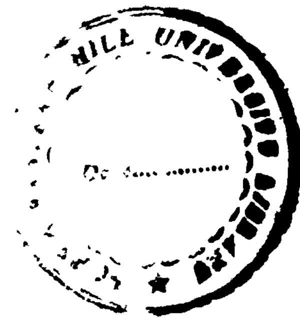
CARNIVAL AND THE NOVEL
A STUDY OF R. K. NARAYAN



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I, *Sravani Biswas*, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis – ***Carnival and the Novel: A Study of R.K. Narayan***, is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or, to the best of my knowledge, to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute

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Chapter-I

INTRODUCTION

The novel, according to Philippe Sollers, is the way in which society talks to itself. Contemporary critical theory has placed the study of fictional works in a broader perspective attempting to answer the *whats* and *hows* of its organization, structure and development as a literary genre. The present study attempts to apply the theoretical concepts of Bakhtin on some selected works of R.K. Narayan.

The writings of Bakhtin go back to the 1920s and 1930s, but he remained unknown to the world until translations in the 1970s brought him to focus. Since then, his ideas, specially polyphony, dialogism and the carnival have proved attractive to critics of different persuasions ranging from Marxists, feminists, to traditional humanists. The reason for such a fascination may be hidden in Bakhtin's radical understanding of relativization of truth, his notion of hidden polemic in all speech, his notion of addressivity, which promotes human connection, and the overall moral implication of freedom. His habitual avoidance of any reductionism shows his concern for the dangers of knowledge both inside or outside a text. He conceives knowledge as dialogic, which

addresses rather than defines. This concern for openness or dialogism can be traced back even to his early aesthetic theories which indicate a deep conviction that an aesthetic event can take place only when there are two participants present, and that it presupposes two non-coinciding consciousnesses. This perception later on was developed to an understanding that a fictional work is primarily dialogic and multi-voiced. Bakhtin stresses not the way that texts reflect society or class interests, but rather the way language disrupts authority and liberates alternative voices.

Bakhtin's theoretical position is clearly anti-Stalinist and against all kinds of oppression. To him any kind of human relationship cannot be viewed in terms of the active and the passive. It may be asserted that in a dominant and subordinate relationship, the passive agent not only accepts anything as *fate accompli*, but also suppresses his/her inner voice, which silently cries for freedom and space. It was quite natural for Bakhtin to be apprehensive of the diminution of the human soul or deprivation of human freedom. Verbal signs are the arena of continuous class struggle: the ruling class will always try to narrow the meaning of words and make social signs 'uni-accentual'. However, Bakhtin

underlines the importance of 'heteroglossia' as the foundation of 'multi-accentuality' of linguistic signs in social discourse that governs the production of meaning in all discourses. It asserts the way contexts define the meaning of utterances, which are heteroglot in so far as they put in play a multiplicity of social voices and their individual expressions. A single voice may give the impression of unity and closure, but the utterance is constantly producing a plentitude of meanings, which stem from social interaction.

Bakhtin had lived through the oppressions of the Czars, and also the gloomy years of Stalin's dictatorship. He was even arrested and lived in exile for six years. So, the authorial vision which he almost valorizes in "*Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity*" cannot be taken as final, as there seem to be an inner tension in the essay itself. Pam Morris points out that this tension is evident when Bakhtin links the authority of authorial knowledge with death. Morris quotes:

> Artistic vision presents us with the whole hero, measured in full and added up in every detail; there must be no secrets for us in the hero in respect to meaning ... From the very outset, we must experience all of him, deal with the whole of him: in respect to meaning, he must be dead for us, formally dead. (Quoted in Morris, 1994:7)

This authorial vision is dismissed by Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, where he criticizes Tolstoy's monologic (authorial narration) style. Authorial knowledge leads to a dead end. To Bakhtin, the overwhelming question that compels to be asked is, is not life more mysterious, more ambivalent and full of unanswered questions and quest for meaning? Is not the meaning of myself always yet to be completed? Is not there more attraction towards the sense of unfinalizability of self than da Vinci's perfect knowledge of human anatomy?

His search for answers to these questions led Bakhtin to understand the complexity that exists in relationships between the author and his characters in a narrative. It is, as he finds, more complex in the dynamics of the social than in love, which is considered to be the ideal form of relationship. So he finds for himself that the active giver (author) and the passive recipient (hero) of his "*Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity*" become two active agents interacting with each other in a complex manner. Language becomes the focus of Bakhtin's thought as he finds it to be the sensitive register of the complex power relations in a society. He finds a strong flavour in the polemic and addressivity of

the language in a novel. This leads him to his narrative theory, which he calls 'dialogic' – meaning that each utterance is addressed to someone, never uttered without consciousness of a relationship between the speaker and the addressee. In this, the play of power and hierarchy are also taken into account. Bakhtin writes in "*Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art*" that the basic stylistic tone of utterance is ... determined above all by who is talked about and what his relation is to the speaker – whether he is higher or lower than or equal to him on the scale of social hierarchy.

Bakhtin follows an overtly Marxist approach with a significant departure from its ideological orthodoxy. He embeds his thesis in a perspective that is drawn from Hegelian 'humanism' and Lukacs's concept of "social realism". In making language the central concern of his study, Bakhtin has attempted the closest approximation to scientificness of language in the study of ideology and creativity. He criticizes two current approaches to the understanding of literature – the Formalist attempt at objectivity and the alternate approach of identifying creativity with subjective psychology that fails to understand that verbal art is intrinsically sociological. The social with or without

ideological considerations is crucial for the verbal art as it originates in society and uses its resources.

An assessment of Bakhtin's theory on the carnival needs a prior evaluation of the concept of the polyphonic novel. We should start our discussion with Bakhtin's praise of Dostoevsky. Bakhtin uses a new term 'polyphony' to describe Dostoevsky's highly innovative narrative form that shows his acute awareness of the multi-voicedness of all discourse. In Dostoevsky's novels, the author's voice is only one among many and the characters are allowed free speech. This, he says, is lacking in Tolstoy where the over-riding authorial voice sounds the loudest. Bakhtin identifies such polyphony as a special property of the novel and traces it back to its carnivalistic sources in classical, medieval and Renascence cultures.

Bakhtin traces the origin of the many-voiced 20th century novel to the carnival tradition in folk culture. The rich tradition of serio-comic, dialogic, satiric literature is found in Socratic dialogues, Menippian satire, medieval mystery plays, and in the works of Boccaccio, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Voltaire, Balzac and Hugo. This carnivalized anti-tradition appears most significantly in the novel. The public ritual

of carnival, especially the ritual of crowning and de-crowning of a mock king inverts values in order to question them. Often through the medium of the grotesque, the people of a community express both their sense of being victims of power and their own power to subvert authority. In a similar manner, the polyphonic novel calls closed meaning into question. Carnival and the novel make power relative by addressing it instead of defining it.

The strong feeling that pervades us while we discuss Bakhtin's perception of the novel and his theory of carnivalization is his deep longing for the freedom of the human soul. His theory is more appealing, as it is more generative than that of the structuralists who focus on the *Langue* – or the system of any language. The Russian Formalists studied folk tales as structural units that together contained a limited number of types of characters and actions. If this can be called the *langue* (the system), then, the individual tale is a *parole* (the specific application of *langue*). Bakhtin's idea of the novel breaks all literary conventions. M. Holquist explains that the 'novel' is the name Bakhtin gives to whatever force is at work within a given literary system to reveal the limits, the artificial constraints of that system. Unlike poetry

or drama, the novel holds immense scope and possibilities for the free play of social speech, thereby inviting the whole gamut of life into its sphere. This democratization of expression is further initiated by Bakhtin's concept of the carnival. Bakhtin's concept of the carnival should be understood in the context of the age-old folk-culture, which had been so rich and active in the past, which is still there camouflaged in modern society, and which will always be there as long as the human community remains essentially social and cosmic. The keynote to this age-old folk-culture is carnival laughter or the unofficial laughter, which is actually a certain way of conceiving the world. It is an all-embracing and broadminded world-view, which is never pedagogic, humourless or biased. It has the strength to take the incongruous world in its stride, fearlessly laughing away the strictures and threatenings of the official value-system. It negotiates with a truth that lurks in the grotesque sphere of the world. As against the upward movement of the official value-system, grotesque realism moves downward, respecting earth's gravity. By way of degradation, the grotesque world brings all its subjects down to earth, while materializing them and turning them to flesh. This grotesque existence is ambivalent, as it signifies a world that dies to be

born, which devours, but at the same time gets devoured. In its spheres, binaries like death and birth, evil and good are not isolated phenomena, but are the two faces of a single truth. This acceptance of ambivalence in truth creates healthy positivism, which is free from the effects of isolation and egocentricity of the modern world.

In the perspective of Bakhtin's theory, a study of the novels of R.K. Narayan proves enlightening. The novels selected for this study exemplify Bakhtin's theories on the polyphonic novel and especially his radical view about the carnivalized anti-tradition.

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan was born in 1906 in his grandmother's house in Madras, India, and grew up in Madras, although his father was a headmaster of a state-run school in the old Mysore State. Narayan did not distinguish himself as a student, but passion for literature was unmistakable. He read eclectically and contributed items on meetings and murders to a Madras newspaper, which brought him a little income. His first novel *Swami and Friends* (1935) was rejected by several publishers before it came to the attention of the English novelist Graham Greene, who found a publisher for it, as he did for his *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) and *The Darkroom* (1938). Narayan married a

young woman of his own choice, against family traditions and astrological warnings, and his wife died of typhoid in 1939. After a long period of literary stasis Narayan wrote the intensely autobiographical novel *The English Teacher* (1945; republished in the USA as *Grateful to Life and Death*, 1953). Narayan's succeeding works do not delve into his persona, though his writing gets richer, more broad-based and complex. Along with fourteen Malgudi-novels, Narayan wrote numerous short stories, critical essays, travelogues, etc. Narayan's novels have been translated into many foreign languages. In India, he won the Sahitya Akademi Award (in 1960, for *The Guide*) and the Padma Bhusan (1964) and was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of Parliament. The British Royal Society of Literature awarded Narayan the A.C. Benson Medal and he received the English Speaking Union Book Award from USA and was made a Fellow of the prestigious American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1982), the only Indian writer to be so honoured.

R.K. Narayan, India's prolific storyteller, died at the age of 94 on May 13, 2001.

Narayan's tolerance and all-embracing consciousness engenders the comic mode, which, according to C.D. Narasimhaiah, is equivalent to the tragic in his evocation of mediocrity. According to Graham Greene, sadness and humour go hand-in-hand in Narayan's novels. This ambivalence is possible as the writer uses a polyphonic style, which renders meaning as unfinalizable. The openness of meaning is what the protagonist's consciousness manifests, for his consciousness is dialogically placed with other equally valid consciousnesses, thus questioning the hero's ideological position and preventing any rounding-up of his character. This very reason thwarts any attempt at compartmentalization of Narayan's novels, leaving the readers puzzled if they are looking for well-constructed plots and rounded characters. One very interesting example in this context is Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*. The novel is often marked out by readers and critics as a Gandhi-novel. But throughout the novel, what we find is Narayan's placing of the image of Gandhi among diverse and contradictory positions. The image of Gandhi in the narrative enters into various relationships with other positions, which leaves the meaning/image of Gandhi open. The relativization of Gandhian principles destroys the

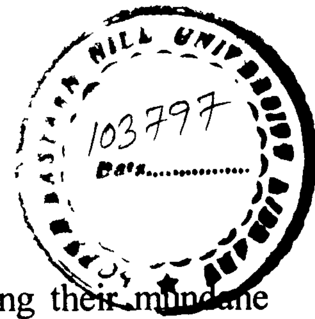
myth, bringing to surface questions that lurk between lines, and often threaten to unsettle our complacent idea about the people of India in relation to Gandhi. Did the people of India understand Gandhi and his non-violence? We find in *Waiting* the people of Malgudi joining with equal enthusiasm the Gandhi-rallies as well as the Loyalists' meetings. They hardly realize how opposed are the two meetings in principle. The image of Gandhi is polemicized in other novels too. In *Swami and Friends* the occasional demonstrations against the British government is spasmodic, with children boycotting their classes, burning their foreign clothes and breaking the glass-windows of their schools. Such chaos gives Swami, a little boy, the opportunity to bunk his classes. He burns his *khadi* cap in the spree of destroying foreign goods. Swami is a little boy, but his confusion seems to reflect all other agitators, including adults. All of them are caught up in the excitement, which the very name of Gandhi evoked, but their true perception of Gandhi remains questionable. Gandhi in Narayan's novels is not a monologic figure, but is a dispersed signifier who brings into focus the polyphonic reality of India's freedom struggle that manifests a structureless paradigm of a carnival. According to Bakhtin, the polyphonic world is like the church,

which is a communion of unmerged spirits – the meeting place of the sinner and the righteous, the repentant and the unrepentant, the saved and the damned. The dialogism in a polyphonic novel provides a scope for an unbiased and democratic exploration of the mystery of life.

Narayan's dialogic world-view has the elasticity to accept and expose the ambivalence of life, and thus initiates the depiction of life not as a harmonious unity but as a battleground of diverse and contradictory tendencies and pursuits. Hence Narayan's stories never achieve the expected denouement that would satisfy our expectations. However, they remain open ended and ambivalent. As Graham Greene points out, in the very first novel of Narayan, *Swami*, the little boy Swami at the end watches his dear friend Rajam with whom he had needlessly quarrelled, vanish into the vast unknown spaces of India. It is a reality as stark as death, especially to a sensitive little boy, as it leaves no promise or hope for the future reunion. It is a deceptively powerful ending, as it emits the flavour of the stark reality exposed in the irrational and accidental quality of human life. Thus, while Rajam's train shows its tail light to the gaping little Swami, the reader too has to gape in wonder at the suddenness and irrationality of the ending.

Interestingly, in *The Darkroom* Savitri's homecoming creates a similar situation of deferred finality like the departure of Rajam from Malgudi. In both cases, the expectation of poetic justice is left unrequited. Savitri is a victim of the social situation in which a married lady is dependent on her husband and has no choice other than accepting his economic dominance. For Savitri it is an existential crisis – either she does not surrender and commits suicide, or is forced to return. Her disappearance would have in a sense pampered the sentiment of the reader, but Savitri does the opposite – she succumbs to her fate in life. Narayan, we find, is not looking at any extraordinary possibility of making her a tragic figure. The lack of sentimentality in dealing with her character makes her situation more unbearable. The novel remains an open question – yet to be solved.

Narayan's polyphonic style creates characters, who are unpredictable, unfinished, and lack the integrated givenness of their personality, while moving beyond the dialectical closures. In Narayan's world there is no hero and there is no villain; often the concept of hero and villain fuse and overlap. The characters thus do not make laudable



claims of morality, ethics or ideology except following their mundane materialistic needs and bodily drives.

As against the pulls of ideology that rejects the earthly and the material and centralizes human existence towards its value-system, the downward thrust of grotesque realism affirms the material life of the body and its needs. This grotesque bodily life is ambivalent in nature, as it, defies the moral, ethical binaries created by the official world. This ambivalence permeates Narayan's characters and renders them unpredictable and unfinished. Raju of *The Guide* is neither a hero nor a villain, but his character is constituted in the dialectics of virtue and falsehood integrating both the hero and a villain in him. His love for Rosie drives him to leave his dear mother, but at the same time he uses Rosie's talent to mint money. In fact, it is quite difficult for the reader to thrust a final comment on the characters created by Narayan. How would one define, for example, the *Financial Expert*? Margaya is a financial wizard, who piles up money with feverish zeal. His lust for money surprisingly, is not for the promotion of personal comfort, but to appease his avarice. His money-minting tendencies are self-denying and self-destructive, for he ruins his health in the process.

In most of Narayan's novels, the hero is actually the anti-hero, a person very common, wayward, selfish and middle class, pursuing some material gain. The very image of this hero inverts the conventional image of the hero, as he moves between the two poles of buffoonery and the tragic. The closed meaning of the hero is thus brought to question. Narayan's heroes may be contrasted with the heroes of Tagore's novels, who are intellectual elites on a quest for self-identity and self-discovery. One may look for Tagore's own quest through his characters. Tagore is trying to establish the identity of balanced, modern and exemplary Indians standing between the radicals of the Derozio school and the reactionaries. On the other hand, Narayan's grotesque characters are let free in a domain where questions of identity and self-consciousness are not ideologically underpinned; they are simply floaters, floating according to the movement of the current, accepting everything either Western or Indian in their own stride.

