language highly comprehensible with the touch of Indianness. In the simplicity of the dialogues and first person narration Narayan sets an adequate mirror of reality. It can be said that in his use of language Narayan is delightfully readable. Narayan proves through his writing that the role of woman or the wife of home maker is subservient to the man and to that effect, he makes them typical Indian housewives who endure torture and trauma in the hands of their husbands. All long, women are found to be passive and meek, and outside the hold. Narayan follows the family order and sometimes he drifts from it and gives an extraordinary importance to woman, but he is forced to bring them back to the family umbrella.

Traditional Ibo Society in fact had a dual sex political system where each sex had its own autonomous sphere of authority besides an area of shared

responsibilities. Women settled disputes amongst women and also made decisions affecting men. They could enforce these by forms of group ostracism. To the British colonialist the Ibo system of diffused authority, shared rights and a more or less stable balance of male and female power was one they encountered nowhere else in Nigeria, not in the Emirates of the North, nor in the Yoruba Kingdoms; it was wholly foreign to their own Victorian ethos. The idea that the contact with European culture liberated African women through the introduction of Christian monogamous marriage, education, the suppression of female circumcision, is highly problematic. Rather to some African women and Ibo women are a striking example actual or political autonomy, economic independence and political power did not grow out of Western influence but existed already in traditional life.

The dividing line which in the colonial city is marked by barracks and police stations is, in the gendered landscape of the patriarchy, more nearly the immuring door of the domestic dwelling. For western feminists it is the most recurrent site for the construction of female potential; confinement within the domestic setting precludes woman's participation in those decision making processes that shape her world. One needs at this point to stress the need to attend to the cultural specificities of the texts to be explored. The continuing need is to interrogate any tendency towards constructing woman as a monolithic category. A real need for Western feminist critics to take count of local cultural practices and socio-historical circumstances if they are to avoid

the charge of ethnocentrism in their assumptions about women from other cultures.

Attending to the cultural specificities involves a finer turning in to the range of female constituencies. The female artist especially, the essential condition for the articulation of her woman's voice. In the traditional Indian context, the secluded was always available to the middle class woman and while it ensured containment of female revolt, it was also simultaneously a recognition of its legitimacy. While it will be impossible to explore in any depth the status of woman in either the Indian or African contexts, within the time constraints of this paper, the range of possibilities will need to be briefly indicated. For instance, in the Indian context the Laws of Manu encode the inferior and wholly dependent status of women, yet Hindu mythology is also replete with cultural imagery which portrays women as ship of the goddess Kali is important as an oppositional influence. A survival from the pre-Aryan past the goddess is an antagonist of all evil, but she is most significant as the embodiment of the female power principle.

In Indian mythology, her annihilation of the mighty demon drinking some blood epitomises the destructions of the male principle. Her sexual dominance over Shiva further reinforces the figure Shakti, female divine power, this matriarchal myth is the central inspiration of the contemporary Indian Women's movement. She is even obliged to spend one night in a tree, to escape an attempt to rape her The paradox of seeming freedom and vulnerability is well-encapsulated in that last image. They are mainly with

narratives of male action, awareness of female empowerment or subjugation must be garnered mainly through resistant reading of the gaps and silences.

Both project the traditionally allocated spaces as empowering. In the narratives of both writers abnegation of the traditionally allocated space by the female in pursuit of public career is represented as a surrender of real power.

This refraction of the traditional context as more conducive to female fulfilment could be interpreted as evidence of continuing male complicity with the patriarchy. It could also re-emphasise the need for exploring and re-discovering those elements in the native cultural tradition that have been eroded through the impact of colonialism. In any case it suggests the continuing need to attend to cultural specificities in the reading of postcolonial texts and the need for interrogating constantly any impulse towards ethnocentrism, particularly in feminist critiques of these works. Savitri is highly praised by traditional Indians for her wifely love to her husband. Many of the critics recommend neither Sita nor Savitri, symbol of the resurgence of Indian womanhood she is the new woman.

The Dark Room tells a tale of discord in married life, and *The English Teacher* presents a story of married love and fulfilment in spite of a heart rending bereavement. Both novels revolve round husband-wife relationship, although other familial ties are also brought into their fold. Both novels present a luminous evocation of harmony in married life. It tells a story of married love which is deep and abiding but without any of the romantic trappings that generally go with a story of love. The most comprehensive picture is that of

Savitri, in *The Dark Room*. What is interesting here is her growing awareness of her own powerlessness. Narayan's novels have many a female character but most of them are traditional Indian women who live a life within the confines of their home. The novel is successful in dramatizing the ordeal of a woman seeking the realization of an identity in conformity with the womanly dignity and selfhood without sentimentalizing or romanticizing. It mirrors an entangled Hindu woman who undergoes a change to affirm to live the life of familial obligations.

The English Teacher would appear to be a logical sequence the theme of marriage and love continues in this novel from the point at which it is left off in the earlier novel. There is in *The English Teacher* another large theme which is immediately and inseparably related to the theme of married love: and that is, a mature acceptance of both life and death. The entire novel can be seen as moving towards this philosophical end. However, it is important to note that Krishnan is able to attain this wisdom as well as tranquility of mind he had been deprived of by his wife's death, chiefly through the active mediation of the spirit of Susila. Krishna, Susila, and the child, left to themselves, comprise the young family until an old friend of Krishnan's mother joins them. The rest of the second chapter of the novel is devoted to presenting a picture of their domestic felicity. As husband and wife Krishnan and Susila are a complete contrast to Ramani and Savitri of *The Dark Room*.

There is married love, which Savitri does not have the good fortune to know or experience any time. It is deep though rarely showy. Susila is

particularly undemonstrative. Little and simple gestures reveal her regard for him. For instance, under the pretext of playing with her child, everything she waits in the garden their house for Krishnan to return home from college. They are completely absorbed in each other and each tries to share in the other's interests. Every evening they spend together an hour or more in harmless gossip. Thus their relationship is nourished and strengthened by mutual respect and trust. The novel closes with a kind of mystic union between Krishnan and Susila. For the first time after he began his psychic experiments, the communication between the husband and wife takes place directly without the need of a medium. Tacitly the spirit of Susila approves of what her husband has done. The conclusion of the novel affirms the transcendental power of their married love.