The setting in most novels of Narayan is also carnivalesque in its market place-like atmosphere. The narrative space in Narayan's works is never a confined place; it has an openness that includes courtyards, stations or taxi stands, where numerous funny faces appear and

disappear, a veritable bazaar, giving the overall impression of life as a generative process. Births, marriages and deaths are casually thrown in without any attempt to sentimentalize them. Narayan never explores the dark layers of human psyche. Here, whatever happens to the individual is not created by that individual's psychological complexities, but by society and the individual's relation to it. Thus the crowd crowns the clown as the king and again decrowns him without remorse or a sense of victory. In Narayan's world nobody is a victor or a victim. Here, for good or bad, power is constantly relativized. Savitri's retreat to the darkroom is pathetically ineffective in moving her husband. Her sentiments turn funny and clownish, but to show that she is supreme in the house she dominates at her servants in an attempt to reinvent her power that she actually does not enjoy. In *The Guide* Raju's relation to the crowd is double-voiced; they inspire him and turn him into a loquacious character, for he holds his power over them as a tourist-guide, a teacher in the jail and as the Swami on the banks of Sarayu. The crowd too has its inbuilt force of subversion and Raju is decrowned by them; he succumbs to the will-power of the mass and literally fasts to death.

Perhaps, Narayan's grotesque presentation of Malgudi renders the hitherto fragmentary picture of India true and complete. Narayan projects the 'other India' – the villages, small towns, where most of the people live – which may have been hidden behind the façade of 'great India' never considered important to writers and historians. Thus cultural signs like 'spirituality', 'harmony', 'self-sacrifice', 'self-effacement', propagated by the official world are constantly being polemicized by the faceless people – the cunning shopkeepers, exploiting priests, loquacious railway guides, greedy film makers, who swarm Narayan's novels. Vasu in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* is a perfect example. Vasu held no other relation worth consideration beyond the consideration of money. He is a talented artist, but in his blunt commercialism he explodes the previous myth of the artist as a man of high mental aspirations. Similarly, Mr. Sampath's uncritical pursuit of the capitalist impulse in a self-righteous manner turned him unpredictable and unredeemable. Mr. Sampath, an attractive character, versatile and helpful, leaves his own peaceful place in the press for the glamour-world of film-making, which ultimate leads him nowhere. With all his respect for Gandhian spiritualism, Tagore's call for self-

purification and the dreams of the socialist thinkers of the time, Narayan could not help perceiving the paradoxes and ironies that haunted the middle-class of India. Supported by his grotesque characters and multi-voiced novels, Narayan initiated a greater freedom and clarity of expression. The presence of the overwhelming faceless crowd and their multi-voiced representation brings Narayan's works closer to Bakhtin's understanding of polyphony and carnival.

The most powerful expression of reality that exists outside the domain of the grim official world, according to Bakhtin, is the world of the carnival with the unadulterated laughter and frolic. We hear this fearless festive laughter in the novels of Narayan. It is not the deriding [7] expression of the individual against a rival, as we find in the satire. Universal in scope, this carnival laughter is directed towards the funny incongruities of mankind in general. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect and its gay relativity. The pathetic display of self-importance of Raju before his simple, good natured mother and the illiterate taxi driver, Sriram's muddling up of Gandhi's speech on human love with his own pangs of adolescent infatuation, or the sweet-vendor's funny self-deceptive activities like stealing his own money break through all

pretences of self-importance that the *homo sapiens* claim to enjoy. The language of laughter exposes the clown in the garb of the king. It is healthy, as it humbles as well as strengthens humankind to face the stark reality about itself and the world.

Narayan in a sense is a contemporary of Bakhtin, and like him lived in a troubled world. To capture this world in fictional narrative, he has chosen that his characters speak instead of the author. Both Bakhtin and Narayan express their longing for the freedom of the human soul – Bakhtin through his appreciation of the carnival spirit and Narayan through his multi-voiced novels, where grotesque characters and events subtly convey bitter truths about individuals and society.

The theoretical insights of Bakhtin, it is hypothesized, will bring in a different perspective in the reading of R.K. Narayan's works. Following this position and in the light of the above discussion, the present work is organized into the following chapters:

1. Introduction.
2. Aesthetics, Language and the Novel: An Overview of Bakhtin's Theory.
3. Novel and Society: Heteroglossia, Polyphony and Dialogic Imagination in the Novels of R.K. Narayan.

4. The Hero and the World: Double Consciousness and Narayan's Unusual Heroes.
5. Carnival and the Novel: Themes and Narrative Endings in the Novels of Narayan.
6. Conclusion.

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Chapter-II

AESTHETICS, LANGUAGE AND THE NOVEL: AN OVERVIEW OF BAKHTIN'S THEORY

I

Although ordinarily the word *aesthetic* means the study and appreciation of the beautiful, over the centuries some of its concerns have been developed into critical theorization. The *aesthetic* as a necessary condition of the arts and its interpretation has gradually permeated into ideological formations. From idealistic abstraction to physical, psychological, political, sociological, moral, and ethical turns of aesthetic theories, the study of *aesthetic* has followed a discursive trajectory. Before embarking upon an exploration of Bakhtin's aesthetic theory it is necessary to trace its historical development.

According to *The New Encyclopaedia Brittanica* (1980) the discipline called aesthetics may be described broadly as the study of beauty and, to a lesser extent, its opposite the ugly. It may include general or theoretical studies of the arts and of related types of experience such as those of the philosophy of art, art criticism and the psychology or sociology of the arts. Aesthetics has often been defined

more specifically as the science of the beautiful, a definition implying an organized body of knowledge covering a special field of subject matter.

Among the ancients, Democritus regarded sensuous knowledge as important, as it provides reason with all its arguments. Yet the properties of things perceived by the senses exist only in opinions. Atom is the final point of the divisible object, according to atomists. It has properties like weight, shape, arrangement, yet the atom cannot be perceived by the senses. While Democritus divided cognition into the sensuous and the rational, Plato emphasized that knowledge of a thing is its unique idea, but this idea is not the sum total of the various properties realized by our sense organs; archetypes are true and universal, while the material world is the mirrored image of the archetype, and hence is its transitory representation. Aristotle attempted to bridge the gap between Plato's two worlds, and spoke of the internal form or structure which gives meaning to an object.

Taking epistemology as the starting point of philosophy, Descartes maintains that the soul has the ability to perceive the universal essence of things through the transitory, possessing innate

ideas gifted to man by God. Cartesian Rationalism became decisive in neoclassical aesthetics. Cartesian and Aristotelian elements combined in the richly polysemous concepts of reason and nature, which became central to all theories of the arts within the project of Enlightenment.

The name *aesthetics* first appeared in *Reflections on Poetry* (1735) by Alexander Baumgarten, a Rationalist influenced by René Descartes, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, a polymath German philosopher, who focussed upon what Descartes had distinguished as clear and distinct ideas, or systematic thought as developed in logic and mathematics. This distinction restricted cognition to conceptual knowledge. Baumgarten noticed that sensory and perceptual cognition, which is developed in poetry and other arts, was thus excluded. Drawing upon the Greek word for perception (aisthªsis), Baumgarten coined the word *aesthetics* for the science of perceptual cognition.

The problem of aesthetic pleasure in art haunted 18th century aesthetic thought. John Locke's *An Essay* negotiates the question: how do ideas generate? The central, though mysterious, role of imagination in artistic creation had long been acknowledged, but its mode of operation had not been systematically investigated. The rationalist

Bacon placed it as a faculty alongside memory and reason and assigned poetry to it. Hobbe's stated that the mind's *trains* of thought are guided by the principle of association. This theory was developed into a systematic psychology by Hume and Hartley. Locke, however, dismissed 'fancy' as a tendency of poetic language to be figurative.

Kant recast the problems of eighteenth century aesthetic thought in the characteristic form of the critical philosophy: how are judgements of the beautiful and the sublime possible? In view of their ardent subjectivity, how is their implicit claim to general validity to be vindicated? According to Kant, empirical knowledge is possible because the faculty of judgement can bring together general concepts and particular sense. The formal purposiveness of an object as experienced can induce 'a free-play of the imagination', an intense disinterested pleasure that depends not on our particular knowledge but just on the consciousness of the harmony of the two cognitive powers – imagination and understanding. This is the pleasure we affirm in the judgement of taste. Since the general possibility of sharing knowledge with each other presupposes that in each of us there is a co-operation of imagination and understanding, so every rational being has the capacity

to feel this harmony of cognitive power. Therefore, true judgement of taste can legitimately claim to be true for all.

Schilling was the first philosopher to claim to have 'absolute standpoint' from which the dualism of self and nature of Kant's epistemology could be overcome. In his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), he attempted a reconciliation of all oppositions between the self and nature through the idea of art. In the artistic intuition, the self is both conscious and unconscious at once: there is both deliberation and inspiration. For him transcendental idealism becomes absolute idealism and art becomes the medium through which the infinite ideas become embodied in finite form, and therefore the medium through which the absolute is fully revealed. This romantic revolution in feeling and taste was fully under way in Schilling's philosophy.

In the romantic revolution, a new version of the cognitive view of art becomes dominant in the concept of imagination as a faculty of immediate insight into truth, distinct from, and perhaps superior to reason and understanding – the special gift of the artist. Blake, Shelly, Hazlitt, Baudelaire and many others spoke of the imagination in these

terms. Coleridge, with his famous distinction between fancy and imagination provides one of the fullest formulations: the fancy is a mode of memory, operating associatively to recombine the elementary data of sense; the imagination is the coadunating faculty that dissolves and transforms the data and creates novelty and emergent quality. His theory of imagination where he distinguishes between the 'primary' and the 'secondary' imagination, ultimately replace the theory of association of Hartley.

The Romantics considered a work of art as an organic whole, bound together by deeper and more subtle unity than that explicated in the neoclassic rules and having a vitality that grows from within.

During the 20th century the understanding and theorization of the 'aesthetic' has followed different paths. The propagators of Art for Art's sake indeed argued that art exists only for itself. This distancing of art from its creator was further strengthened by the objective theories of Croce, Ogden and Richards. Croce developed his thesis centralizing logic as the foundation of conceptual understanding. Taking a detour of Coleridgean concepts of awareness, intuition etc. Croce identified the lower consciousness as the area of raw data while intuition occupies a

level of higher consciousness. Ultimately, the aesthetic understanding is formalized because of the merging of the two. Echoing Croce, Henri Bergson maintains that while intuition or instinct becomes self-conscious it enables us to penetrate into the ultimate reality which our spatializing intellects inevitably distort.

C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards in their work *The Foundation of Aesthetics* explore the context of aesthetic experience. In applying the semiotic analysis they found that earlier theoreticians of beauty had used expressions very loosely in that similar language involves similar thoughts and similar things thought of. Early aesthetic theory, according to the authors lacked in logic and scientific language of analysis. Richards manages to give the impression that he is the first rationalistic thinker on aesthetics. Although he used scientific language he lacked scientific accuracy.

One of the features of the 20th century is that it is remarkably historicist, disposed to apocalyptic, crisis centred views of history. Herbert Read, writing in 1933 points out that though there have been revolutions in the history of art before, one can discern a difference in kind in the contemporary revolution; instead of turning over or even

turning back, it is a break-up, a devolution. Its character is catastrophic. Contemplating the impact of Gauguin and Van Gogh, and then Picasso, Read claimed that 'we are not concerned, not with a logical development of the art of painting in Europe, not even with a development for which there is any historical parallel, but with an abrupt break with all tradition ... The aim of five centuries of European effort is openly abandoned.' (Read, quoted in *Modernism*, 1976: 20) In the view of C.S. Lewis, in politics, religion, social values, art and literature, a chasm lies between the present age and the age of Jane Austen and Walter Scott that is greater than all divisions in the entire history of Western man:

> I do not think that any previous age produced work which was, in its own time, as shatteringly and bewilderingly new as that of the Cubists, the Dadaists, the Surrealists, as Picasso has been in ours. And I am quite sure this is true ... of poetry ... I do not see how anyone can doubt that modern poetry is not only a greater novelty than any other 'new poetry' but new in a new way, almost in a new dimension. (Lewis, C.S. quoted in *Modernism*, 1976: 21)

Later, Roland Barthes attempts to locate the Great Divide more precisely: he identifies it with the pluralization of world-views deriving from the evolution of new classes and communications: 'Around 1850 ... classical writing therefore disintegrated, and the whole of literature,

from Flaubert to the present day, became the problematics of language.' (Barthes, R. quoted in *Modernism*, 1976: 21)

The concept of modernism during the 20th century came to be associated with modernist doctrines of the absolute autonomy of art. This argument underlines the non-referential and non-mimetic nature of art and its meaning was considered to be part of its structure. Its compliment in literary criticism was to be found in the formalist analysis of New Criticism. With the advent of political and social activism in the 1960s which dictated that art be socially relevant, that is it should reflect, the aestheticism of art entered into new debates and theoretical speculations.

Marxism underlined the social context of art. Emerging out of Marx's assumptions that art belongs to the 'superstructure' having its material origin at the base, for the first time a materialistic interpretation of aesthetics was offered. Probably, the most famous assertion in *The German Ideology* is the belief that under a communist form of social organization grounded on redistribution of wealth, abolition of private property and the end of class relations – man could be hunter, fisherman, shepherd, critic – all in the same day. He could realize his

full potential, emancipate his true qualities and build a world based on cooperation instead of competition. Though it says very little about Marxist aesthetics, *The German Ideology*, however, criticizes liberalism as the legitimating ideology of capitalism with its assertion of universal human nature, of the autonomy and freedom of the individual and the rational and unencumbered transcendence of mind. Marx and Engels thus provided a foundation for the later development of a Marxist literary theory which would begin to critique the claims of idealist and humanist aesthetics.

Marxists would address the ways in which art is both implicated in and critically distanced from cultural ideologies, recognizing that art is a powerful political force capable of organizing what Kant referred to as the 'rabble of senses' through its capacity to give pleasure and to present ideas in the form of embodied experience. Art can encourage conformism with desired models of social cohesion or be seized upon as the site for disruption, subversion and challenge.

In the writings of Lukás, Adorno and Benjamin, the understanding of the assumptions of 'aesthetics' underwent radical changes. According to Benjamin in his celebrated essay "The Work of

Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", the autonomous work of art loses its traditional status ('aura') as an effect of mechanical reproduction. Art is thereby removed from the realm of ritual to that of politics, and a new, distracted but critical audience is mobilized in the direction of greater democracy by the new mass art.

Patricia Waugh in *Practicing Postmodernism Reading Modernism* views postmodernism as a late phase in a tradition of aestheticist thought inaugurated by philosophers such as Kant and embodied in Romantic and modernist art: "Postmodernism as an aesthetic and body of thought can be seen as a late flowering Romanticism. What distinguishes its mood from earlier Romanticisms, however, is that its aesthetic impulses have spilled out of the self-consciously defined sphere of art and into the spheres of what Kant referred to as the cognitive or scientific on the one hand and the practical or moral on the other. This mood reveals itself on both sides of the Atlantic. In its European forms, it tends to draw on a theoretical or philosophical tradition through writers such as Nietzsche, Bataille, Artaud and post-phenomenological critiques arising out of thinkers such as Heidegger, Derrida and post-structuralist Lacan ..." (1992: 3)

The Romantic notion of imagination was conceived as a non-conceptualizable and effectively divine power with human being. Though this idealism invoked the ire of Nietzsche, he too took resort to aesthetics, though as the only substitute of metaphysics.

The autonomy of aesthetics continued to be felt in the following modern and postmodern thought. Patricia Waugh argues that once the metaphysical frame of Idealism began to weaken, however, the concept of autonomy began to be transferred from self entirely to the work of art itself conceived of as an internally coherent, self-contained and linguistically self-legitimating system. Though referring back to Kant and Schiller, this modernist aestheticism is however different. For neither of them could conceive autonomy as a withdrawal into a realm utterly distinct from the historical world, but New Criticism meant such complete isolation. According to the French philosopher Lyotard, the modern systems of knowledge were compartmentalized, art being one distinct compartment, each supported by some meta-narrative or grand discourse. The sense of fragmentariness still haunting the modern consciousness, the era became a constant fight for universal agreement – between art and religion, science or political ideologies.

Although generally post-modernism is viewed as a fall from modernist grace and a break with modernist formalism, Patricia Waugh points out a still increasing aesthetic concern to be continued in postmodernism: “The aesthetic has now entered the ‘hard’ core of the human sciences: philosophy, political theory, social science.” (1992: 6) In both Post-Nietzschean and Post-Heideggerian modes it is seen as inseparable from the world or knowledge. This implies, according to Waugh, that in postmodernism truth cannot be distinguished from fiction. Richard Rorty greets this implication of aesthetics as a potential to reshape a new world by abandoning altogether the outworn rhetoric of metaphysical truth. On the other hand, for some critics, this is seen as the ‘comodification’ of art, or as a dangerous displacement of the cognitive and moral by the aesthetic. Habermas criticized post-modernism for attempting to over-extend the aesthetic and to confuse the boundaries of these orders of discourse.

Lyotard, in his attempt to find a way out of the commodifying effects of post-modernity, reverts back to Kant’s idea of the sublime, to a value of the aesthetic as a form of non-utilitarian autonomy, a mode which is resistant to any form of conceptualization. The post-modern

expression of the sublime is a form of resistance to the banal and automatising effects of modern life. In literature this is expressed through various self-cancelling techniques like parodies, ironies, etc. or self-referential language games. Lyotard's post-modernism is an extension of modernism or romanticism and their faith in the autonomy of art. He resists the belief that forms of the aesthetic can be translated into the forms and concepts of the historical world.

In the context of unending debates on aestheticism in post-modern discourse, the apprehensive observation of Raymond Williams brings a different note. Tracing the history of the word 'aesthetic', Williams shows that the use of this word has always been biased towards what is 'fine' or 'beautiful' which emphasized and isolated subjective sense activity as the basis of art, and distinct from social and cultural interpretation (it may be recalled that in the discourse of post-modernism, the possibility of aesthetics invading all other fields of discourse is implied). Williams shows his apprehension: "... the isolation can be damaging for there is something irresistibly displaced and marginal about the now common and limiting phrase 'aesthetic consideration', ..." . (1976: 31)

Williams here expresses the Marxist concern for the need of ethics in literature. Marxist approach to literature is social rather than aesthetic with an idealistic aspiration for a welfare of humankind and improvement of the conditions of life. The ambitious project of Enlightenment for human liberation and progress had been based on the sole reliance on human reason. This project was discredited by the modern capitalist forces of efficiency which defined reason increasingly in terms of a narrow and specialized expertise. This system brought fragmentation and isolation. On the other hand, Marxist materialism, with a solid social and economic project maintains a distance from any form of abstraction. Lukás contrasts Marxism as a philosophy that integrated the individual in society with all modern philosophies of crisis and evasion, particularly existentialism which isolated man outside social and economic relation. Lukás' stress on social relationships became the basis of his aesthetics.

While Lukás' aesthetic thought draws on Nietzschean 'will to power', Bakhtin perceives a close bond between the artist and society through the dialectic nature of language. His dialogic worldview spills out from his concept of language to all other social discourses including

aesthetics. For Bakhtin, as for Marx, aesthetics is something more capacious than the usual sense of the word – it includes the fundamental questions of ethics, epistemology and ontology.

In *Art and Answerability* Bakhtin uses the word aesthetics implying a sort of activity: "the activity of a subject engaged in making sense out of the world by fixing the flux of its disparate elements into meaningful wholes ..." (1990: XXIV) This reminds one of Kant's necessary interaction between the mind and the world, which Bakhtin came to interpret as 'dialogue.'

Aesthetic activity is the activity of at-least two different subjects perceiving each other. Here, as in the dialectical theory – there is the interaction of two opposites, but there is no negation of negation. On the contrary the two opposites or distinct subjects require each other to consummate a meaningful whole. Bakhtin creates a very positive and dynamic relation of the 'I' and the 'other'. Unlike the idealists or rationalists to whom the materiality of the body posed great philosophical problem, Bakhtin paid homage to the body as the locus for making judgement. The 'I' and the 'other' gaze at each other and two different worlds are revealed. These are two bodies occupying

unique places in space. From their unique positions each is rewarded with a unique angle of perception: "I shall always see and know something that he, from his place outside and over against me, cannot see himself: parts of his body that are inaccessible to his own gaze (his head, his face and its expression), the world behind his back and a whole series of objects and relations, which in any of our mutual relations are accessible to me but not to him." (1990: 23) This position is convertible and the inadequacy of one's perception necessitates the help of the other person. Holquist's restatement of Bakhtin's metaphorizing of this condition is eloquent: "We not only interrogate each other, we inter-locate each other, and it is the inter-locative or dialogic self that is the subject of Bakhtin's archetectonics. The inter-locative self is one that can change places with another – that must, in fact, change places to see where it is. A logical implication of the fact that I can see things you cannot, is that our excess of seeing is defined by a lack of seeing: my excess is your lack, and vice-versa. If we wish to overcome this lack, we try to see what is there together. We must share each other's excess in order to overcome our mutual lack." (1990: XXVI)

The mutual interdependence of two different worlds create a 'whole'. For Bakhtin, wholeness is a fiction which can be created from a particular point of view at a particular space and time, and since everything is in a state of constant motion and shift, and nothing remains the same, the wholeness cannot be absolute.

This may apparently seem dire skepticism on the part of Bakhtin, but to a reader who has gone through all of his works it would seem otherwise. Bakhtin's was a philosophy which found truth in fragmentariness, in the loopholes of all metaphysical categories – since they bring to him the promise of change as against stagnation, an urge of the fragmented living being to survive. Completion would stop the world, inadequacy would activate it to reach out for the promise of completion. It somehow reminds one of the Heraclitian metaphor of the river universally flowing, giving the appearance of wholeness, yet which is never the same.

The young Bakhtin wrote under the gloom of World War-I, which had erased the former myth of humanity with mass homicide, and thus could not recapture the old metaphysical truths of philosophers. Bakhtin sought a unique niche for man which would allow reclusive

individuality as also social intercourse. His 'I' welcomes the 'other' as a great possibility, the relationship described as 'love'. *Art and Answerability* is important and interesting as it has certain self-contradictory elements or loopholes, which prevent the work from remaining as a dead-end in Bakhtin's career. Identifying the weakness of idealism implied in the work, Bakhtin went further to find a more real and complex relation the he came to name as 'the dialogic relation'.

However, in the post-world-war era, and amid the chaotic situation of his own nation, Bakhtin sought to find for man and art (specially verbal art) a living relationship kept alive with certain responsibilities of remaining answerable to each other. This ethics in aesthetics would save it from a damaging isolation into the ephemeral world of the 'fine' and 'beautiful'. Bakhtin, exploring the inner structural interrelations or archetectonics sought to bring the human soul and art closer to each other. To Bakhtin, art that is not bound to answer for life, a pure isolated world evoked by Pushkin in his dialogue-poem "The Poet and the Crowd", which is made of "inspiration, sweet sounds, and prayers" is high flown. This self-satisfied complacency generates stagnation. Answerability to life entails liability and guilt. The artist,

who is also a human being bound to the fretful cares of everyday life should not detach himself from that life while creating his art. "It is not only mutual answerability that art and life must assume, but also mutual liability to blame. The poet must remember that it is his poetry which bears the guilt for the vulgar prose of life, whereas the man of everyday life ought to know that the fruitlessness of art is due to his willingness to be unexacting and to the unseriousness of the concerns in his life." (1990: 1-2) In "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" Bakhtin explores the archetectonics of this mutual and very dynamic relationship. Thus the young author impregnates this work with such possibilities which later flower into his more popular theories on polyphony and the carnival. In the author-hero relationship the author holds a privileged position over the hero from where he perceives the hero as a whole human being.

But the process of aesthetic activity is not as simple as it sounds. The author, though privileged, should also be answerable to life. He must reflect the hero's 'emotional-volitional' position and not his own in relation to the hero. This requires much caution and psychological restraint on the part of the author because his own whims, his own

socio-political outlook may get juxtaposed with the hero's world which is different from the author's. "The artist's struggle to achieve a determinate and stable image of the hero is to a considerable extent a struggle with himself." (1990:6) This sort of juxtaposition often takes place and Bakhtin, in his later writings demarcates them as 'monologic' writing, where the hero becomes the author's tool or mouthpiece. Monologic writings miss the multidimensional and intricate interrelationships of the subjects of society each of whom possess unique determinate positions and outlooks. Monologic writings or tendencious writings are often written to serve some special historical purpose. Trotsky writes in his essay "The Limitations of Formalism" – that in Russia, tendenciousness was the banner of the intelligentsia, who, crushed by Tsarism and deprived of a cultural environment, sought support in the lower strata of society and tried to prove to the "people" that it was thinking only of them. This sort of writing does not reflect a holistic picture of man or his epoch. Supporting Marxist aesthetics Lukaćs in his essay "Historical Truth in Fiction" stresses the moral, humanitarian and historical importance of the role of literature. He finds the paradigm of true realism in the writings of Balzac and Tolstoy, and

supporting Engel's remarks on Balzac writes that a great realist such as Balzac, if the intrinsic artistic development of situations and characters he has created comes into conflict with his most cherished prejudices or even his most sacred convictions, will, without an instant's hesitation, set aside these his own prejudices and convictions and describe what he really sees, not what he would prefer to see. Lukaćs stresses on ethics as the criteria of genuine literature. Balzac, though a royalist, could not help exposing the vices and weaknesses of royalist feudal France. Lukaćs praised the active participation of the author to his epoch. Bakhtin, it may be noted, had also invoked an unbiased and active author. But when we say that Bakhtin did not consider the realisms of Tolstoy, Gorky or Balzac unbiased, we hit the point where Bakhtin's analysis of the author-hero relationship proves unique. In order to understand Bakhtin, we may venture to start with the point that in the question of unbiased writing Lukaćs stresses on the theme or topicality of the realists while Bakhtin delves deeper into the aesthetic process and explores the structure of art in relation with the creator or author.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929), a work of much later period, Bakhtin shows how Tolstoy in his story *Three Deaths* describes

the deaths in a single day of a noblewoman, a coachman and a tree, who are totally unknown to each other. The author externally connects them with the help of Seryoga the coachman who was transporting the ailing noblewomen. Seryoga removes the boots from a dying coachman in a roadside station and then after the coachman's death cuts down a tree to make a cross for him. These three deaths are self-enclosed and the thematic unity is brought externally by the author. These three self-enclosed worlds are detached and never interpenetrate. It is the author's own unified field of vision, which externally connects them and renders them meaningful. The theme externally lends an appearance of heterogeneity. The noblewoman, the poor coachman and a tree in the forest belong to totally different planes of life and Tolstoy seems to handle them with an unbiased mindset, bringing them on a level plane with the help of death. But have the characters been allowed the freedom to express what they think of their situation or of one another? Is there any revolt, non-acceptance or frustration? Is there any hidden polemic, discord or ambivalence? Do they stand on dialogic relation to one another? Bakhtin write – "The three lives and deaths illuminate each other, but only for the author, who is *external* to them and takes

advantage of his *external location* to definitely interpret and finalize them." (1973: 57)

Thus in a monologic writing the theme may provide an appearance of heterogeneity along with language diversity and speech characterizations, but the characters are not counter-posed in a dialogic angle so that the meaning of each remains unfinalizable, debatable and open. The author, with his privilege of surplus of vision renders them as final.

Praising Dostoevsky's polyphonic style Bakhtin writes that if it had been written by Dostoevsky, the story of the three deaths would have taken a totally different dimension. Firstly, Bakhtin says, Dostoevsky would have bound the three characters together with dialogic relationships. He would have introduced the life and death of each character into the consciousnesses of each other. Secondly, he would have made his characters see those essential elements that he as an author sees and knows. (Therefore, we may say that Dostoevsky's writings are not among those tragedies which stand on the very foundation of man's blindness to his fate). Finally: "He would not have retained for himself any *essential* authorial 'surplus'." (quoted in *The*

Bakhtin Reader, 1994: 96) Interestingly, what Bakhtin criticizes in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, he had valorized in *Art and Answerability*: "I must enframe him, create a consummating environment for him out of this excess of my own seeing, knowing, desiring, and feeling." (1990: 25)

However, it cannot be denied that Bakhtin had always maintained that the author should not transgress the spatial, temporal and situational frame within which his characters are placed. "These actions of contemplation do not go beyond the bounds of the other as a given; they merely unify and order that given." (1990: 24)

In *Art and Answerability*, Bakhtin provides us with an interesting analysis of the aesthetic process happening between the author and his hero. According to Bakhtin, the hero is not the author's consciousness, but the author is the consciousness of the hero's consciousness.

The starting point of this aesthetic activity is empathy on the part of the author with the hero. This empathy is aesthetic in nature and not ethical which excludes actions like consolation, assistance, etc. The author projects himself into his hero to experience the hero's life from

within. In this he is assisted by the outward expressedness, the body-language of the hero, which guides the author into the hero's soul: "In other words, the outward expressed-ness of such features is the path by which I penetrate him and almost merge or become one with him from within." (1990: 26) But this merging is an ethical action: "… the pathological phenomenon of experiencing another's suffering as one's own would result – an infection with another's suffering, and nothing more." (1990: 26)

Aesthetic action proper starts only when the author returns to his own place outside his hero, from where the material derived from the merging of consciousnesses become meaningful ethically, cognitively and aesthetically. Bakhtin hints about the true aesthetic moment when two consciousnesses juxtapose or counterpose and a plethora of meanings ooze out. But in *Art and Answerability* this idea is hidden or at the stage of germination. A few sentences like "the hero's self-utterances are encompassed and permeated by the utterances of the author about the hero", (1990: 13) and "The hero's consciousness, his feeling, and his desire of the world (his object-directed emotional and volitional attitude or posture) are enclosed on all sides, as if within a

band, by the author's *consummating* consciousness of the hero and his world" (1990: 13), forecast the dialogic and polyphonic concepts that he so successfully developed in his later writings. However, in *Art and Answerability* it is not difficult to sense the germination of those ideas that proved indispensable to certain fields of literary criticism. Here, Bakhtin's criticism of expressive and impressive theories prove his tendency to reach that subtle point of balance where two consciousnesses meet creating a living moment of truth cradled by both life and art.

To Bakhtin, the expressive theories seem impoverished and incomplete because in them the merging of the author with the hero happens but the return never takes place. For Bakhtin: "Aesthetic activity proper actually begins at the point when we return into ourselves ..." (1990: 26) and start to communicate the material gathered from experiencing the other from within himself. This consummation is effected by the author completing that material with features transgredient to the entire object world of the hero's consciousness. (It has already been mentioned how the two participants in the aesthetic event, according to Bakhtin, are incomplete and need each other for

consummation). But in the expressive theories, the author merges with the hero and what one gains in this way is a purely theoretical transcription of an already accomplished event. It is the work of a single consciousness. A single consciousness can be philosophic, ethical or moral, but it is only through the counterpoising of two active consciousnesses that the aesthetic moment is born. However, in *Art and Answerability* Bakhtin contradicts his own conception of aesthetic activity by uttering sentences like "All of the moments that actively consummate the hero render the hero passive, the way a part is passive in relation to the whole which encompasses and consummate it." (1990: 14) If the hero remains passive he no longer remains a subject, though Bakhtin meant him to be a subject. A subject is a thinking and feeling entity. Can a thinking entity who is bound to be a determinant by nature remain passive? While criticizing expressive theories, Bakhtin says that the idea of formal achievement and not material achievement is the motif behind cultural creation. This formal enrichment is impossible if the author merges with the object of his creation.

According to Bakhtin, form is not pure expression of the hero and his life, but an expression that gives expression to the hero, and

underlies the author's relationship to the hero. It is this relationship of living and in principle, non-merging participants in the event that constitutes the specifically aesthetic moment of form. Thus the question arises, can a living relationship happen between a thinking and active subject and a passive agent? According to Bakhtin, this creative reaction of the author to his passive hero is aesthetic love. But should we call it love or conquest? Even in a dominant and subordinate relationship the passive agent not only accepts anything as *fate accompli*, but suppresses his/her inner voice that silently cries for freedom and space. A thinking individual, however passive, cannot help leaving some marks of constraint and reaction on the partner of the event who is a different personality.

As the expressive, so do the impressive theories seem incomplete. While criticizing the impressive theories in aesthetics, Bakhtin says that here the artist's act of creation is one sided, who confronts not another subject but an object or material to be worked upon. For in impressive aesthetics only the author exists without a hero.

In spite of certain self-contradictory and questionable utterances, it is however not impossible to grasp Bakhtin's attitude. He is trying to

reach at a complete and satisfactory aesthetic theory hitherto unaccomplished by both the expressive and impressive schools of thought. In expressive theory the author merely transcripts the hero's inner world. In impressive theory the author expresses himself through the hero. As Bakhtin had already said, it is the point of returning of the author to himself that the aesthetic even occurs. What Bakhtin fails to impress upon us in *Art and Answerability* but later develops in his other works is that at this point of returning the author's own consciousness dialogically faces the hero's consciousness which he brings out. This is aesthetically a creative moment that is dialogic; open-ended and sites meaning.