The Dark Room and *The English Teacher* are wholly concerned with different aspects of married life. They may also be called domestic novels. They present the obverse and reverse of the medal of life. In *The Dark Room* tells a tale of discord in married life, and *The English Teacher* presents a story of married love and fulfilment in spite of heart rending bereavement. Both novels revolve round husband-wife relationship, although other familial ties and also brought into their fold. In both the novels, Susila and Savitri are sketched as strong women who in their own way defy tradition or embrace it to make a mark for themselves in society. Even in a small way, they are presented as markers of social change.

Chapter-III
Indian Sensibility

Chapter-3

Indian Sensibility

R.K. Narayan was clear that the Indian sensibility was profoundly different from that of the western. Writing in English came naturally to him which he did with complete ease. He strived to embody a wholly different mentality another view of the world. R.K. Narayan novels analyse the varied forms of location, region and shows how Narayan is able to transform a particular limited region into a symbol of India and its life. Though fictitious, Narayan's region of experience represents the essence of South Indian culture, hence an exploration of Indian sensibility including the incorporated in the chapter. The study of the characters, the customs, belief, superstitious, social evils, socio-cultural life, language, style and life philosophy, are the focus of this study. Narayan's treatment of love and marriage has various hues and shades- bright and dark, sparkling and somber. It has the ardour of infatuation and the euphoria of the illusion of love, the passionate frenzy of a youthful yearning heart and the intensity of married love.

R.K. Narayan's books present an expanded depiction of Indian sensibility. He doesn't depict the photographic actuality. He rather speaks to actuality which is aesthetic. In this he contrasts from the French realists and naturalists who were intrigued by the stark and stripped authenticity of life. Narayan delineates a sort of authenticity with all its superstitious appreciation of life its dazing inconsistencies and its mocking comic. Fundamentally stories of Indian life his books depict people who are profoundly established in the Indian

social system. Indian actuality in his books is reflected in the interminable clash between custom and innovation. Narayan is a pure Indian both in spirit, despite his preference for English language over his mother tongue for the expression of his creative urge. His creative genius is deeply rooted in ancient Indian religion which attaches great importance to self-discipline, non-violence, renunciation, incarnation, and doctrine of birth and the law of karma. In almost all his major novels these Indian themes find expression in one form or the other. His novels describe ancient Indian philosophy and religion. He creates Indian atmosphere in various ways.

Narayan's imaginative orientation is deeply rooted in Indian culture. He has made a frank use of Indian superstitious and religious ceremonies and customs, his works. These traditional rituals, beliefs and superstitious not only create an authentic picture of Indian life, but also contribute to the effective communication of experience stating the view as C.D. Narasimhaiah opines that the Hindu man drinks religiously, sleeps religiously, marries religiously and robs religiously. Narayan's Indianness can also be seen in his portrayal of women characters. In the field of characterization he is regarded as one of the greatest of the Indian-English novelists. He himself belongs to a middle class family of South India and all his memorable characters are from this class. The women characters in his novels are typically Indian and are drawn with the same depth. They characters may be divided into two groups first the typical Indian housewives who are the upholders of the ancient Indian way of life and secondly the modern of women.

In *The Dark Room*, Narayan a serious tale of silent suffering the central theme as the plight of the traditional Hindu wife. The novelist's chief thematic concern in the novel relates to a realistic and poignant portrayal of a traditional Hindu wife's predicament. The discordant note of marital incompatibility is struck on the very first page of the novel. Ramani the bullying domineering and unfeeling husband and father is responsible for vitiating the atmosphere of an otherwise happy understanding and loving family. He is an inveterate fault finder and gambler. He finds fault with everything including food in the home Ramani was eccentric and lawless in his taste. Savitri in *The Dark Room* is a true symbol of the Indian womanhood. She is deeply devoted to her husband Ramani. But Ramani develops an affair with Shantabai and the peace of the domestic life is upset. Savitri tries to commit suicide but is saved and start working in a temple. But the feeling of home-sickness and her anxiety for the children makes her restless and she returns home.

Caste is determining factor in Hindu marriages. A fairly large majority of Indian implicitly accept the manners and modes of their caste. Most of them carry on the respective occupations of their castes. They have a strong fear of losing their caste. Even today inter-castes marriages are rare. The few who do so are frowned upon by the members of their caste. They are vitality ostracized and their progeny are frowned upon by the members of their caste. They are vitality ostracized and their progeny are treated as out-caste and find no place in the Hindu society. Savitri's attempted suicide in *The Dark Room* ends in a miraculous escape and she returns to her home and children. Chandran's

renunciation of life in *The Bachelor of Art* his wandering as a traditional Indian sadhu and Krishnan's communication with the spirit of his dead wife are all relevant examples of fantasy.

In *The Dark Room* the attention is focused on Savitri's misfortunes and the plot is not congenial enough for the comic irony to operate. Of course Shantabai shrewd coquetry comes for Narayan's ironic banter as much as Ramani's foolishness and frailties. The whole *The Dark Room* remains a domestic drama like *The English Teacher* where the narrative moves from the physical aspect of existence to the metaphysical. In both these novels the small Malgudi town of various forces of unbridled aspirations and instincts as well as of taboos and traditions has been tapered to the narrow confines of husband wife relationship. Krishnan in *The English Teacher* is representation of are all householders who must learn to deal with the frustrations of living in a world full of illusions, distractions and changing fortunes. *The Dark Room* outlines the ambivalent fate of an Indian wife who is who is bound to her bullying, roguish husband through her utter financial dependence on him and through traditional ways.

In *The Dark Room* can be cited as the only novel of Narayan in which a woman is questioning however mildly her traditional role. The novel is a lament on the disharmony of domestic life but the author always stresses that the individual choice is limited in Indian family life. Ramani the brisk and seemingly efficient insurance agent neglects his simple and devoted wife Savitri. Initially Savitri adopts a symbolic protest and shuts herself in a dark room to

sulk and brood there. However, when her husband has an amorous affair with his coquettish office assistant Shantabai the slight becomes over bearing even for the doting Savitri. She runs away from home to end her life but is saved by the locksmith Mari. In the absence of any viable alternative to achieve economic independence and emotional self-sufficiency Savitri is compelled to return to her husband and children. She is primarily driven back because she needs more than love or independence the emotional and economic refuge which she discovers only an earning though sometimes husband can furnish.