Thus, the most important point in an aesthetic activity is the necessity of two consciousnesses. Bakhtin delves deep into the analysis of aesthetic activity to impress his point upon us. If form is the prime idea of cultural creation it is necessary to understand the archetectonics behind formal achievement. The aesthetic moment of double-consciousness blossoms into form. Form cannot be understood from within the hero's single consciousness. If the hero suffers, his inner being can only suffer, but he cannot name his suffering as tragic, as he

is incapable of having a holistic view of himself that is necessary for the form of tragedy. From within itself, inner life is not rhythmic, not even lyrical. It is introduced from outside. The hero himself misses his bodily expression, his gait, his stupor, the light and shade of his face. He misses the horizon that enframes him – he can see the horizon but not himself placed against it. He is näive in the sense that he is totally ignorant of his finitude, his fate, as given, is known to the author. This blindness of the hero and the surplus of vision enjoyed by the author create the form of tragedy. The example that drives home is that of the figure of King Lear in the 'storm scene'. The flying white locks of the old king, his childish suffering eyes and the stormy horizon embracing and engulfing his lonely frame is completely missed by the suffering soul of Lear, which in itself is in a state of chaos. It is the author's excess of vision that gifts Lear with such lyrics (the author's own emotions regarding Lear) in that he turns out as the epitome of tragedy. It is the givenness of the old king's fate and his own naivet[a] that creates the tragedy of Lear. It is created at the meeting point where the king's consciousness stands against and disagrees with the author's consciousness against the king's finitude.

The single consciousness, the 'I' experiences oneself as endless and incapable of being contained in the finitude of the body. "In the deepest part of myself, I live by eternal faith and hope in the constant possibility of the inner miracle of a new birth." (1990: 127) Bakhtin calls this insanity of faith and hope that remains as the last word of an individual's life. A human being cannot experience himself outwardly as a whole. So, there is the absolute need for the other to create the finished personality that depicts the hero's finitude. In this outside position, the relationship is of absolute mutual contradiction: "...at the point where the other, from within himself, negates himself, negates his own being as a given, at that point I, from my own unique place in the event of being, affirm and validate axiologically the givenness of his being that he himself negates, and his very act of negation is, for me, no more than a moment in that givenness of his being. What the other rightfully negates in himself, I rightfully affirm and preserve in him, and, in so doing, I give birth to his soul on a new axiological plane of being." (1990: 128) The anticipation of death proves the hero's entire life null and void and the author seeks to create forms of justification for his life that the hero himself is incapable of finding.

Does not this argument of Bakhtin sound as a crusade against death? 'I' experience myself as infinite, and it is only the other's bodiliness that speaks out against my faith and hope and reminds me that I too am finite and mortal. It is a shock that we experience while looking at the lifeless body of some near and dear one. But in an aesthetic moment this contradiction helps the birth of the soul on a new plane of being. This does not signify that the soul is thus captured into a permanent metaphysical realm. Bakhtin would never agree with Plato, who said that verbal art rescues an event from its spatial and temporal limitations. Rather Bakhtin found in textualization a sort of sterility and fixity, and in order to rescue art from such stagnation he worked against all ideology of literature and depicted the aesthetic activity which is radically perspectival and situational. Thus the soul which is posited on the aesthetic plane of being is perspectival and situational and, therefore, unfinalizable. This unfinalizability of the soul or its eternal possibility of meanings rescues it from death. Years later, in his theory of the carnival, Bakhtin concretized what we find here as a germinating aesthetic idea. Unfolding the pages of traditional folk culture, Bakhtin found a positive ambivalence in the unique folk world-view where life

and death are integral and not isolated, and where the eternal man continues as the unfinalizable entity of this world. This continuity is possible only through human intercourse, through the acceptance of one another as a functional necessity.

Certain weaknesses in *Art and Answerability* anticipate Bakhtin's conception of the carnival theory. Here we find the young author valorizing the formal death of the hero for the full realization of meaning. But somehow the use of the term 'death' sounds discordant and self-defeating, and it seems impossible that the author himself would find it satisfactory and leave it to that. It was quite natural for Bakhtin to be apprehensive of the diminution of the human soul or any sacrifice of human freedom under authoritarian centralization and finalization of meaning. Bakhtin had lived through the oppressions of the Czars, and also the gloomy years of Stalin's dictatorship. He was even arrested and lived in exile for six years. So, the authorial vision which he valorizes in "*Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity*" cannot be taken as final, as there seems to be an inner tension in the essay itself. Pam Morris points out that this tension is evident when Bakhtin links the authority of authorial knowledge with death. Morris quotes Bakhtin:

"Artistic vision presents us with the whole hero, measured in full and added up in every detail; there must be no secrets for us in the hero in respect to meaning ... From the very outset, we must experience all of him, deal with the whole of him: in respect to meaning, he must be dead for us, formally dead." (quoted in *The Bakhtin Reader*, 1994: 7) This authorial vision is dismissed by Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* where he criticizes Tolstoy's monologic (authorial narration) style. It is the excess authorial knowledge which is able to consummate the characters in accounts of their deaths, as Tolstoy did in his story *Three Deaths*. Bakhtin writes: "Of course, Dostoevsky would never have depicted three deaths: in his world, where self-consciousness is the dominant of a person's image and where the interaction of full autonomous consciousnesses is the fundamental event, death cannot function as something that finalizes and elucidates life ... Dostoevsky would not have depicted deaths of his heroes, but the crises and turning points in their lives; that is, he would have depicted their lives on the threshold." (quoted in Morris, 1994: 96) Authorial knowledge leads to a dead end. But is not life more mysterious, more ambivalent, full of unanswered questions and quest for meanings? Is not the meaning of

myself always yet to be completed? Is not there more attraction towards the sense of unfinalizability of self than de Vinci's perfect knowledge of human anatomy? These questions directly relate to representation. As representation in Bakhtin's understanding is a product of dialogism, language and communication become crucial. The following section deals with Bakhtin's understanding of language and representation.

II

Literature is language in which the various elements and components of the text are brought into a complex relation. According to Jonathan Culler, "'Literariness' is often said to lie above all in the organization of language that makes literature distinguishable from language used for other purposes. Literature is language that 'foregrounds' language itself: makes it strange, thrusts it at you – 'Look! I'm language!' – so you can't forget that you are dealing with language shaped in odd ways." (1997: 28) The 'odd ways' in which language foregrounds literature has been subject to linguistic and critical speculation. Literature is an aesthetic object too and its aestheticist character is formalized through language. Jan Mukaiovsky has argued that language has a material base. It enters the work of art from outside as a sensorily perceptible structure

of the work. Unlike other materials, language has a semiotic dimension in that it is a sign outside literature. Because of its semiotic character language is relatively independent from sensory perception. However, it is indebted to the world outside art for its semantic definiteness and its close contact with the contexts of everyday human life.

Ferdinand de Saussure developed his theory of language with the central concern that language is primarily a sign. Although a sign is divided into a signifier and signified, the relationship between the two is arbitrary. Sausssure argued that the object of study for linguistics is the underlying system of conventions (words and grammar) by virtue of which a sign (word) can 'mean'. The signifier and the signified, according to Saussure, are however separable on the analytic level, they are not separable at the level of thought. Further, Saussure speculated that language is a system of difference where any one term has meaning only by virtue of its differential place within that system. As Eagleton has maintained, the Russian Formalists led by Viktor Shklovsky initiated a new literary movement as a reaction against symbolism's mystification of poetry (though not against its emphasis on form). The formalists sought to place the study of literature on a scientific basis;

their investigation concentrated on the language and the formal devices of literary works.

Though likened to the American New Criticism of the 1950s, Russian Formalism emphasized a differential definition of literature, as opposed to the New Criticism's isolation and objectification of the single text; they also rejected the mimetic/expressive function of literature more strongly. Unlike New Criticism, Russian Formalism does not see the text as reflecting an essential unity of moral or humanistic significance. The central focus of the movement was not literature *per se*, but literariness of the work. Their interest in texts centred on the functioning of literary devices rather than on content; literariness was to do with special use of language.

Shklovsky made the initial important contribution to the movement through his essay 'Art as Technique' where he develops the key notion of 'defamiliarization'. It is a literary device that impedes perception, draws attention to the artifice of the text and dehabituates automatized perception.

The implication of Formalism is that it leads us to view literature as a *relational* system and not an absolute one and so it is bound to change with history. So to avoid automatization as literary devices cannot remain strange forever, literature has to produce new defamiliarizational device. Such a view must see the literary tradition not as a seamless continuity, but as discontinuity where breaks and reformations in form and devices continue to renew the system.

In defining the object of inquiry as that of 'literariness' the Russian Formalists gave a systematic inflection to the study of literature that went beyond intrinsic study of the individual text. The work of Volosinov/Bakhtin first emerged alongside Russian Formalism in the 1920s. In recent years their work has proved fertile ground for literary theorists, for In spite of having the marks of its time, the work contains some remarkably post structural themes.

Marxism and the Philosophy of Language (1929) is a powerful critique of the 'abstract objectivism' of Saussure's theory of language. The basis of the critique is the recognition that language is a social process; language is utterance emerging from concrete social communication not from any abstract objective system of langue. In its

social context language is a generative and continuous process; as utterances which respond to and anticipate other utterances. These utterances form the arena of struggle between different social groups who inflect the same sign-forms with different 'evaluative accents' to produce different 'ideological themes' or meanings. While acknowledging that the sign is not stable, they add that 'multiplicity of meaning' has to be seen in relation to 'multi-accentuality', i.e., its openness to different evaluative orientations.

Bakhtin develops this view, seeing language not as singular and monolithic, but as plural and multiple; languages inscribed with various evaluative accents become socio-ideological languages intimately bound up with material and social conditions and with the contexts of their production – i.e. their 'heteroglossia'. Bakhtin applies this to the novel, the form which is exemplary in its ability to represent a dialogic interanimation of socio-ideological languages. The dialogic nature of language can either be open or closed; the author can either let the interplay of languages speak for itself or can impose a privileged authorial metalanguage. In Bakhtin the dialogic is closely linked to his notion of carnivalization – the popular forms that disrupt and relativize

meaning in opposition to the 'official' discourse and its attempt to close down the polysemy of language.

In the quest for meaning, Bakhtin went forward with an interdisciplinary approach to man's socio-cultural life manifested through dialogic interaction. Bakhtin's dialogism, which is essentially a philosophy of language, is a 'translinguistics', which provides the optics to perceive all aspects of human life through the different categories rooted in language. Instead of describing language as a system, Bakhtin exploited the immense possibilities lurking in the semiotic value of words to mean. Bakhtin ventured into those areas which the linguists avoided – to consider all the social, cultural, political, economical or situational factors outside words that had profound bearing on their meaning. In language Bakhtin identified multitudes of speech genres, which he named 'heteroglossia'. He looked at heteroglossia as a counter-force that frustrates and decentralizes the monistic black and white social existence. The spirit is to encourage social diversity by deconstructing official discourses and subverting any authoritarianism. He had immense faith in the liberating power of the diverse popular cultures which are usually overshadowed by the monolithic beurocratic

form of society. Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist in their biographical study of Bakhtin write: "Political and ethical concerns are still the main force animating his philosophy of language." (1984: 237)

The philosophy of language depicted in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* starts with the Marxist approach to language as a social construct, and this idea remains the central tenet throughout. Yet the approach to language is unique and not totally Marxist in the sense that the Bakhtin circle considered language as ideologue overlooking the Marxist rejection of ideology as 'false consciousness', and underlines it as essential to the shaping of all social relations. Bakhtin's conception of ideology is not epistemological but semiotic, which is produced in a particular social context. For him the domain of ideology coincides with the domain of signs. Ideology did not simply reflected reality, it refracted, or presented a mediated form of reality. This presentation of reflected and refracted reality depended on the semiotic material and their social perspective. It also depended on how the speech of others are presented. For these reasons Bakhtin found language to be 'double-voiced.' Michael Gardiner, in his analysis of the concept of 'ideology' used by the Bakhtin circle writes: "... language,

being inherently 'dialogic', is always the site of ideological contestation." (1992: 70) Gardiner further argues that the Bakhtin circle that conceived of the sign as the arena of power struggle revealed a deep-rooted semantic ambivalence. The sign is not self-evident with a unitary meaning but is rather transient, depending upon the "prevailing state of interacting and opposed class forces and the wider historical context." (Gardiner, 1992: 70) The Bakhtin circle took account of a wide range of semiotic material from words, utterances, gestures, and intonations to the human body itself, which accounts for Bakhtin's highlighting the human body as the locus of all his discussions.

Thus, with their interdisciplinary approach, the Bakhtin circle nullified the Marxist binary of science/ideology, or the economic reductionism in the structure-superstructure theory. For them ideology is that 'meaning endowing activity' which is centrally implicated in all symbolic constitutions of human thought and action, or any human endeavour in the sciences or arts, in revolutions as well as in everyday life.

Marxism offers critiques of two diametrically opposite schools of thought – the school of abstract objectivism of Saussure, and the school

of individual subjectivism or the idealist school of Dilthey, Vossler and Croce. Saussure, the acknowledged forerunner of structuralism and semiotics considered language as a fixed system, as *sui genesis*. He distinguished between the *langue*, or the system of any language from the *parole* which meant the unique utterances of particular individual. However, the Russian Formalists contested some of the core concepts of Saussure. The question posed by the Baktin circle is – are linguistic forms eternally stable and always self-equivalent signals? "Does language really exist for the speaker's subjective consciousness as an objective system of incontestable, normatively identical forms?" (in Morris 1994: 32) According to the writer of *Marxism*, the linguistic form exists for the speaker and the listener who belong to the same language community, only in a specific ideological context, and the divorce of language from its ideological impletion is one of the most serious errors of the followers of Saussure.

On the other hand, the subjectivists underlined the 'parole' as important in the historicity of language, as it is the creative externalization of the individual's intentions, emotions and thoughts.

The subjectivists located the source of this creativity in the individual's psyche.

Both schools take language in isolation, away from any social context. Bakhtin writes: "The social environment is what has given a person words and what has joined words with specific meanings and value judgements: the same environment continues ceaselessly to determine and control a person's verbal reaction throughout his entire life." (in Morris, 1994: 44) Thus, the social utterances or living speech were considered important by the Bakhtin circle as dynamic and real, existing in historical time and space. They further argued that utterances should be considered not merely from the point of view of the speaker's consciousness but also from the reciprocation and understanding of the listener. Even in the absence of any listener, language is 'inherently dialogic', as every utterance is a response to past utterances and is uttered in anticipation to future responses. However, language loses significance without its understandability, and this blossoming of meaning happens just outside the utterance: "In essence, meaning belongs to a word in its position between speakers; that is, meaning is realized only in the process of active, responsive understanding." (in

Morris, 1994: 35) For any understanding the listener has to orient himself in response to other's utterances. This position interrogates the status of evaluation and with it the context, the social background, the values and ideologies that have gone in creating the subjects, who are now participating in the conversation. Bakhtin, in spite of his critique of abstract objectivism, found its semiotic approach to language useful. "Everything ideological possesses meaning: it represents, depicts, or stands for something lying outside itself. In other words, it is a sign. Without signs there is no ideology." (in Morris, 1994: 50) Verbal signs, for Bakhtin, are the arena of constant interaction of individual consciousnesses in the micro level and class struggle in the macro level. Bakhtin takes language, not as an abstract self-enclosed system, but as ideologically saturated and as world-view. For him, the basic reality of language lies in its dialogic interaction. In his philosophy of language, Bakhtin includes even the inner feeling which is materialized by the inner speech. Bakhtin finds the inner speech resembling a dialogue, for inner feelings, like the conflict of Freud's conscious and unconscious, are in a constant interaction between the subjective and the social. Accordingly, verbal signs are also very sensitive to any socio-economic

change which influences human feelings, affects human relations, and which further results in a change in the verbal structure. Language cannot help but reflect society.

It is undeniable that in a Copernican revolution, Marxian philosophy shifted the focus from the explanation of the human mind to the material condition of man's existence. Language is considered as an essential part of man's material existence, and this idea remains as a linchpin in Bakhtin's philosophy of language.

Bakhtin's penchant for answerability in art to life and vice-versa propelled him to probe into all intricacies in society and human consciousness. In his search for truth, he discovered society as a field of numerous opposed forces, forces that cannot be classified. Power in society is arbitrary and transient, as resistance is always complimentary to power, and in such an agonistic situation the king is decrowned, the power shifting to the subaltern, and vice-versa. This power shifting may happen at any moment, and even among people belonging to the same economic class. For Bakhtin, freedom can never be termed as *sui-genesis*, but it is just the other face of power. Bakhtin's new theoretic position is achieved through his experience in Russia, the Russia of the

Tsars, the Lenins and the Stalins. To him, any kind of relationship cannot be viewed in terms of the active and the passive, thus disclaiming his previous approach to the author-hero relationship in *Art and Answerability*. He had witnessed the forceful suppression of all subversive endeavours, and bulks of propagandist writings produced for the machination of certain socio-political goals. In spite of this black and white monistic appearance, the existence of alternative ideals, counterforces and tensions are bound to erupt, and Bakhtin found the language to be as sensitive to these conflicts as a seismograph to the quake. He perceived two contradictory forces working within language – the centripetal force that tries to create a unitary or official language, as against centrifugal forces or the social heteroglossia. The former force tries to monologize or finalize, while the dialogic relations of heteroglossia ensure that meaning remains in process, unfinalizable. It is undeniable that verbal signs are the arena of continuous class struggle: the ruling class will always try to narrow and centralize meaning and make social signs uni-accentual. Bakhtin underlines the importance of heteroglossia, which brings out the potentiality of the linguistic sign for multiple accents or meanings. This generative force takes into account

the numerous social voices and their individual intentions and expressions; it asserts the way contexts define the meanings of utterances and how social interactions transform a single voice, giving the impression of unity and closure into a voice that is prismatically potential. This he calls the social heteroglossia that helps the process of evolution of meaning. Bakhtin uses the term 'heteroglossia' in a later and more matured essay "Discourse in the Novel", which he wrote in 1935. It was one of the four essays under the title *Dialogic Imagination* and can be called the sequel to *Marxism*.

III

In *Formal Method* (1928), the Bakhtin circle launched a debate to rebuke the Formalists for their excessive avoidance of the social dimension in literature and also to provide the Marxists with an appropriate poetics. The Bakhtin circle confronted the Formalists with a deconstructive approach. For the Formalists, the content was unimportant and form became the hallmark of literariness. The literary artefact, according to the Formalists, can have no relation outside of itself save through the mediation of form, and anything beyond form was considered non-literary. The Formalists avoided history and their

only conception of literary history was in the device of defamiliarization, which distinguished one text from the other. The reader would start reading a text with the perceptual expectations built from his or hers previous readings. "Defamiliarization then is the means by which one text distinguishes itself from its predecessors in the intertextual field in which it comes into being, and as such it becomes the agent of literary history." (Bakhtin/Medvedev 1985: XI) This history, however, has no theory of change or any concept of transformational agency. In this, it manages to avoid all extraneous factors, like authorial intentions, social effect, ideological resonances and so on. Thus they were demarcated by the Marxists as representing the bourgeois.

The Formalists later re-oriented themselves towards a full-scale structuralism, which helped them to avoid any external evaluative medium (the reading subject who, with a historical consciousness of previous readings was bound to take an agential role) and determine the meaning of all signifying activities in the text with the help of a linguistic system, which was basically autonomous. The previous device of defamiliarization had to include the reader to recognise the inter-

textual gaps and differences. This was ultimately stopped by the appropriation of structuralism, which completed the elitist status of modern literature in Russia.

Yet, the Bakhtin circle was too sensitive to overlook the hidden possibility existing like an embryo in the structural turn of Formalism. It was possible for the Formalists to provide very rich analysis of all complex and even conflictual social relations by postmorteming the terminological resources of rhetoric and discourse. After all, any sort of discourse is ultimately social in origin and thus the social reference is unavoidable. On the other hand, the Bakhtin circle apprehended the hegemonic tendency of the Marxists during the emerging Stalin era. This tendency would invite too much authoritarianism and thus would spoil and corrupt literature. The Bakhtin circle chose a midway, a critical approach that moved beyond materialism and idealism, with the intention of a blissful marriage of form and content.

Bakhtin's semiotic approach to verbal art as well as his belief that ideology nested in every sign enabled him to rise beyond typical binaries like science and aesthetics, idealism and materialism, etc. and provide us with a critical approach which is, according to Holquist, not

too hot, not too cold, but just right. He is a Marxist in his sociological accounting. He is also a Formalist to that extent where he realized the importance of rhetorical signs as the most sensitive index of society. It is this tremendous sense of balance, which led Bakhtin to respect the voices of all and sundry in society. After all, can society really exist without the existence of the nondescript agents who either act as subverting forces or are exploited?

This very consideration led to him to discover in Dostoevsky a fellow who, in his novels affirms the right of each and every character to be treated as subjects and not objects. In the *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1928) Bakhtin uses a new word 'polyphony' to describe Dostoevsky's 'multi voiced' novels, which contained numerous unmerged consciousnesses and valid voices interacting with each other. These numerous subjects signify interacting autonomous ideological worlds where the author, abandoning his authoritarian position, stands on the same plane with his characters. This new integral authorial position allows for an unprecedented method of visualizing the human being in the sphere of art. He allows his heroes maximum semantic independence and the power to mean is not mediated by the

author. The characters in Dostoevsky's novels are existential beings who are responsible for their deeds and words. The lack of any apparent authorial intention or scheme and the relative freedom of the characters make them unpredictable beings, and so open to meaning. Dostoevsky, like Goethe's Prometheus creates "free people who are capable of standing beside their creator, of disagreeing with him, and even of rebelling against him." (Bakhtin, 1973: 4)

In a polyphonic novel element of plot, characterization, style, imagery, portrayal of time and space are so structured that they make dialogic opposition inescapable. This dialogic world peopled by equally active agents makes it possible to project the complexities, contradictoriness and multi-voicedness of the real social world. Bakhtin's was an ultra-sensitive soul placed in an epoch when Russia was bubbling with various cultural, political, and religious activities, with diverse groups and schools, each equally strong and violated; a Russia constantly torn between contradictory ideological structures, some indigenous and some imported from the West. Bakhtin found an ideal in the writings of Dostoevsky, which adequately expressed this experience of Russia – the strengths, complexities and dilemmas.

Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel, which can also be called the Heteroglot novel, creates a world of autonomous subjects. These novels should not be judged with the same criteria applied to the traditional novel form imported from the West. The usual idea of such a novel is that it is written with a scheme or purpose with pragmatic links at the level of the plot. This kind of writing is linear in pattern, evolving in a time scheme. In such novels, Bakhtin says, characters become "fixed elements in the author's design; such links bind and combine finalized images of people in the unity of a monologically perceived and understood world; there is no presumption of plurality of equally valid consciousnesses, each with its own world." (in Morris, 1994: 89) Bakhtin calls it monologic writing where everything is subordinated to authorial knowledge.

There may be, even in a traditional novel, multitude of characters and fates; there may be interaction, contradiction and debate among the characters, but they are ultimately illuminated by the author's aesthetic scheme, his unified consciousness. The words that are spoken by the heroes are part of the author's creative design subordinated to be a part of the characteristics of the objectified hero. These characters often

serve as the author's mouthpiece. But Dostoevsky's heroes possess – "an exceptional independence in the structure of the work, standing as if alongside the author's word and in a peculiar way combining with it and with the full-valued voices of the other heroes." (Bakhtin, 1973: 4)

However, this is not to deny the existence of any artistic plan. It is not possible to write a novel without any artistic plan. So the hero's freedom should be recognized within the bounds of the creator's design. The author creates the artistic image that possesses its own artistic logic and inherent order. After this the creator subordinates himself to that inherent order. He allows that image the freedom to express itself in its own manner without the author's own consciousness to determine it. Thus it is removed from any monologic field of vision and saves itself from becoming a finalized image. Paradoxically, removing the artistic image from any authorial intention is the prime intention of the author. This does not imply a 'death' of the author, but a radical alteration of the author's position in his own creation. The author is not passive, but along with his characters he is dialogically active: he is a counterpoint among other counterpoints.

Bakhtin's conception of the archetectonics of creation in *Art and Answerability* may be cited to show that neither the simple objective description of the hero's inner state, nor the author's sympathetic conception and projection of the hero is the right aesthetic state; true aesthetic moment starts at the midpoint where the author's consciousness stands face to face with the hero's equally valid consciousness and a plethora of meanings emerge. Thus meaning is always double-voiced in a polyphonic novel – there is always an inner conflict. This aesthetic moment, when expressed in words, becomes dynamically meaningful, as each word contains in itself two contending autonomous counterpoints. Thus a multi-structural word is created where, in every voice Dostoevsky could hear two contending voices – "in every expression a split and willingness to immediately turn into another, contradictory expression. In every gesture be perceived confidence and lack of confidence simultaneously; he perceived the profound ambiguity of every phenomenon." (Bakhtin, 1973: 25)

We may conclude that Dostoevsky's novels are multi-accented, embracing contradictory values. They destroy the organic unity of material, which we find in a conventional novel. In fact, everything in

the polyphonic novel is so constructed as to make the dialogical opposition perpetual. In it there is no scope for any non-participating third party in the composition or in the meaning of the novel. The author actively prevents the reification of characters and helps them to develop all the counterpoints to their extreme strength and depth, to the maximum plausibility. The most important thing, Bakhtin says, is the final dialogicality, i.e., the dialogical nature of the total work.

In a polyphonic novel the different ideological worlds never merge with each other, nor are they dialectically unified to create a philosophical whole. In fact, the development and growth which is required in the dialectical process is completely absent in Dostoevsky's novels. As in Dante's formally polyphonic world, Bakhtin says, Dostoevsky's novels contain unmerging consciousnesses who combine to form a frozen event in the form of dramatic juxtaposition. Dostoevsky uses space and not time to present the maximum diversity in a single focus. Thus they almost give the impression of the newspaper, where, within a single space stories of diverse and even contradictory nature are juxtaposed. Bakhtin uses the image of the church to describe Dostoevsky's polyphony, as the church presents "the

communion of unmerged spirits, the meeting place of the sinner and the righteous man, or, perhaps, Dante's world, where there are the penitent and the unrepentant, the saved and the damned." (Bakhtin, 1973: 22)

Dialogism thus is not merely language but a world-view which naturally permeates into any field or category that refer to life and society. Bakhtin discovered in the novel the utmost scope for the manifestation of the dialogic truth, a scope for an unbiased and democratic exploration of the mystery that is life. Bakhtin, with the guidance of his unique philosophy of language found that magic-touch which, according to the Shakespeare critic John Palmer is the "touch of nature which makes the whole world kin." (Palmer, 1962: 346)

Bakhtin discovered the profound ambiguity of every phenomenon through the artistic perception of Dostoevsky. He was not ready to accept any finalizing definition or any final truth about man. Therefore, he was opposed to the epical expression of reality in literature, which depicted a monolithic, complete world, sacred and incontrovertible. The epical approach is the approach of the official system which dominates society, and which, for its own convenience, creates a value-system valorizing past epic values. Past is always better, bigger, more graceful

and inaccessible. It is a finished and complete world, which cannot be changed or revaluated. In literature this epic world-view creates genres that are cut-off from the present. Bakhtin preferred the novel, the form used by Dostoevsky that he called the *genre* of the imperfect present world. Not bound by definitive formal characteristics, the novel had the potential of generating new forms. It was kinetic and iconoclastic. For Bakhtin the novel was the most significant force at work in the history consciousness even in periods when no novels were written. He assigns the term 'novel' – "to whatever form of expression within a given literary system reveals the limits of that system as inadequate, imposed, or arbitrary. Literary systems are composed of canons, and the novel is fundamentally anti-canonical." (Clark & Holquist, 1984: 276)

While retracing the path of history in the evolution of the novel, Bakhtin finds two fundamental considerations as important – attitudes to space and time and attitudes to language in the history of human consciousness. He insists that at different times, diverse combinations of space and time have been used to model external reality. He calls this concept of engaging reality in the combination of space and time 'chronotope'. The significant combination of space and time springs

from certain world-views. In literature, it is precisely the differing ways that people are represented that determine the difference between chronotopes. For example, we find Dostoevsky preferring instantaneous time – the time of crisis and metamorphosis, while Tolstoy loved to stretch it out – the chronological time of biography. This reveals that the two great authors situated at opposite poles had different ways of perceiving man and life. In a broader sense, the chronotope defines genres and generic differences.

Again, Bakhtin's account of chronotope and literary evolution is bound up with his analysis of different ways in which language is perceived and used. For example, the epic, lyric and tragedy spring from the world of direct word. Here the author believes that his own language is the only tool which is adequate enough in realizing the word's direct objectivized meaning. But on the other hand, the language of laughter, through the tools like irony, satire or parody, called the sanctity of the unified meaning into question. The role of this language is corrective and taboo destroying. It criticizes the straightforward genres, styles, languages and voices. It leads us down beneath these straightforward categories to a contradictory reality, which the straightforward language

is incapable of capturing: "... in place of a simple ... sealed off Ptolemic world of language, there appeared the open Galilean world of many languages, mutually animating each other." (Clark & Holquist, 1984: 289)

Thus, it is important to consider chronotope and use of language because, it is through the analysis of these that we reach out to the significance and meaning of a particular novel form. Even in ages when the novel was not formally invented, the novel-ness can be traced in literature, either in complete forms or in fragments, with the help of chronotope, language and finally the spirit imbued in that literary piece. Even in the medieval period Bakhtin discovers novel-ness in the canonical Gospels. For example, in the 'King of the Jews' Christ is shown entering the Jewish capital on a lowly donkey and the crown of thorns that is an anti-crown on his head. This picture of a king stands as a living word, dialogically questioning and upsetting the epigonic and the stasis. It reminds us of carnivals where things come out 'upside down' or 'inside out'. It is a sort of laughter against man's wise presumptuousness and incapability to perceive the profound ambiguity imbued deep in the nature of human life and the cosmos. In fact, as

Clark and Holquist point out, that both Dostoevsky and Bakhtin conceived the figure of Christ as part of an inner dialogue and not a God in whom one bestow blind faith. The life model that Christ provided can always be referred back to everyday experiences of man, can be relativized and polemicized. One can ask about Christ: "What would he do?" According to Clark and Holquist: "It is from such an understanding of Christ that Dostoevsky's innovative novelistic techniques derive." (1984: 248)

IV

The idea of Bakhtin's 'novelness' as a subversive force automatically leads to the carnival which subverts and materializes. In fact, Bakhtin traces the root of the many-voiced open-ended twentieth century novel to the carnival tradition in folk culture. The rich tradition of the serio-comic and dialogic literature is found in Socratic dialogues, Menippian satire, and during the Renaissance in the works of Boccaccio, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Voltaire, Balzac and Hugo. It is quite interesting that this kind of serio-comic and satiric literature always evolved at times which are threshold periods characterized by intense rivalry among contradictory philosophical, religious and political

systems. These are times not yet sedimented by self-satisfaction and tranquility. Retracing the literary memory of Dostoevsky's form of novel, Bakhtin explored the unified and the sanctified epic world-view that was on the verge of breakdown, when writers parodied and mocked the grand heroes and grand styles, the apparently unimpeachable world-view, which were previously considered immutable or fixed. A very good example of this breakdown is *Don Quixote* of Cervantes. Another style of writing considered by Bakhtin as one of the forebears of the modern novel is the Socratic dialogue. Socrates believed in the dialogical nature of truth and of human thought. He believed that truth is not born and does not reside in the head of an individual; it is born of the dialogical intercourse between people. After the Socratic dialogue the Menippia came into existence for the traditional ideals of dignity and seemliness were breaking down. It was a time when the academics were not the sole authorities to finalize on ultimate questions. Debates were held in market places and taverns – places previously looked down upon. It was a period of decrowning, a radical overturning of authority, when Christ wins the hearts of the people as a very simple human being. He is the epitome of ambivalence. In spite of being a

carpenter's son, he is considered a king, and again, In spite of being a king, he is mistreated as an ordinary criminal. This ambiguity, humility and overturning of seemly world-view mark the formative period of Christianity. According to Clark and Holquist, it was not unusual at that time "... carpenters proclaiming a new order or fishermen preaching in harbours or along the highroads." (1984: 250)

Literature was carnivalized again during the Renaissance, which was a reawakening from the tranquilized sleep of the Middle Ages – a monologic period of calm and unity. It was a time when Christianity was confident of a strong foothold. This carnivalization brought inversions in social hierarchy, welcomed free appreciation of naturalism, turning from blind faith to a sort of skepticism.