Savitri's dream of feminine independence and dignity recedes rapidly she has the door banged on her and so returns submissively to the house never again to stray in through or deed. Through the attempted revolt of Savitri the author is implying that domesticity is the creed for women with the craving for assertion of independence being considered impulsive. So even in the attitude towards women R.K.Narayan upholds the average as positive. In *The Dark Room* he has touched the fundamental problem of the juxtaposition of the past and the present. In this novel a film on Ramayana is called mythological nonsense but it should not be forgotten that this remark comes from Shantabai a modern with whom we are meant neither to Sympathise nor to empathise. The heroine Savitri thinks that she has few overtones of the famous mythological figure of her name in her but we know that though she leaves her home she cannot cut off all links with her husband so easily and is still afraid of having committed the sin of talking back to him.

Savitri essentially illustrates Narayan's concept of Sita as docile. Her walking out of her house only highlights the difficulty of her situation, discarding *The Dark Room* with her children. The conflict in Savitri reveals the essential ambivalence of Indian womanhood in the twentieth century. Savitri's stay with thief Mari and then at the temple may be likened to Sita's stay in Lanka or with her later exile in the ashrama of Valmiki who himself is said to have been a dacoit in his earlier life. The easy acceptance of Savitri by Ramani on her return is contrasted to Rama's suspicious of Sita and making her pass through the ordeal of life. This throws light on the loosening of moral codes in the twentieth century through Ramani's himself has more conservative views. Savitri only to be exploded for a brief while and then to return to the norm. But in this topsy-turvy world of the new age the meek and submissive Savitri herself feels constricted and her Sita-like qualities are appreciated by none not even by her husband. In *The Dark Room* seems to have overtones suggesting the constrictions pressing upon Indian womanhood from all sides.

In *The Dark Room* Narayan utilises the Savitri's familiar pattern of domestic disharmony to sketch the status of women in Indian society. *Dark Room* is the story of conjugal conflict with three principal characters Savitri the traditional wife silently sobbing and suffering Ramani the cold hearted and philandering and Shantabai the flirtatious woman-taken together represent a situation which is not uncommon in the domestic life in Indian society. *The Dark Room* is an authentic picture of a traditional Hindu housewife. Her silent suffering and temporary rebellion ends in pathetic surrender is in keeping with

the Hindu culture. Savitri is rescued predictably by a man and a man whose comic failure at robbery serves as reductive parallel to Savitri's suicide attempt. Introduces farce on the heels of Savitri's tragic self-discovery and her subsequent odyssey is qualified by further hints of the farcical. If Savitri's failure is then to be seen as the logical conclusion of the reality principal as it operates in the social realism of the novel we are confronted by the problematic relationship between genre and gender between on the one hand the generic impulse to portray the existent female situation and on the other the contradictory impulse to remake reality and produce new forms of moral character on behalf of the suppressed female is also evident.

Savitri's emotions are shown to be engaged especially towards her son who according to Indian custom will but even here Savitri's power is illusory not only because the entire weight of traditional attitudes in the person Janamma the servants and the priest are weighted in Ramani's favour but also because for the children Ramani is the admirable role model. William Walsh calls the children engaging and think there is a sense in which the author can be said to be emotionally engaged with the children's point of view. *The Dark Room* presents the darker shades of life and is most of the time sombre, gloom, despair, helplessness and dependence. But even in this sad story there are occasional through few moments of comedy. Savitri's friends Gangu and Janamma mutually jealous and hardly on speaking terms and the coquettish Shantabai with her Greta Garbo airs and mannerisms flaunting a life philosophy laugh, clown,

laugh, through your heart be torn are comic cameos sketched with skill. The real comic touch comes however towards the close of the novel.

Narayan's comic ingenuity must enliven even the most depressing of situations. The unhappy and recalcitrant children in their mother's absence are handled by the cook in his own uncanny manner. The belief was that a person who looked into the cook's eyes at certain moments would be turned to stone. They had been told that many of the furlong and milestones in the place were once human beings who had dared to look into the cook's eyes after they became stones the government people came along chiselled them into shape and carved miles and furlong on them. In *The Dark Room* is essentially a sad story but it is not without its moments of lively humour. This illustrates Narayan's capacity for finding streaks of light even in the murkiest of settings. According to H.M. Williams the comedy of the novel is of two kinds ironical social comedy in Narayan's depiction of Ramani's uneasy affair with the sophisticated divorcee and more light-hearted comedy in his desperate attempts to keep his children amused during his wife's desertion by taking them every night to the new Palace Talkies cinema another feature of Malgudi's modernisation.

In *The English Teacher*, Narayan has portrayed typical Indian characters, Indian sensibility and symbols of Indian culture and traditions. It is an autobiographical novel and is related with Narayan's own life. It is the story of a college lecturer Krishna who teaches English language and literature in Albert Mission College, Malgudi. He's married to Susila but lives in the college hostel. Susila and her daughter Leela lived with his parents-in-law. Every day he read

Milton, Carlyle and Shakespeare. But soon he moved to a rented house in Sarayu Street with his family. The married life of Krishna and Susila is a happy and contented one but this compassion and bliss of their married life was transient. On the third birthday of Leela, Krishna's father offered money as a gift so that they could buy their own house. The dreams of own house in a well to do Lawler extension turned to be an ill fate.

The English Teacher revolves around the impulses and attitudes are born of personal involvement a true suffering of the spirit and therefore what critics call felt experience but Narayan was not to employ this tone anywhere else including in his personal life. The story and characters in the novel appear to be fictional but in fact drawn from the real life of R.K. Narayan . For a brief period in his life Narayan worked as a teacher and experienced the academic environment and the education system .Narayan too dreamt of becoming a writer of stories and novels as in the novel Krishnan longs to be a poet. His wife too stricken with severe ill-health and died leaving behind their only daughter to be taken care of and brought up by Narayan. Narayan too with the soul of his departed wife. So Krishnan in the novel is none other than inspiration of a Susila his wife and Leela his only daughter. Other characters in the novel are also real people from the life of Narayan. So the whole novel does not fall under the category of mere fiction and it can aptly be viewed as a disguised autobiography of R.K. Narayan. Narayan wields irony and humour, as potential weapons to expose the functioning of education system and municipality.