Again, away from Europe proper and at a different time when Dostoevsky was writing his novels, Russia too was experiencing turmoil. It was a battlefield of the leftists and capitalists, the Westernizers (followers of Peter the Great) and the nationalists or orientalists, the theists and the atheists, the bourgeois and proletariats. Bakhtin writes: "Thus the objective contradictions of the age determined Dostoevsky's art not in that he was able to overcome them

within the history of his own spirit, but in that he came to objectively view them as simultaneously co-existing forces." (1973: 23) Dostoevsky broke the tradition of monologic writing with a distinct use of time and space and a distinct artistic vision. He created a genre foreign to his contemporaries, while valorizing the carnival tradition.

Bakhtin's radical theory on the carnival and his appreciation of Rabelais in his book *Rabelais and His World* (1965) has greatly perturbed critics who tended to evaluate him from the point of view of the cultural history, or attempted to apply ethical or moral criteria to judge him. This resulted in extreme and polarized views, which are totally foreign to Bakhtin's tendencies of balance and moderation. Those who ventured in Christian interpretations said that in his thesis, Bakhtin condemned the institutionalized Catholic Church of Rabelais' time and instead upheld the Orthodox Liturgy which incorporated all the participatory, self-humbling aspects of the carnival. For them, Bakhtin's carnival was the song of incarnation. The critics of the other extreme, devilized Bakhtin's carnival by showing that in Russia laughter was considered a sin at all times. Because of this demonic connotation of laughter it was considered as a license – a sort of utopia. This kind of

analysis reveals only the Russian paradox – the conflict between comic genius and orthodox conscience. Further, cultural-historians too have pointed out that actual carnivals are often bloody and violent and lack the jolly positivism that Bakhtin tried to uphold.

These confusions are easily avoided if we stop bothering about the biographical or socio-cultural aspects of a work, i.e. tying the work to non-literary causes. Moreover, instead of alienating it as an individual work, we should install it as a part of Bakhtin's greater work, which is a sort of journey in the Socratic tradition– a dialogic search for truth. It may be noted that In spite of the diverse aspirations of his works – which range from subjects like aesthetics or linguistics, to genres and chronotopes – certain common tendencies and links are easily perceptible. Bakhtin, we find, is the eternal seeker of the balance, of restraint and moderation, which are the key to the mystery of existence.

Bakhtin is never totally absorbed in the values of material-reality, nor is he the singer of purity in art and literature. Bakhtin sought for the truth in-between, on the borders of life and art. The carnival of actuality or real life metamorphosed on its way towards literature, which is also

true of anything else that ever treaded the literary path. This metamorphosed truth in literature is a truth that cannot be denied by life itself, but which cannot be judged by the criteria of material reality. Bakhtin, at the beginning of his career, had bound life and art with the question of answerability and there is no evidence to show that Bakhtin ever retraced this critical position. Bakhtin's carnival with its jolly positivism counterposes and questions carnival violence and misappropriation of freedom, while all that is carnivalized in art and literature is accountable to life for its truth. Life, on the other hand, finds a compatible code in the aesthetic forms of literature.

Bakhtin's appreciation of Rabelais' novel signifies his appreciation of a certain world-view, a certain perceptional angle which negotiates with a truth that lurks in the grotesque sphere of the world. The essential principle of this grotesque form of realism is degradation, lowering of all that is ideal and spiritual. As against the upward movement of the official value-system, grotesque realism moves downward, respecting earth's gravity. By way of degradation, the grotesque world brings all its subjects down to earth, materializes them

and turns them to flesh. It embraces the life of defecation, copulation, conception, pregnancy and birth.

Contrary to the official world where the value-system is flat and uni-dimensional, grotesque values and images are ambivalent. It signifies a world that dies to be born, which devours but at the same time gets devoured that grows but at the same time degenerates. The grotesque body's contact with the earth shows it in the light of earthly ambivalence. Thus, like the earth, it is the grave and the womb, it gets destroyed and regenerates.

In the official world, whether of philosophy or literature the human body has always been the locus of ambiguity. The official value-system has always perceived the body and its natural needs as a threat to man's spiritual endeavours and aspirations. Hunger, pain, sexual life – the functions and needs of the body were considered shameful and private. In the 19th century, these were transferred to the psychological level, torn away from their direct relation to the life of society and to the cosmic whole. The official bodily canon always presented an entirely finished body, which looked as something individual from the outside.

It is the lonely human body, alien to the huge cosmos in which it is placed.

This completed individual body is countered by the grotesque body of the carnival and folk tradition. It is an open, unfinished body which makes no pretence of its independence from the earth. It retains all its orifices which are taboo to the official canon, and through these orifices it maintains communication with society, earth and cosmos. The cosmic and universal nature of the grotesque body renders it positive and fearless, as it feels at one with society and the cosmos.

The sense of security which the grotesque body finds in its relation to society and the cosmos is denied to the individuated body of the official realm. Bakhtin writes that the abstract memory of the past cosmic upheavals and the dim fear of future catastrophe form the basis of human thought, speech and images. This is used by religious systems to oppress man and his consciousness. In this system, death comes as a punishment, an avoidable moment of terror because it signifies dead end. But in the grotesque body of the folk culture death brings nothing to an end. Bakhtin writes: "One body offers its death, the other its birth, but they are merged in a two-bodied image." (quoted in Morris, 1994:

236-37) The folk tradition is aware of the cosmos within man himself, especially the lower stratum that is linked to the earth. The cosmic fear finds its equivalent in the human body itself, and by creating carnivalesque disasters and parodical prophecies; the carnival laughs away the terror. Laughter, which is the keynote to carnival and all folk-festivals, lightens the burden of time and turns time into a gay sequence of transformation.

It cannot be said that all laughters are positive, but folk laughter is definitely so. It knows no inhibitions, no fear or limitations. Being a festive laughter it is the laughter of all the people, directed at all, including itself. It is philosophic, as it is directed towards the highest sphere and even the deity is not excluded. Thus the carnival laughter is permeated with a deep ambivalence. Bakhtin says that this laughter is genetically related to the most ancient form of ritual laughter, which was directed towards the gods, specially the sun, which were disparaged and ridiculed, and thereby forced to renew themselves.

In fact mocking, thrashing, abusing are part of carnival performance. The primary performance is the mock crowning and subsequent discrowning the king of the carnival. In this system the

clown is elected as the king and he is abused and beaten when the time of his reign is over. His costume is then changed or 'travestied' and he once more turns into a clown. This two-in-one ambivalent ritual expresses the inevitability of change and renewal, the jolly relativity of every authority, system or position. Carnival symbols always include within themselves perspectives of negation and affirmation.

The main arena of carnival performance is the public square. Public places like the market place, the banquet hall or wherever people meet, speak loudly, openly and freely without inhibition and free from official boundaries turn carnivalesque. In the crowded festival or marketplace physical contact of bodies brings the awareness of sensual material bodily unity; consequently follows the consciousness of the people's mass body and its relative historic immortality. The people perceive their continuity in greater time and the metamorphosis of death and renewal (an individual dies but people never die). Thus the victory of the future is ensured in the people's immortality.

The carnival spirit and its locus in the public square, banquet-hall or marketplace suspends temporarily all hierarchic distinctions and barriers. With the carnival familiarity among people, a new type of

communication with new speech patterns and meanings emerged. Abusive language, profanities and oaths, excluded from official speech, are legalized in the carnival and become ambivalent. These abuses, while humiliating and mortifying, revived and renewed. Unlike the modern satire, it is not high-handed and includes itself in the degradation. The use of colloquialism created the atmosphere of frankness, inspired a certain unofficial truth of the people and all became conscious participants in the world of laughter.

Bakhtin's praise of the carnival in Rabelais' novel should be understood in the context of the age-old folk culture and with the help of the folk psyche which had been so rich and active in the past, which is still there camouflaged in modern society and will always be there as long as the human body remains essentially social and cosmic. The keynote to this age-old folk culture is carnival laughter or the unofficial laughter, which is actually a certain position or perspective of conceiving the world. It is an all-embracing and broad-minded world-view, which is never pedagogic, humourless or biased. It has the strength to take the incongruous world in its stride, fearlessly laughing away the strictures and threatenings of the official value system. This

elasticity helps the exposure of broader spectrum of life, if not deeper. The ambivalence imbued in its nature compels one to face a greater reality that evades the mind, which is trained in a biased education system of the official world. Bakhtin discovered this laughter in a series of literary or verbal art – starting from the time of Socrates, who had to pay the heaviest price in sacrificing his life for finding an alternative way of discerning truth and thus democratizing the process. This laughter lurks in diverse works either temperately or in a louder form. For example, Rabelais' world is a world of open laughter, while in Dostoevsky it is in a subdued form. Positing Rabelais and Dostoevsky as the same generic brothers naturally leads to some confusion. Dostoevsky's closeted and self-absorbed Raskolnikov is polarly opposite to the generous Gargantua in Rabelais' novel. This confusion is caused by a thematic analysis, which is the first thing that one habitually tends to do. But an overview of Bakhtin's theories would lead to the option of a structural approach for a convincing solution. This is to realize the overall approach, expectation and coherence of the work. It requires focusing on the language, the tone, the attitude and the perspective of the whole work. These considerations expose links that

can bind these works together. The first point to be underlined is the dialogic, open-ended language, or the overall dialogism of the work, which leads to multiplicity of meaning. The position of the author in the context of the work is significant. In both the novels, the authors stand dialogically on the same level with their characters. These authors do not take sides – as a result of which, characters and situations come out with all their natural ambiguities and ambivalences. These are polyphonic worlds crowded with equally valid characters. The democratic world of polyphony naturally extends to the participatory world of the carnival. Thus a world is created by each of these apparently dissimilar novels, which rises beyond the black and white official world, fearless enough to lay bare its weaknesses and black spots along with its laudable qualities, humble and broadminded enough to laugh at itself along with others.

Bakhtin, through his sociological accounting of human consciousness and his study of language as dialogic, outgrows himself from the stage of *Art and Answerability*, where he has endowed human relationship with a monistic idealism of love. The matured Bakhtin discovered that relationships cannot be reduced to the metaphysical

dualism of the lover and the beloved, the active and the passive, as we find in John Donne's "The Sunne Rising": "She is all States, and all Princes, I". For Bakhtin, nothing is permanent, and society is a ground of constant changing and shifting of roles. He finds the ideal mode of expressing social truth in the polyphonic novel where different voices and ideas engage one another in an unending process of summons and response and truth is born in the process.

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Chapter-III

NOVEL AND SOCIETY: HETEROGLOSSIA, POLYPHONY AND DIALOGIC IMAGINATION IN THE NOVELS OF R.K. NARAYAN

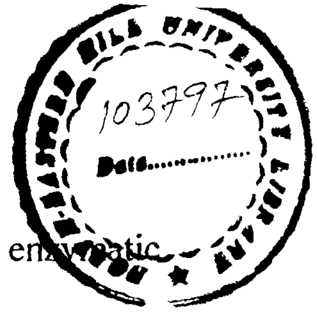
I

The striking feature of Bakhtin's theories is an elasticity that is extendable to non-literary categories as well. As a humanist, Bakhtin's philosophy is primarily informed by a Christian theology that underpins the 'present', the 'human', the rich and complex manifestation of everyday life. Clark and Holquist observe: "Christ is important for revealing for the first time the basis of all human consciousness and thus for supplying the key to understanding all things human." (Clark & Holquist, 1984: 86) For Bakhtin and the Russians as well, Christ is the word enfleshed, a human being who cleansed the 'self' from cool solipsism and inculcated a feeling of communality in devoting the self to the other. "Christ gave up the privileges of divinity, his uniqueness, to share the general condition of humanity, a model establishing the priority of shared as opposed to individual values. In Bakhtin's thought this concept is translated out of the discourse of theology into the more

widely appropriable discourses of linguistics and social theory." (Clark & Holquist, 1984: 85) Christ is an event in the development of human consciousness which is a consciousness of the self's relation to the other. Bakhtin uses these theological ideas to refresh areas other than theology like language, society and the nature of the 'self'. Bakhtin related the traditional concern of the 'Logos' or the 'Word of God' or God's authorship of the world to the understanding of the nature of language. The inescapable dualities of spirit and matter in theology are imbued in the sign – the signifier/signified duality in language. The word as a sign is a material thing, a physical production of the speech organs or the pen on paper. But the word transcends itself in meaning. The problem of duality lies in the fact that the sign is never what it signifies: "I am never any of the signs that name me." The relationship of the self with the world – a problem proposed by Kant and made much of by the neo-Kantians like Cohen in Bakhtin's time is the dyad around which Bakhtin's literary and extra literary theories are organized. But, as Clark and Holquist have claimed: "Although the self/other distinction is a recurring preoccupation of many other post-Romantic systems of thought, Bakhtin is the only major figure to frame

the problem in terms of authorship. He is distinguished not by his emphasis on the self/other dichotomy as such but rather by his emphasis on the essentially authorial techniques of dialogue and character formation which permits the poles of consciousness to interact while maintaining their fundamental difference from each other. Ultimately, Bakhtin's thought is a philosophy of creation, a meditation on the mysteries inherent in God's making people and people's making selves, with the activity of people creating other people in literary authorship as a paradigm for thinking at all levels of creating." (1984: 80) For Bakhtin, authorship means the archetectonics of consciousness.

In chalking out the archetectonics, Bakhtin finds examples in the natural world. If a form has the capacity to react to a stimulus and is able to answer it, it is alive. Bakhtin believed in human agency and for him living, even in its meanest form is a constant reaction and answering to the environment. He found that the human body is the most complex form of existence. "The human body is a social organization of teeming histological communities, each of which is in turn composed of individual cells, all interacting with each other in a constantly inter-relating community of 'languages', a heteroglossia of



electrochemical impulses and hormonal "dialects" and enzymatic "patois". In the same way that all these sub-systems interact with each other, the integrate system they all constitute in their entirety socially interacts with other persons. Not only are situations in the human social environment more varied than those encountered by protozoa, but even when a situation repeats itself among humans, we cannot know absolutely how each of us will respond. Each of us has a capacity to be unique, which makes all human beings, as a species, unique." (Clark & Holquist, 1984: 67) The distinctiveness of each response is the specific form of that person's answerability. However, Bakhtin's concept of authorship is greatly indebted to the concept of simultaneity in science too. Because of the assumed split between mind and world, a major problem of the mind is how to see the world and translate it. Duality may be perceived in biology too which proves the duality of bifocal vision and also the working of the bicameral brain. The result is a conception of the world created by the simultaneous working of two different spheres of the brain. Thus reality is always mediated. "Bakhtin, who was influenced by that great physiologist of the brain A.A. Ukhtomsky, suggests that constant mediation between the role of

self and that of other is the mechanism by which we conceptualize and, to a degree, control at the level of mind dualities which are present in biology at the level of mere brain." (Clark & Holquist, 1984: 73) Nothing is complete in this world and the self's ability of perception is partial and requires the uniqueness in the placement of the other to bridge this gap. Thus reality or authorship is a simultaneous effort of the self and the other. Non-coincidence between self and other is a constitutive feature of human perception. It is an optimistic theory, for instead of lamenting alienation it rejoices in 'alterity'. Since the place each one of us occupies is unique, things that evade my vision and those which occupy it distinctively help in the constitution of *myself.* "Self creates itself in crafting an architectonic relation between the unique locus of life activity which the individual human organism constitutes and the constantly changing natural and cultural environment which surrounds it. This is the meaning of Bakhtin's dictum that the self is an act of grace, a gift of the other." (Clark & Holquist, 1984: 68)

At the core of this non-coincidence of existence and simultaneity of activity lies the concept of heteroglossia, that like many other theories of Bakhtin may be extended to all spheres of human

knowledge. For Bakhtin, being is the result of the struggle between two non-coinciding forces. Thus the self, which is expressed by the pronoun 'I' constitutes itself from the markers provided by others. It is conceptually seeing the self by refracting the world through values of the other. But the self and the other are characterized by a different space and different time. The self's time is open or 'unfinished'. Achieving the self is always incomplete – it remains as a project of becoming in the future. But the other is architectonically completed by me and is a unified whole. Thus there is bound to be an ambiguity of values. It is an example of the constant struggle between the centripetal and the centrifugal forces. The 'I' is the ground for openness while the other is a ground that ensures the possibility of completing. The peculiar mode of the first person pronoun is a constant struggle between the subjective experience which is centrifugal or chaotic and open, and the centripetal force that tries to define and close me with abstract systems. Bakhtin perceives this struggle in Dostoevsky's underground man who insists to negate all definitions with which society might label him.