The texture of this novel *The English Teacher* presents a blend of humour and pathos, realism and fantasy the ordinary and bizarre the early and the mythical-supernatural while the novel has been an object of controversy especially in the west with regard to the element of the occult. In the second half it retains the flavour of Narayan's humour. One of the essential sources of this humour is the perception of incongruity for example in the juxtaposition of objects totally unrelated to each other. An amusing example of this kind of humour is provided by an erratic alarm clock which Krishnan possesses. It let out a shattering amount of noise and it sometimes when he had locked the room and gone out. Started off and went on ringing till exhaustion overcame it. There was no way of stopping it by pressing a button or a level. While this account of the eccentric clock with a reddening face is amusing enough it becomes more humorous with Krishna's discovery of an unusual way of stopping it namely sort of instinctive experiment that if placed a heavy book like Taine's History of English Literature on its crest it stopped shrieking.

In *The English Teacher* opens on the note of material bliss. In the first half of the novel the novelist dealt with the smiles, worries, trifles and follies of married life. In the latter half after the death of his beloved wife Krishnan drifts towards spiritualism and found back his wife in a transcendental space. Thus the novel is an idyll of married love as well as an account of the resurgence life from death. It was all about my life with Rajam reminisced Narayan with a touch of melancholy and had been witness to the experiments but he lamented it was unfortunate that the reviews did not understand it. *The English Teacher*

is surprisingly free for a Narayan novel from the comic or the ironic and free also from the oblique in expression for the presentation takes the form of direct statement, which makes one miss the irony of understatement that is Narayan's strength.

For instance walking along streets and lanes in Anderson, lane Krishnan finds the area horribly shabby and unsanitary. He concludes that there was every sign that the municipality had forgotten the existence of this part of the town. Yet it seemed to maintain a certain degree of sanitation mainly with the help of the sun, wind and rain. The callousness of municipality in maintaining sanitation is quite ironically depicted in a humorous way. The British education in pre-independence era gets exposed in the reflections of Krishnan when he makes up his mind to resign his job of college teacher. This education had reduced us to a nation of morons who become strangers to our own culture and camp followers of another culture feeding on leavings and garbage. Narayan is simply a master story writer. His stories run smoothly with the portrayal of realistic middle class characters.

He never philosophises nor does he take metaphysical flights. However in this novel, just in one or two places Narayan dons the role of a philosopher which is quite appropriately as the situation in the novel demands for it. The philosophical musings of the writer spoken through his characters on life sink well into the context of the novel and eternal truths. For instance after his wife's death and leaving his daughter at his parent's house in a village Krishnan returns to his house and finds himself quite lonely. So he muses philosophically over

life. Wife, Child, Brothers, Parents, Friends all come together only to go apart again. It is one continuous movement. They move away from him and she moves away from them. The law of life can't be avoided. The law comes into operation the moment one takes birth from her mother's womb. All struggle and misery in life is due to one's attempt to arrest this law or get away from it or in allowing oneself to be hurt by it. The fact must be recognised. A profound unmitigated loneliness is only truth of life, everything else is false. Krishnan reflects on happy and sad experiences through the memories of his past life which he had spent with his now departed wife.

Those were subtle links with a happy past they were not merely links but blood channels which fed the stuff of memory with sad and harrowing memories. The memories cherished by him in the contemplation of these sad scenes and hapless hours seemed to acquire a new peace, a new outlook on the view of life with a place for everything. Man must accept not only the pleasures but also grief from one's life mingled with web of joys and sorrows with stoic attitude to life. This stoic view of life is well projected through the character of Krishnan. R.K. Narayan has amazingly had successes in universalising the great Indian middle class with its common characteristic features of life and its common gamut of emotions with his masterly fictional skills. That's indeed, the bejeweled autobiography of Narayan which certainly stands out with its unique splendour from the total fictional world of the writer.

Susila was locked in a lavatory full of dirt files and foul smell. This led to her illness that pushed her to the lap of death. Krishna's life turned void and

empty. He lost all his interest in life. The only ray of hope was his daughter Leela. Soon with a band of spirits Susila's spirit communicated with Krishna through a rich landlord of Tayur village. This changed Krishna's life. He now started taking interest in Leela's school. He becomes friendly with the headmaster. The headmaster presents the darker side of married life. Krishna is very impressed by the educational theories of the headmasters. He resigns from his college job and joins the school of the headmaster with education of school children. He is now able to communicate with his dead wife directly. His dreams turn into reality. He starts feeling the presence of Susila near him. An everlasting joy descends upon his soul.

Susila's mother is a superstitious woman who thinks that some black eye has befallen on her daughter calls a Swami and smears sacred ash on her daughter's forehead. The headmaster who believes in astrology does not die on the day predicted by the astrologer. Family relationships, education, bliss of married life, money, degeneration of relations are the themes that weave the plot of his novels. The married life of Krishna and Susila is a song of love in marriage. The death of Susila makes the life of Krishna void and empty. The communication of Krishna with Susila's spirit, and the role of jasmine flower that links Krishna and Susila and the estranged relationship of headmaster and his wife shows how his characters and their relations play a vital role to exhibit his sensibility and Indianness. Human emotions run hand-in-hand with the Indian ethos.

In *The English Teacher* is catharsis of Narayan's times. Narayan quotes more than any other book. *The English Teacher* has autobiographical content. Narayan writes about his own experience with as much intensity and grace. The wife of the protagonist dies of typhoid. Her sickness, diagnosis, hope, despair and death are painted with strength of delicate detachment and infinite pain. The reader is touched by the narrative of universal loss. Narayan as evident from his novels has a conventional view point regarding morality, love and sex. He resolutely believes that life can be joyful only if there is genuineness, honesty and impartiality in it. Sentimentalism and self-interest make life unhappy. This belief can be seen in his characters of Chandran and Savitri. Krishnan the central character of the novel undertakes a journey which is altogether emotional, intellectual, and spiritual, during the course of novel.

At the start of the novel Krishnan is an English teacher in the Albert Mission College living and teaching at the same institution where he was once a pupil. At and at the end, he resigns his post beginning work at a nursery school and learning to communicate psychically with his dead wife. He learns and changes during the course of the novel in a way which he could not have predicted at the beginning. While the story opens one sees very nervous and anxious Krishnan expecting the arrival of his wife and daughter to Malgudi where he is working as an English Teacher. Krishnan's wife Susila is with her parents some miles away as she had recently given birth to their daughter Leela. Krishnan wants a drastic change in the society where he lives. He takes the task of debating the possibility of regenerating the society which is trodden by

customs and tradition. According to him, the tragedy lies in the fact that a major section of the Indian population is self-assured victim of superstitious, smugness and social evils.

Regarding the education system he is a stern critic of the education system run by the British. The irony is that he himself is the product of this education system. In chapter eight of the novel while writing the resignation letter to the principal of his college .Krishnan criticises the false education system which has reduced the people of India. He is opposed to the perpetuating system of education that cripples his imagination and hence believes in social freedom and independence of mind. He has studied English literature and admired the wonderful writers. His soul revolts against the British education and hence he gives up his job and prefers to work as primarily school teacher. Thus like most of his countrymen Krishnan detests the promotion of British culture which will effectively help to keep the country in subjugation and servility. This English education breeds a class of youngsters revering the British culture, disregarding their own heritage and in some cases even showing contempt to their own.

However, Krishnan is not ignorant of the aesthetic value of English literature and is not opposed to teaching it as a matter of pride or principle. His opposition to English education is a well- informed decision. Throughout the novel, Krishnan encounters the coexistence of western and native cultural attitudes which also represents the attitudes of Indians of a never and older generation. For example, when Susila is ill she is treated both by a doctor who

practices western scientific medicine and by a Swamiji who uses mystical methods of healing. The final stage of Krishnan's journey takes him further to the western intellectual frame of native Indian spiritual practices. His friendship with the grandmaster of a kindergarten school transforms his life. The eccentric headmaster is a refreshing contrast to Krishnan. The headmaster doesn't believe in spoon-feeding or excessive discipline and allows the children to play games most of the time teaching them lessons in between their play. This mode of learning seems to be effective. The education system that the headmaster is running has a direct contrast to the western educational system. Krishnan gives up his job at college as he finds it meaningless and joins the headmaster's school as a teacher. He finally attains peace of mind and realises that life will have meaning for him from then onwards.

He gradually overcomes his grief over the loss of his wife and finds happiness and fulfilment in bringing up his young daughter. He no longer requires the presence of Susila's spirit to infuse confidence in him to face life as Susila spirit remains with him forever. The problem of literacy has been discussed in the novel. Through Krishnan Narayan express his displeasure over the present education system which failed to solve the problem of illiteracy. Illiteracy in woman is very often seen in India and more so in the colonial phase and this is the reason why the majority of his heroines in Narayan's work are illiterate including Susila, in *The English Teacher*. This illiteracy of women is the root cause of their exploitation in society. Another prime reason of their exploitation is their dependence on men regarding economic matter and this

dependence is also because of their illiteracy. Narayan raises the issue in the novel. Finally, it is pertinent to say that the issue of roots plays a pivotal role in *The English Teacher*.

The Dark Room is unusual in the Narayan canon in several respects. It is, for example, the closest Narayan comes anywhere to arguing a case. It shows this as a consequence, at certain places a wash of unabsorbed feeling. There is a touch of hysteria in the material, and the phrasing at times has a markedly antique and dated quality. *The Dark Room* is the account of marriage given throughout from the point of view of the wife, in which the image projected is that of the Indian woman as a victim. It should be remembered, that it was written some thirty-five to forty years before the current talk of women's liberation. Savitri is a middle-class but not highly educated woman, who is burdened by the immense weight of the Indian past, by her caste, her religion, and her role as wife and mother. She is an ordinary, amiable housewife, not deeply dissatisfied with her allotted part, given on occasion to boredom with its pointlessness, but increasingly oppressed by her loud, assertive and exigent husband. This is the case with many women even today.

R.K. Narayan is factual to the Hindu notion that one must not engage too much value on the things of the world and must at short notice be prepared to shake it off. Characters in his novels tries to run away from a calamity like Swami, Chandran, Savitri and the headmaster in *The English Teacher*. But in the end they return because it is not really easy to run away and wisdom consists in tolerating the world and making the best out of it. Narayan's approach to love

and sex is also conventional. His characters are also devoid of physical passion. They have only spiritual love. Almost all marriages in his novels are settled on the basis of horoscopes. It shows his faith in astrology. He is an outright traditionalist in this difference. This in turn speaks of high Indian sensibility in the narrative of the novels.

R.K. Narayan is one of the innovative motivators and molders of Indian visual sensibility, reality and psychology of the conventional and nationwide narratology. His inventive universe rotates on an emotional axis and time chisels the growth and developments of the characters while the society residues melodramatic and tragicomic and are telescoped into a local limited dimension. Narayan is greatly successful at character portrayal in his novels. He draws his characters through appropriate descriptions and relevant and effective dialogues. His characters are life like and have been from the middle or lower middle class of society. He has sharp insight to see and explore the mind and action of his characters. This has enabled him to present reasonable and true to life men women and children in his novels. R.K. Narayan's characters are individualised types. They are a blending of individuals and typical fashionable adventures. Susila and Savitri are typical housewives Chandran is an illustrative college student. They are all individualized characters possessing their own impulse and whims.

Narayan's female characters stand in two categories; typical Indian housewives and stylish modern daring women. His heroines like Susila and Savitri are God-fearing, gentle, modest and loving characters. They run their households and always believe in terms of the wellbeing of their husbands and

children. But on the other hand there are women like Rosie in *Guide* Shantabai in *The Dark Room* and Shanti in *Mr. Sampath* who are butterfly type smart adventurous women. They are cunning and spoiling the familial happiness of lot of persons who come in their contact. Thus R.K.Narayan is the greatest of the Indo-Anglican novelist so far as his skill in characterisation is taken into consideration. As R.K. Narayan belongs to a middle class he has successfully drawn the habits, deeds, aspiration, joy and frustrations of the people in his novels. Human relationships, more chiefly family relationships comprise a major theme in Narayan's novels. The family is the immediate context in which his sensibility operates and his novels are remarkable for the subtlety and conviction with family relationships.