If 'I' is the infinite self the other is finite in the self's conception, then the other is also a self and thus the process is reciprocative. It is the

infinite, yet to be and chaotic consciousness of the selves in the world that may be called centrifugal force that struggles against the constant centralization of the centripetal force that works in all levels of human existence. Starting from the human consciousness and language to the more concrete levels of state and politics, Bakhtin perceived a constant struggle of the heteroglossia to polemicize meaning, to question and to continue the dialogue of existence. Bakhtin insists on language as being the heart of any culture and conceives utterances as the place where the struggle between centrifugal and centripetal forces is fought out in miniature. An utterance takes shape in an environment of dialogized heteroglossia. This understanding leads Bakhtin in categorizing authors, schools, genres according to their preference for any of the two forces that constitute the struggle in language. The existence of the centrifugal forces or heteroglossia has always been accepted, but there has always been a conscious effort to order the flux by using a unitary language in a work. Such works are monoglots and have existed from the beginning of the history of literature. In comparison, the heteroglot writing is more young. The heteroglot writing, instead of concealing the centrifugal forces in an apparently monoglot style, celebrates the diversity and

conflict. It constitutes itself out of the very stratification of discourse. Although skeptical of all languages it assumes the voice of truth.

Bakhtin found the novel to be the most effective instrument of exploiting and strengthening heteroglossia. The heteroglot novel is more efficient in bridging the gap between the self-other dichotomy. "Because the heteroglot novel is more open to difference it could more easily absorb the increasing tide of self-consciousness. In other words, the heteroglot novel was able to accommodate more of the self because it is more sensitive to otherness." (Clark & Holquist, 1984: 291)

In extending the concept of Bakhtin's 'heteroglossia' to the fictional architectonic of Narayan, we hypothesize that Narayan's works centralize a heteroglot vision. However, instead of discussion of all his works, the analysis is focused on selective works that are considered to be key texts in the development of Narayan as a novelist. The qualifying aspects of the key texts hinge upon the fact that they have become the beginning and extension of particular themes within the broader framework of the author's vision that seeks to look at the world from a location that is Malgudi. This method is also followed in exploring

concepts such as polyphony and dialogism of Bakhtin in examining Narayan's fictional works in different sections of the chapter.

A world-view shared by both Bakhtin and Dostoevsky may be used as a rationale behind the architectonics that constitutes Narayan's novels, which, behind a deceptive simplicity of unadorned rendering, exhibit varieties of discourse and techniques of narration. While *The English Teacher* and *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* have first-person narration, for *Swami*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *Mr. Sampath*, *The Financial Expert* and *The Sweet Vendor*, Narayan employs the third person narration. In *The Guide*, Narayan uses a mixed mode – the interposition of the first person narrative and the omniscient third person narrative. While in *The English Teacher* the 'I' is autobiographical, the 'I' of *Man Eater* is only the witness to the activities of Vasu and the reactions to his activities. Again the third-person omniscience is also variegated. In *The Darkroom* it is neutral, while in *Swami*, *The Bachelor* and in *Waiting* it is limited omniscience with casual shifts in focus. The authorial position in Narayan's narrative keeps on shifting, mediating among many other subjectivities while creating a polyphonic environment. The discourses in his novels embed double-voiced

discourse like parody or a healthy and unpinching satire, inner dialogues, and a deliberately brazen, no-nonsense, unsentimental rendering of the documentary discourse which turns the more intimate and colourful reflections ambiguous and polemic. There are often sharp and unexpected turns from parody to a deeper irony, from the very material concern to the poetic or even metaphysical.

A very interesting example of the heteroglot novel that revels in the polemic of truth may be cited in Narayan's *The English Teacher*. This piece is specially selected because as in an autobiographical writing, the author is here closest to the hero. This is a form in which one sees and gives utterance to one's own life. In such a writing the same person is divided between the self and the other – the self who has experienced life and the other who authors that experience. The axiological force of the other determines the self and renders a valuational history. Without the help of the other, the self remains fragmented, divested of value. The self who is the hero, is the bearer of the lived life, while the other, who is the narrator, is the bearer of the unity of form. The hero is the narrator as he coincides with the other in himself who aestheticizes him. Being the two sides of the same person,

the hero and the author in such a writing belong to the same axiological world. So there is always the possibility that the fundamental and essential character of the hero's otherness is not properly expressed and the writing may become naïve and one-sided. But the interesting point about Narayan is that in his auto-biographical writing the author is skeptical towards the hero's life. He seeks to consummate the hero's life from a point of view which is in principle different from the way that life was lived. He does this by the use of parody, oxymoron, irony in general, while situating the hero in the world of others. The hero is created in this struggling world of transgredient values of consummation that constantly oppose the hero's own values of a lived life. Thus the hero is constantly being created on the boundaries of this narrative struggle.

The English Teacher follows a first person narrative mode where the inner dialogue of Krishna goes back and forth in a dialectical bend in order to concretize the self. It is the unfinished sense of the self in Krishna that cannot accept the finite and well-defined garb of the English teacher. The novel starts with the note:

> The urge had been upon me for some days past to take myself in hand. What was wrong with me? I couldn't say, some sort of vague disaffection, a self-rebellion I might call it. The feeling again and again came upon me that as I was nearing thirty I should cease to live like a cow (perhaps, a cow, with justice, might feel hurt at the comparison), eating, working in a manner of speaking, walking, talking, etc. – all done to perfection, I was sure, but always leaving behind a sense of something missing. (Narayan, 1955: 5)

It is his revolt against the centripetal force that works in terms of systems and formulas. For him, the people around him like Gajapathy, Mr. Brown or Rangappa and the larger society itself constitute this force. In their eyes Krishna is the 'other' who may be completed and defined. Thus, according to Brown, it is the English teacher's duty to save the students from committing such unpardonable blunders like dropping the 'u" from 'honours'. Mr. Brown's sentiments emerge from the British ego that was struggling to maintain the purity of its language in the face of the growing distortion in its colonies as well as in America. But for Krishna, a non-English person, this makes no difference. Gajapathy in his role of the Assistant Professor finds the lapse of his department disgraceful and scowls at his juniors furiously. Krishna argues – "Mr. Gajapathy, there are blacker sins in this world than a dropped vowel." (Narayan, 1955:6) During the after-dinner chat,

Rangappa agrees with the English teacher: "I said the English department existed solely for dotting the i's and crossing the t's." (Narayan, 1955: 7) But Krishna could not agree and the novel continues to employ a double-voiced dialogue on his role, until Krishna decides to quit for a different role. But will a shift from teaching in a college to the role of a teacher in a nursery school resolve his debate? In fact, in the novel Krishna plays several roles but there is a constant slipping away or shifting of roles and the conscious 'self' of Krishna continues to remain as uncertain as ever. For example, at the very beginning he defines himself as a poet and thus tries to justify his dissatisfaction: "But such repose was not in my nature, perhaps because I was a poet, and I was constantly nagged by the feeling that I was doing the wrong work." (Narayan, 1955: 5) Yet throughout the novel there is no evidence of a serious endeavour on his part to write poetry. The few spasmodic attempts are almost parodic, conveyed to us by Krishna himself with a tongue-in-cheek humour and thus he negates his own definition of himself: "I made a space on the table by pushing aside all the books; took out a sheet of paper and wrote a poem entitled "Nature", about fifty lines a verse. I read and re-read it, and found it very

satisfying. I felt I had discharged a duty assigned to me in some eternal scheme." (Narayan, 1955: 11) But like the evidences of "half a dozen similar resolves in the past and the lapses" (Narayan, 1955: 10) – this too proves shortlived, and he gets absorbed in the role of playing husband to Susila. He is visited by the Muse several months later: "My conscience had a habit of asserting itself once in six months and reminding me that I ought to write poetry." (Narayan, 1955: 45) He brings out his carefully bound copybook that has thousand pages, each page eager to receive the ink of a future poet, but only ten pages are fortunate. Krishna fills the eleventh page with a poem on Susila that sounds like Wordsworth in a new garb. Krishna's resolve is undoubtedly double-voiced: "I always fancied that I was born for a poetic career and some day I hoped to take the world by storm with the publication." (Narayan, 1955: 45) The objective and critical tone of these lines is set against the protagonist's anticipated image of himself which is tinged with the colour of secret longing.

As a teacher too, Krishna is a déclassé personality, with his tendency of constant self-criticism and his habit of looking at himself from the perspective of his students: "These poor boys are now all

attention, cowed by your superior force. They are ready to listen to you and write down whatever you may say. What have you to give them in return? (Narayan, 1955: 13) This interior monologue shows how Krishna strives to anticipate possible definitions and assessments of him by his students. It is also confessional and self-critical. It reminds us of Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, who ruthlessly dissects himself from the perspectives of his mother and sister when they compromise their honour to pay the university fees for the scholarly son:

> And she actually writes to me: 'Love Dunia, Rodia, for she loves you more than herself': isn't that the pangs of secret remorse for agreeing to sacrifice her daughter to her son? 'You are our hope, all we have!' O mamma! ..." (Dostoevsky, 1985: 57)

When Susila and the baby appear in the scene, Krishna is really uncertain about his role. He is terrified by the prospect of acting father to a seven-month baby: "But I didn't bargain to accept her guardianship so suddenly." (Narayan, 1955: 20) Susila's complete dependence on him disturbs him and his inflated self esteem sounds a bit hollow: "I felt I was someone whose plans and determinations were of the utmost importance to others ..." (Narayan, 1955: 20)

Krishna's depiction of his wife, In spite of his passion and love for her, is cold and documentary in style, and there is no attempt on his part describe or define her. As a result, every movement and utterance of Susila, when conveyed, brings out unprecedented surprises revealing her personality. If at one moment she is loving and kind, the next moment, in a different situation she exposes unexpected pettiness; if one morning she inspires her husband to write poetry, that very afternoon she sells his clock without any desire to appease or understand his sentiments; if one day she is a doting mother, and a lynx-eyed and tight-fisted home-maker, the next day she melts down into the shy and innocent beloved. Thus, Susila too is a character that remains unfinalizable.

Susila's sudden typhoid and death at the middle of the novel matches with the episodic nature of Narayan's novels where the characters are thrown from one situation to another in a no-nonsense unsentimental deliberation. Yet the integral irony of the work joins the episodes with a centralizing pull and the flux of life is realized. When Susila dies her life, her every step in her marriage and her casual conversations with her husband suddenly change their dimensions. In

the face of death every confident utterance of life seems ironical. Thus her craving for a house with decorative bathroom tiles fitted in the living room gets connected with her horrible experience in the filthy bathroom and the consequent typhoid and death. This episode acquires a new dimension as the apparently chaotic episodes get connected in irony. When in her deathbed she is totally isolated from her daughter, her husband's casual advice to his wife to leave her child alone and not fuss too much suddenly, overgrows and overwhelms in meaning, when Susila actually dies: "She (the child) must learn to exist by herself ..." (Narayan, 1955: 53)

True to the carnivalesque demand of the matter over mind, the daily life leaves little space for Krishna to brood on the aftermath of his wife's death. He has to readjust himself into the twin role of both father and mother and his views are adjusted accordingly. Shifting his roles and decentering his self-definitions, Krishna thus becomes part of the chaotic flux of life. After cremating his wife, the shock and pain benumbs him, and for that intense moment he feels: "For me the greatest reality is this and nothing else ... Nothing else will worry or interest me in life hereafter." (Narayan, 1955: 96) In a monologic

writing this may well have been the end. But in a heteroglot novel, the plurality of consciousness, even in a single character is brought out. It shows how utterances can never be taken as final. The remaining five more chapters of the volume after Susila's death neutralizes Krishna's nihilism. The very next line reveals Krishna's intense longing for and dependence on his daughter as a last resort to life. So he takes hold of the last straw of life – Leela. The girl is spick and span and fresh, proving the fact that her father is blissfully engaged: "It kept me very much alive to play both father and mother to her at the same time." (Narayan, 1955: 97) His acceptance of the situation is a unique mixture of self-pity and bravado almost Senecan: 'God has given me some novel situations in life. I shall live it out alone, face the problems alone, never drag in another to do the job for me ...' I found a peculiar satisfaction in making this resolve." (Narayan, 1955: 97) Krishna's self-effacing resolve to cloister himself away from all the sympathies and condolences of society is heroic, yet this heroism, at the very next moment is shattered by the practical-talk of the village woman, for whom Krishna's resolve holds no meaning: "A man must marry within fifteen days of losing his wife. Otherwise he will be ruined. I was the

fourth wife to my husband and he always married within three weeks. All the fourteen children are happy. What is wrong?" (Narayan, 1955: 99) In a novel where heteroglossia rules the roost, it is difficult to remain on the pedestal of heroism, and Narayan's novels teem with such plurality of consciousnesses. In the bus stand where Krishna had come with his daughter to bid his mother farewell, we hear different voices crisscrossing each other. The mother's sighs for her son's misfortune are encountered by the stubborn resolve of her son to remain single forever, the child's innocent questions are counterpoised by the worldly wise village woman's practical-talk and all these are set against the din caused by a passenger haggling with the bus conductor for a concession of four *annas*. The whole scenario of unbridled chaos nullifies any conscious monoglotic tendency to centralize the situation into a sentimental scene.

Heteroglossia is the recognition of the 'I' in every personality and also taking into account the different and unique spheres in which the 'I's are placed, and the unaccountable and unique reaction of these personalities to the phenomena of life. Even placed under the same

sphere of time, place and situations, these different 'I's will produce variegated behaviours. Narayan's novels thrive on such situations.

The unsentimental rendering of sickness and death in *The English Teacher* is caused by such heteroglossia. Sentiment is ideally connected with sympathy, i.e., the harmony of human reactions towards a certain crisis. In our mind, which is always eager to seek order in chaos, the very idea of sickness or death always gets connected with a general sympathy, and we blindly nurture this illusion. But when people are considered as different 'selves', a certain contradiction in reaction may be observed.

Susila's sickbed brings out such variegated reaction from those who surround her. Susila's sickness turns her into an alien in the eyes of her little daughter who is facing her mother's sickness for the first time in her life. Krishna, on his part, retains an illusory cheerfulness, as he is still unable to apprehend the grim and dark realism of disease. He neglects to call a doctor for quite a few days. But when her sickness is confirmed, he plays his role with an illusory self-satisfaction: "There was a morbid pleasure in this thoroughness ... . We were setting the stage for a royal illness from which she was going to emerge fresher,

stronger ... ." (Narayan, 1955: 79) Krishna's love for his wife blinds him to the fact of the slow wasting away of Susila's mortal body. So he is still able to write light verse on the battle between the iceberg and the stubborn fever:

> And here it is a great battleground,
> The great fight goes on
> On either side of this red bag.
> But so far it is not the fever which cools,
> But Ice that melts. (Narayan, 1955: 86)

The maturity of Susila's parents brings more subdued and less dramatic reactions: "Susila's parents suffered quietly. There was a deep attachment between them and their daughter." (Narayan, 1955: 82) Yet In spite of the united sharing of a grim knowledge about disaster, their reactions are different. The father, being more rational, follows the dictates of the doctor with accuracy. "He sat up with his daughter all night, reading a novel and speaking to her very kindly, but without betraying any excessive sentimentality in his voice." (Narayan, 1955: 83) The mother, who is not of scientific bent, believes in the Evil Eye and her love for her daughter makes her impatient to the doctor's procedure. She calls an exorcist as a last resort.