R.K. Narayan's language is almost devoid of imagery. His language is deceptively simple. 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. Narayan's imaginary inquisitiveness are his straightforward style and language free of any literary or verbal embellishment bring a vicarious feel for readers. Narayan's language is poetic as Krishnan in *The English Teacher* where he admires the beauty of her wife calling her a as she was phantom of delight. It was written seven years after *The Dark Room*. Probably it was the shattering blow that he received in the death of his wife which made him incapable of sustained artistic effort and during this interval he could compose only short stories or sketches. This novel which is dedicated to Narayan's wife Rajam, is

not only autobiographical but also poignant in its intensity of feeling. The story is a series of experiences in Krishna's life comprises of some joyful and some sorrowful memories in his journey towards achieving inner peace and self-development in the traditional Indian.

R.K. Narayan is not a feminist even then he has shown his sympathy for the exploited and oppressed class of woman in Indian society. The helplessness and miserable condition of a Hindu housewife is brought to the forefront in Narayan's *The Dark Room*. His protagonist Savitri is a victim of either man or of an authority, or of a particular social setup. Today, a woman's goals are expressively defined, first her indignation against the oppression and depression by men in patriarchal society, and second, the consequent quest of her identity. Both the factors go against the socially approved image of the passive woman. He realises education and his choice of career have actually removed him from his roots and culture and ultimately from reality. He realises the futility of an education as it serves effectively to keep them in subjugation not only physically but also in their approach to life and mindset. From the above discussion it is found that R.K. Narayan remains preoccupied with the treatment of social and national issues like nationalism, traditionalism social norms, typical Indian attitude to family life, sound familial relationship, belief on other worldly matters, feminism, faulty education-system, social evils like dowry system and caste system, east-west encounter, degeneration of values, rural-urban conflict and freedom struggle in his novels.

R.K. Narayan accepts the reality as it presents before him. He sees the nation in transition and in emerging stage with an ironic detachment and accepts reality ungrudgingly. As the pre-Independence period is marked by a transition the conflict between tradition and modernity between East and West naturally come into being in the literature of this period. So the theme of east-west encounter depicted in Narayan's pre-Independence novels marks the beginning of the tradition of highlighting the interaction between oriental and occidental people and cultures which is developed further in his post-Independence novels. Narayan's characters are both type and individuals. His novels are suffused with an Indian sensibility. The theme the characterisation, the locale, the use of language, his style of writing, family relations and his symbols had added flavour of Indian to his novels. Narayan has given a beautiful presentation of India. The suffering of village their ignorance, illiteracy, superstitions and spiritualism is the root cause of sufferings in India. His literature is a treasure for posterity with gifts of rich Indian culture and traditions.

Chapter-IV
Conclusion

Chapter-4

Conclusion

Narayan's novels represent a section of Indian society life which is steeped in middle class consciousness. His characters portray certain characteristic features. Either they are docile, timid, adhering to traditional values and pacifist by nature or they appreciate vulnerability, violence and excessive greed for money. This context expands the fact that Narayan studies economic problem minutely and exquisitely. Narayan's writing spans over sixty years. He is the witness to the modern transition of India and his writing can be regarded as the epic of modern India because the background of nearly all his fiction is an imaginary town in South India, which is actually a sample for change of their values and their way of looking at themselves. His works faithfully reflects the change of women's social position and also the change of their role in the households. The writer creates new women to pursue their own happiness, ignoring the confinement of the tradition or the codes of religion. His writing about the tradition of India only relates to the elites, or at the most, the middle class.

A simple, innocent and conservative society undergoes fast changing because of the incursions of modern civilisation. From a sleepy, silent and small town atmosphere on the banks of river Sarayu to fast developing metropolitan ethos with modern streets, banking corporations, talkies and smugglers den and even a circus, marks a movement in time. This movement not only affects the geography of the place, but also the social and cultural

milieu. Innocence gradually gives way to experience and begins to live up to the modern spirit. The agriculture community of England and that of time experiences the swift changes, innumerable contradictions that make a mark on the orthodox Indian society with its age-old culture, beliefs and superstitions. The characters are all drawn from middle class and Narayan creates them by imaginatively recreating their oddities and eccentricities. He is extremely successful at drawing his characters in the novels.

His characters are life-like and have been drawn from the middle or lower middle class of society. Narayan openly tackles the problems in family relationships and has beautifully portrayed its emotional tangles. Narayan's novels are characterised by Chekhovian simplicity and gentle humour. He talks about simple folks trying to change lives in a changing world. The characters in these novels were very ordinary and down to earth. Indians trying to blend tradition with modernisation often resulting in tragic comic situations. His writing style is simple, unpretentious and witty with a unique flavour. Many of Narayan's works are rooted in everyday life. Narayan's writing has been extremely popular amongst the masses, the upper, literary classes never really wanted up to him. It has been said that his writing was pedestrian, with his simple language and stories of village life.

Narayan's novels depict a society in a state of flux. It is essentially a conservative Hindu society undergoing changes slowly but steadily under the impact of industrialisation and modern culture of the west. The conservative stands for traditional holiness and sterile bourgeois values and the modern is

symbolised by rush of speed, extreme political activity, permissive sex and live in relationships, the breakdown of joint family and similar older institutions, the prevalence of American pop culture, half-lunatic violence and lawlessness and finally, a lively sardonic discussion of new theories like free love, women's liberation, birth control and their fallout for characters both male and female. Narayan's stories are incredibly easy to read due to their simplicity. He almost always wrote about India in some way and usually added cultural influences about Indian life in his works. Though Narayan's writing have been extremely popular amongst readers the literary classes never really warmed up to him. Narayan adequately reflects the various human relationships including the image of woman and man-woman relationships.

R.K. Narayan's central characters in his novels show everything that occurs in the development of human relationships. His heroes are aware of the social and political changes but they do not take sides nor do they commit themselves to any ideology. It is important to note that Narayan is a conservative Indian both in thought and spirit. In all the novels of Narayan one find the Indian milieu in the depiction of school life and college life, family relationships, traditions and religious customs, superstitious, humour, irony etc. Thus we find that Narayan reigns supreme in Indian English writing in term of his technique and development of literary devices which enrich his style with perfection. His technique of sensational story telling provides enough charm and enchants the readers in magical manner. His ironical details of the complicated and dramatic situations are so alive that his novels become nearly

true account of life in each and every circumstance. His objectivity in all these does not force us into retreat or recoil rather it creatively re-engages us in life.

India has had its own tradition and ancient religion and culture and tradition since time immemorial. It has its own cultural heritage and milieu besides having its own language and literature. The adoption of English as a medium of communication and the adoption of English as one of the official languages stimulated a new consciousness among the people of political and cultural naturalism. It encouraged the quest for the true meaning of the Indian experience of history in relation to the west. Equally important is the diffusion of western thought and European literature which attracted the great minds of the 19th and the 20th centuries and laid strong foundation for the changing face of the Indian Society in its approach towards Religion, Culture, Tradition and Modernity. The encounter between Eastern and Western thought left a permanent impression on India's ethos. Narayan has established himself as master of the comic mode in fiction portraying the life of particular societies by means of a realism strongly rooted in the locative impulse and vividly rendered through an almost optic precision of closely observed nuances of human behaviour and attitudes.

Symbols of mystic space which control the physical and psychological centers of action in the novels confer on the narratives the quality and force of ritual in tracing the locations of detachment and as a route to objectivity and truth. The radical vision of experience projected by the pressure of events and existential choices they generate as well as the alternations in the stance of

human personality in the flux of life is fundamentally different in each novel. For example Krishna, waiting to meet his wife Susila with tremulous expectation and lyrical concern in *The English Teacher*. Shot through the texture of the whole experience is the incremental movement of human feeling spurred by a sense of concern. Krishna is very concerned about bringing up the baby safely. Susila considers it to be a normal father's plight and brings up the child in a carefree way. Their love grows more even though there is a distance in their relationship.

Through the prism of Hindu concepts Krishnan is shown as undergoing a complex personal transformation in the end clinging to traditional ways and patterns. Rushdie, who also employs Hindu imagery the effects of working of waters are carried a little further. Saleem is obsessed with the salvation of his country and the transformation he goes through is not so much related to his person as it is to the Indian nation. Rushdie uses the patterns of both Hindu and Buddhist imagery to create Saleem as a representation or an avatar of Vishnu who though he fails to save the country is only possible in recognition by trying to see the other aspect to perceive what it means to experience being other after the hidden parts of the self the inner needs and desires are understood. The novel *The English Teacher* starts as an interesting novel of domestic felicity and ends up in spiritual and philosophical discussions. According to many critics the ending is the weakest part of the novel. Readers also find this absurd and unrealistic. But one cannot deny the facts that Narayan himself has taken this experience in his life after his wife's death. Its chapters are longer, making

for more continuity in the narrative, and there are less of the seemingly abrupt shifts of emphasis and the launce that characterize the previous three novels.

In *The English Teacher* itself metonymy gives way to metaphor, as Narayan shapes contingent details from apparently the shift of tone and focus that appears to occur halfway through is an artistic whole. At the same time *The English Teacher* is a dialogic text which juxtaposes and assesses the rival claims that various approaches to life make on the individual. Once again location is central to the particular properties of rooms and buildings link the social themes of the first half of the novel, which not only centers on domestic life but also Krishna's place in Malgudi scolonically oriented educational system. A concern with the dialectics of space runs through the whole novel and Narayan introduces a series that allow him to debate the competing claims of the social, political, psychological and spiritual. *The English Teacher* has a greater coherence than the other novels of Narayan's first period. It is clear that the apparently meandering structure embodies a debate about the relative merits of issues connected through a focus on the physical and psychic properties of space. As in *The Dark Room* houses and rooms are accorded a central prominence and they become the sites for both a Brahmin-based view of cleanliness and pollution and for an exploration of the individual's quest for an appropriate *Dharma*.

The use of rooms as tropes for mental states is reversed as Krishna attempts to establish contact with Susila through the séances with the medium. This mental condition makes his supposed visitation from Susila possible and

the novel's paranormal conclusion comes down on the side of the spiritual, leaving little room for ambiguity. Head master, this conclusion has the effect of bringing the domestic, political, the psychoanalytic and the spiritual together. The concluding episode privileges the spiritual, but like everything else in *The English Teacher*, it is a product of Krishna's consciousness: from first to last the novel is circumscribed by his first-person angle of focalization and it is about his state of mind. The transcendental conclusion is complemented by a domestic resolution, in which, denied conventional movement into the role of *grihastya*, Krishna has progressed towards becoming a caring and responsible father; and it is a secular movement that it is associated with ancient Hindu religious beliefs. In short, these various levels intersect and overlap in a novel, which despite its paranormal conclusion operates as a window into the representation of Indian milieu.

The implied cultural politics are, however, problematic in that, if one accepts Krishna as a reliable narrator and the tone and progress of his narration encourage such a reading, they promote an exclusivist encounter with polluted, non-Brahmin space. The schoolmaster retreats from the responsibility of the *grihastya* ashram into a vision of fulfillment predicated on a sentimentalisation of childhood and in so doing takes Krishna with him. Krishna's particular sense of loss is related to the primal sense of loss that the new-born infant suffers as it leaves the womb and an answer to these problems comes through a form of spiritualism, whose exponent is associated with a ruined ancient Hindu discourse: the temple dedicated to the primal Vak Matha figure, a theological

equivalent of the rupture from the womb mentioned above. In its conclusion, then the novel could be seen to desert the everyday realities of South Indian life for a mystical dialogue with the after-life, but the totality of its various strands makes it an altogether more complex work and ultimately these suggest the tensions and confusions in Tamil Brahmin culture, which leave the protagonist pulled in different directions by the various possible choice of dharma that are open to him.

Savitri wanders aimlessly in the night and is a prey to conflicting emotions. She is rescued in time by a burglar when she is about to be carried away by the river. The burglar's wife looks after Savitri for two or three days. She keeps on thinking of her children, and decides to pocket her pride and return home. Meanwhile Ramani has been having an uncomfortable time with the children. His versatility is amazing: he leaves his children in the cinema house at six, spends a couple of hours with Shantabai, and is back in time to take his children home. Savitri returns one morning, and normalcy which includes the liaison with Shantabai returns. A cynical conclusion, this but one knows too that there are pinchbeck domestic tyrants like Ramani, and also women like Savitri whose badge is sufferance. The tradition, in fact is also old as the ancient Tamil bardic story of Kovalan and Kannaki.

In *The English Teacher* there is a practical purpose and a trilogy on Sarayu. *The Dark Room*, which appeared between the teacher is a novel part, a study of domestic disharmony as *The English Teacher* is the song of love in marriage. Ramani is an insurance executive, whereas Krishna is a teacher of

English poetry: a significant difference. Ramani has a comfortable salary not a mere Rs.100 per month, which is Krishna's monthly wages, he has a car of his own, he has a middle-aged wife and three grownup children. There is a streak of the ruffian and the cad in Ramani, and indeed in many respects, he is a sharp contrast to Krishna. Savitri is not simple as Susila who has reached the thirties: she lacks the ineluctable poetry of Susila, the capacity to be at once a Goddess and a woman, the eternal feminine and the womanly woman. Ramani blows too often, and Savitri sulks too readily. *The Dark Room* used to be as indispensable a part of an Indian house as a kitchen, and was a place for safe deposits, both a sanctuary and a retreat; but modern houses, are apt to dispense with the *The Dark Room*. Even in the old houses, the installation of electric lights of the dark room. Narayan has thus done well to preserve like the mummified curiosities of ancient Egypt the dark room in the pages of his novel.

All three women, however being traditional wives, are contrasted with the ambiguous Shantabai, newcomer to Malgudi. Shantabai has few traditional kinship ties. Her caste, class and identity are left deliberately blurred. If the readers are to believe her, she is an unreliable narrator. She was married young to her cousin, a gambler and drunkard, whom she left at the age of eighteen, because he would not change. Her parents would not accept this, and so she was forced to leave her parental home as well. Most of all, she contrasts with Savitri because she lives from day one in a makeshift philosophy without apparent commitment or responsibility. It is clear at the same time, that Shantabai manages to keep afloat only through her comic illusions of

emotional independence; her financial position is entirely precarious, and depends on Ramani's attachment to her. For the purposes of the novel, and because Narayan wants our sympathy for Savitri, Shantabai remains at a superficial level, even if there is a shadow over much of her life.

A woman has held a very strange place in Indian society. She has been revered for being sati and at the same time she has been hated and loathed for being a widow or for not bringing dowry. Stories of women are in abundance in the ancient literary texts. However, with the progress of time the woman of Indian society changed and she started making herself noticed by fathoming all areas which were until now the arena of men. In literature too, the role of woman was given a certain distinction. In this league R.K. Narayan writes about characters like Savitri and Shantabai in *The Dark Room* and shows the various perspectives of the Indian woman. Narayan's novels have many a female character but most of them are traditional Indian women who live a life within the confines of their home. The character of Savitri in the first half of *The Dark Room* is an apt example. Despite the rude nature of her husband, Savitri performs the duties of a mother and wife uncomplainingly. She takes the frequent harshness with indifference. She behaves or talks the free only after judging his mind. She is the quintessential mother, wife and homemaker. She is the humble, patient, loyal wife mentioned in the scriptures.

Savitri is such a humble and down-to-earth person that after hearing about her husband's affair, she does not believe it. Later she feels Ramani is not to be blamed. Perhaps, she is not beautiful anymore and hence Ramani got

attracted to Shantabai. In her innocence she starts paying attention to her looks. Once again she dresses up not only to look good but in the manner in which Ramani likes. Narayan comments on the status of Savitri in her home where he says that she was so important even after fifteen years of marriage. And, the progress of Savitri's character shows that she had the essence of feminism in her but it had been suppressed for all these years. The mental torture that she has been going through draws out her inner strength and that gives her the courage to talk back. Besides Savitri, there is Shantabai, the educated, manipulative seductress who knows how to use a woman's charm to win the man. She is cunning, clever type who makes every right move to trap her prey. When he visits her home for the first time, her style of talking is conspicuous of her intention of enticing him.

In the Narayan's novels, the new woman as she moves out of the traditionally hallowed domestic space is projected as a curiously disempowered figure, particularly pathetic in her homelessness. From her initial appearance in *The Dark Room* she is destructive of the values of the traditional home. R.K. Narayan's presentation of female characters, fall into three main groups: first, dominating, powerful women; second, powerless, frustrated, oppressed women; and third, women accepting the system in this case, the Indian society of strong masculine dominance but at the same time finding ways and means to informal, indirect control of their situation. The aim would be to see if any of them have any real power. This makes him even more insensitive to his wife than before and thus triggers off the tragedy. As a background, one should also

keep in mind the pattern and ideal of a wife in Indian myth, the perfectly loving and self-sacrificing, Goddess like Savitri. Narayan's use of the same name for his anti-heroine gives the story new dimensions. This is the traditional pattern of a good Indian wife in total subjection to her husband and master.

The Dark Room is the only novel of Narayan's with a woman holding the center. *The Dark Room* is a spectacle of domestic discord rising to a rage of violence unique in Narayan's early comedy, a painful experience for the reader coming from Narayan novels. The crisis in *The Dark Room* is built on adultery. The heroine, having quit her home in protest against infidelity, of all Narayan's characters pushed up closest to suicide, returns home in a helpless compromise, with more than a residue of bitterness that makes the ending of the novel unique in Narayan, far from happy or comedic. The heroine is left trapped in a predicament of unrequited moral struggle, close to life in death. Savitri and Ramani with economy and with impressive psychological and social realism.

The philosophy of woman is that she is opposed by man, and a woman considers him as her constant oppressor. This must have been an early testament of the movement. A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society is an ideal victim of such circumstances. In *The English Teacher* the toll that typhoid took and all the desolation that followed, with a child to look after, and the psychic adjustment, are based on his own experience. The reunion at the end is in fact the marriage of the lovers all over again they achieve now a submergence of psyches with the boundaries of our personalities suddenly dissolved.

R.K. Narayan accepts the reality as it presents before him. He sees the Nation in transition and in emerging stage with an ironic detachment and accepts reality ungrudgingly. As the pre-Independence period is marked by a transition the conflict between tradition and modernity between east and west naturally come into being in the literature of this period. So the theme of east-west encounter depicted in Narayan's pre-Independence novels marks the beginning of the tradition of highlighting the interaction between oriental and occidental people and cultures which is developed further in his post-Independence novels. Narayan's characters are both types and individuals. His novels are suffused with an Indian sensibility. The theme the characterisation, the locale, the use of language, his style of writing, family relations and his symbols had added flavour of Indian to his novels. Narayan has given a beautiful presentation of India. The suffering of village their ignorance, illiteracy, superstitions and spiritualism is the root cause of sufferings in India. His literature is a treasure for posterity with gifts of rich Indian culture and traditions.

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