The reaction of the doctor to Susila's fever is now a well-known example of incongruity. P.S. Sundaram writes: "The doctor who treats Susila and in his ineptitude kills her is another unforgettable character. He imagines, without bothering to see the patient, that she must be suffering from malaria and treats her accordingly. Then he decides that she must be suffering from typhoid, but that does not worry him ..." (Sundaram, 1973: 59) He describes typhoid as a cobra and malaria as the elusive green snake – "But typhoid is the king among fevers – it is an aristocrat who observes the rules of the game. I'd rather trust a cobra than a green snake; you can depend upon the cobra to go its way if you understand its habits and moods... ." (1955:78) Sundaram comments: "This particular cobra goes its way and kills the patient: but no doubt the doctor was satisfied that he understood its habits and moods."(1973: 59)

Death is another question on which we hear different voices creating a dialogue. For Susila who suffered the pains of the mortal body in typhoid it is a transition to a higher plane where the body does not hinder the joys of the mind: "I'm essentially the same person as far as you and my dear ones are concerned, but the only difference is that

I'm without the encumbrance of the physical body and everything is finer and quicker than on earth." (Narayan, 1955: 131)

Krishna is benumbed at the first shock of his dear wife's death. For him the whole process had been a gradual transformation from Susila to the patient and ultimately to a lifeless body. However, when nearing the end of her life Susila turns into a symbol for Krishna. Her stentorian breathing, he said: "appeared to me the creaking of the hinges of a prison gate, opening at the command of a soul going into freedom." (Narayan, 1955: 94)

At the emotionally charged moment of bidding her body farewell, he takes resort in the diary, which enables him to communicate in a documentary style. A direct rendition would have opened the floodgates of emotion, but that would have blurred the truth about death, which is far more brazen and stark. Krishna's diary is a montage, a conglomeration of various pictures. We see the child blissfully innocent of her mother's death, parading in a sparkling green coat, surprised and happy with all the special attentions, while in a dark room lies the 'inert form', surrounded by three shattered human beings battling with intense pain of parting and a stubborn fatigue that disables them even from

expressing their woe. These three figures are surrounded by different layers of numerous other faces like the neighbours, relatives and friends who come with tears and lamentations, then the corpse bearers who perform their duties with deft professionalism, and again the passersby who stop for a moment and sigh, followed by the madman whose insanity gives him the licence to break the sanctimonious silence with his curses against fate. We have glimpses of all the vibrating colours of life like purple, saffron and vermilion that ironically enfold the corpse, vying with the black dots of flies that are the harbingers of decay. Krishna's intense suffering is methodically nullified and negated by the practical scenario of people shouting, ordering and haggling on prices and quality of the materials used for the funeral. While Krishna's mind is transformed into a moonbeam of symbolism, which, with a pathetic calm perceives the whole funeral ground as a "cloakroom, a place where you leave your body behind," (Narayan, 1955: 96) the sun mercilessly and unsparingly chars everything that came his way.

It is this metaphysical notion of death that Krishna carries away from the funeral ground and so, when he hears of his dead wife's communication with him through a medium, he accepts it at once. Thus

for him, In spite of all the pain it caused him, Death was not a disaster but only the other face of life. For the remaining chapters it is Krishna's struggle to conceive the truth about the other face of life by trying to merge his personality totally and selflessly with the form of his wife.

But the debate on death does not end here. In spite of the blissful ending where, in the magical light of dawn engulfed by the heavenly aroma of jasmine, Krishna sees the ephemeral form of his beloved wife, it cannot be pronounced as the golden pot at the rainbow's end. The very episodic nature of Narayan's work that promises endless surprises, his preference for the heteroglossia that turns every utterance as double-voiced and polemical, and the overall dialogical approach to truth profess that the end is never the end. Krishna's epiphanic vision of his dear wife that indicates the continuity of the soul in afterlife is not the final truth that the writer wishes to convey because he has countermanded it with the schoolmaster's stoical acceptance of death as a dead end: "It is all a matter of personal faith and conviction. But I am not interested in the life after death. I have no opinion either way. There may be a continuation in other spheres, under other conditions, or there may not be. It is immaterial to me. The only reality I recognize is death.

To me it is nothing more than a full stop. I have trained myself to view it with calm." (Narayan, 1955: 163)

Bakhtin could never imagine single-toned human significance, and this view applies to all the writers including Narayan who hold a dialogic world-view. These writers show their inclination to support the free play of heteroglossia in their works, for heteroglossia, being open to difference and contradiction, truly portrays the increasing tide of self-consciousness. This self-consciousness is never moulded or complete, but is a process of being and becoming, it is always dialogic.

II

Dialogism is not a textual or inter-textual phenomenon, but reaches beyond the text to embrace the social world as a whole. Dialogism is created by social heteroglossia. Bakhtin considered the novel form to be the most appropriate medium for the expression of the dialogic relations of a society, as this form has the elasticity to accommodate different styles, languages and genres. The novel form that embraces the wider dynamics of heteroglossia, Bakhtin names – 'the polyphonic novel'.

Thus, while dialogism and heteroglossia are more general terms, the world polyphony is specifically applied to the novel.

Social heteroglossia provides the novel very significantly the dialogizing background that helps interaction between text and context. Social heteroglossia, according to Michael Gardiner, saturates the words and thoughts of characters and author alike with a 'fundamental speech diversity'. Gardiner continues to explain that this internal dialogism is never subject to ultimate resolution or closure, as we have seen in our analysis of R.K. Narayan's *The English Teacher*. Again it cannot be reduced to mere conversation or extant dialogue. In order to comprehend the nature of the polyphonic novel and the dynamics of heteroglossia in the novel, it is therefore necessary to understand the way polyphony works as a basis of the novelist's worldview that he structures in an effort to provide the narrative an artistic vision.

Polyphony basically is a sign of laughter, precisely because it disrupts the author's hegemony and allows the free play of several other voices too. Adopting the polyphonic style is like laughing on the face of the presumptuousness and egocentricity of man who is constantly evolving towards a center. This centralized monologic world, the

moment the carnival spirit of social laughter surfaces, vanishes like a bubble in a mountain stream. If laughter liberates man, the polyphonic novel liberates and de-reifies human being by revealing those aspects of his personality that cannot be shown by the traditional monologic style of writing.

Bakhtin introduces us to this totally different kind of artistic vision, which may be named as 'the polyphonic vision' through his analysis of Dostoevsky's works. Defending Dostoevsky's novels, Bakhtin argues that Dostoevsky's work "does not fit any of the preconceived frameworks or historico-literary schemes that we usually apply to various species of the European novel." (quoted in Morris, 1994: 89) Taking his cue from Bakhtin, Pam Morris writes in his introduction to the second section of *The Bakhtin Reader* (1994): "It is Dostoevsky's achievement to have envisaged human life in this unfinalizable way and to have found the artistic means of representing it. To do so he rejects any authorial excess of seeing and in a Copernican revolution of novelistic form he centers the whole novel upon the interactive consciousness of characters." (in Morris, 1994: 88)

Given the freedom the "interactive consciousness of characters" open up the complexities and dilemmas, and specially the gaps and fissures that cause the multi-levelled commotion during the eruptive stages in history. Dostoevsky, writing within such anxieties of the time which saw the breakdown of polite society and patriarchal forms, at an age that was incubating the birth of a more brazen era of proletariat revolutions, and despite his own ideological vacillations, very successfully opened up to the epoch. The very novel use of the polyphonic style saved Dostoevsky from a narrow expression of his own political conservatism. It may be noted that Dostoevsky's own political agenda never surface in his works as the very structure of the polyphonic novel has declawed them. This apparently supports the formalist's claim that the text is a world on its own, quite apart from the author who writes it. However, Bakhtin's dialogics of language explores more possibilities in the claim of truth than the formalists could achieve. Bakhtin neither agrees that the text that uses the same social language for expression estranges itself from social and contextual connotations, nor does he prescribe that the text be explained through simple biographical clues or psychoanalysis. Bakhtin's dialogics projects

language as generative, bearing the genetic signals of past connotations, present situational constructions and future transformations. Thus the author becomes part of a greater dialogue, an instrument in the hands of the dialogic force. This is not to say that the author loses his own integrity. The author's consciousness, while facing other equally valid consciousnesses, is disrobed of his own bias or predisposition and a more egalitarian system is created. This is especially true of writers who are not visual, painterly or analytic, but those who center their writings on the interactive consciousnesses of the social man. To such writers, truth is never a personal accomplishment or realization, but always mediated.

Bakhtin's dialogics brings about a significant shift of authorial position, which is brought on the same plane as that of the characters of the novel. This goes along with a significant shift from seeing to hearing. In order to comprehend the significance of such a shift we may analyse it thus – when an author gives an excessive effort to the description of his characters, rounding up with authorial comments and ideas, it is a tendency of monologising, and in his scrupulousness for creating a perfect and clear whole he leaves no scope for the creation to

grow on its own. But when we close our eyes to this world of distinct forms and open our ears instead, we hear the soul – mysterious, unifinalizable and ever evolving, the soul with echoes of the past and visions of the future, all at once integrated in it. Dostoevsky realized this and evolved a new novelistic form that situates the interactive voices in the narrative resulting in polyphony. The polyphonic world of the novel redirects the mind from a dialectically linear pattern and situates it in an amalgamation of subjects like an orchestra underpinning interaction and co-existence. It creates a space that manifests a simultaneous viewing of all at a time, encompassing diversities and relativities. Therefore a novel written with such a world-view cannot be truly judged with the help of the characteristic format of plot construction and characterization as these require pragmatic linkages at the story level and an all-encompassing authorial knowledge for a well-developed character. In order to understand Dostoevsky, Bakhtin argues, the focal point of the critic should be different.

Like Dostoevsky, R.K. Narayan too was born in a disturbed era when Indian history saw great socio-political upheavals and ideological tug-of-war. Narayan started writing at a time (His first novel *Swami and*

Friends was published in 1935) when Tagore had already won the Nobel Prize (1913). His illustrious contemporaries were Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. It was a time both grim and glorious as India was still gasping under British imperialism. However, the struggle against imperialism and the consolidated effort towards freedom prompted Tagore to say: "... just as sandalwood, when gashed, emits its fragrance, India also has laid bare her inmost treasure of truth, has offered her best self, whenever she has been struck by outsiders." (Tagore, 1911) This missionary zeal and apocalyptic vision had infected many Indians who plunged into the freedom struggle. The Indian scenario was throbbing with high idealism and this sway of idealism also registered tremendous revisionary cultural activities as a corollary to the freedom movement. Indians passionately followed Gandhi's teachings and Nehru's leadership. The writers of the time, both as visionaries and reformists were trying to capture the turbulent period giving momentum to cultural, social or political issues. A number of autobiographies, which were success stories of the individual struggle for self-improvisation or enlightenment, had come out. The radical Indians, with some British help, had opened schools for women; women's emancipation was in,

and ladies of aristocratic families were daring to come out of their *purdahs*.

It is quite surprising for many critics that at that enlightened age, among the high-sounding hubbubs of diverse idealistic activities, Narayan's first novel *Swami and Friends* was like a snowflake floating upon wildfire. While his contemporary Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) narrates the serious conflict of nationalist upsurge and conservative orthodoxy, and Mulk Raj Anand's hapless protagonist Bakha's spiritual resurrection depended on Gandhi's speech in *The Untouchable* (1935), little Swami's childhood passed serenely under the shady trees of Malgudi. Why was Narayan so composed in the midst of the ferment; the fiery pre-independence struggles and the organized social reformation? How could Narayan depict village cricket matches, adolescent love and petty household quarrels? Even Gandhi's presence in many of his novels is too unimposing to be noticed.

This apparent indifference of Narayan to greater causes has certainly left critics with some embarrassment. This is clear from our overall observation of Narayan-criticism where we find either a total avoidance of such queries, or a brazen reaction that Narayan as an artist

is not worth much attention. One such example is Ramesh Shrivastava, who finds Narayan's language devoid of the "minimum sustaining rhetoric" which shows a total "artistic bankruptcy". Narayan's insensitivity to the National cause hurts and puzzles Shrivastava: "It seems unbelievable that throughout the intensity of sufferings and tortures during the British rule over India and the pangs of the independence movement, Narayan should have remained completely unaffected and that his imagination should find no job but to churn out humorous books for children and common people without any reference to the contemporary events." (in Ram, 1981: 207) The only broader awareness of the colonial situation that critics repeatedly identify in Narayan's novels is the disastrous Western influence which penetrates the lives of common men and render them confused, and that Narayan very successfully turns comic.

On the other hand, the critics, who appreciate Narayan fail to place Narayan in the greater context of world literature. Narayan is appreciated for his humanism. Warren French writes: "The humanist is marked by a sense of the human drive and capacity for self-realisation and a placid acceptance of its frequent frustration, a sense that Narayan

possesses to a degree that I find equalled only by William Faulkner, Eudora Welty and Thorton Wilder." (in Ram, 1981: xiii) Apart from this abrupt comparison, the generic equations of these writers with Narayan **are** not dealt with any further. Describing Narayan's artistic vision, Shiv Kumar Gilra writes: "The basic humanity of this vision accepts life in its totality. Incongruities idiosyncrasies, follies and foibles of human nature amuse him, and with a merry twinkle in his eye he transmutes them into the staple of his writing." (in Ram, 1981: 47) This comment also applies to writers like Shakespeare, Cervantes or Mark Twain, and Bakhtin traces this humanism to its roots – to the language of laughter in folk tradition or the amoral atmosphere in carnivals. Thus, we find that Narayan is not a puzzle amidst the revisionary and motivated activities in pre and post-independent India, but the torchbearer of a special genre which very effectively plays a role at the turning points of history, in realizing a more comprehensive truth about that era, by including the subaltern participants of history in his depiction.

Again, Narayan's world has rightly been compared with the 'newspaper world' or 'crowded bazaar', where the varieties of life are

brought within a single space. Critics have been quite sensitive to the ambivalence showing up in his world. O.P. Mathur finds that while dealing with his characters Narayan's attitude is highly ambivalent – which is apparent in the sympathy and irony crystallized in Raju: "The author's highly ambivalent attitude noticeable in the sympathy and irony with which almost every major character is treated, is crystallised in his treatment of Raju." (in Ram, 1981: 31)

The openness as well as the absence of any commanding and commenting authorial presence or any pedagogic endeavour too has not gone unnoticed. O.P. Mathur writes: "As an ironist he perceives the truth and falsity of both simultaneously and leaves it to the reader to arrive at his own solution." (in Ram, 1981: 32) Atma Ram, in his introduction to *Perspectives on R.K. Narayan* writes about Narayan's technique: "He avoids authorial comments and employs irony as a vision, not as a device. His humour is never satirical. He tries to offer an objective viewpoint and includes comments as a part of description and narration." (in Ram, 1981: xxv) Further, Shiv Kumar Gilra maintains that Narayan's work: "... is free from motives, purposes or 'axes' of any kind. He never set out to be a missionary, crusader or reformer."

(in Ram, 1981: 38) Interestingly, these very qualities often turn against Narayan, for when compared with Raja Rao or Anand, Narayan is found lacking in motivation. Puzzles haunts the lines of many critics like Rameshwar Gupta: "looking at Narayan the artist one cannot be sure about his real attitude." (in Ram, 1981: 56) Narayan's detachment is often seen as a lack of commitment on his part. Ramesh Shrivastava writes: "How one wishes that Narayan, too, like Mark Twain, had sweetened the bitterest truths of life, coated with laughter the pangs and sufferings of a subjugated and dumb race, and had given as a joke a slap or a stab that otherwise might have drawn a punitive action from the foreign rulers." (in Ram, 1981: 207) But from Bakhtianian point of view Narayan's 'detachment' is not a lack of concern for the 'subjugated race', but a strategy of not providing guidance to the common peoples' voices or thrusting his own ideas or viewpoints on them. Narayan lets them talk for themselves, and in the process a far more bitter truth is exposed than the 'bitter truth' referred to by Shrivastava. British imperialism and colonial subjugation of Indians may be a bitter truth, but the half-conscious instinctive life of the common man in India following the ebb and flow of life, unconcerned to the nationalist

struggle may be a truth which is harder to digest. Thus, what seems as a lack in Narayan or considered as "his monumental ignorance, his absence of courage or a tactful withdrawal from confrontation ..." (in Ram, 1981: 208) is actually an effort at a deeper understanding of the human situation with a humility that renders his narrative style so deceptively unassuming. This simplicity and limited pattern in his use of language and style too has earned him both praise and criticism. While Meenakshi Mukherjee eulogizes the lack of 'purple patches' in Narayan's style which she finds very appropriate in depicting his simple honesty of vision, Ramesh Shrivastava names it as his incapacity to write a multidimensional prose. Narayan's world is not an intense electrifying world where a grasping story and dynamic characters evolve towards a cathartic height, but it is a world that allows everybody to be his/her own on a canvas that is spacious and problematic without intervention. The dynamism that holds the narrative follows the least authorial presence/intervention with a view that stories need not be told, they must emerge from interactive conflicts. Thus the story does not determine the characters; instead individual stories commanded by characters develop into a story that is

primarily situational and open-ended. Narayan remembers in his autobiography: "The general criticism was that my stories lacked 'plot'." (Narayan, 1974: 100) Critics fond of his writing like K. Viswanatham have tried to find out why Narayan evoked such lukewarm response: "... why do critics say that Narayan is not a committed writer?" (in Ram, 1981: 183) Viswanatham rightly comes to the point: "That is because the critics have not understood the nature of laughter." (in Ram, 1981: 183) Though critics might have apparently pointed out certain aspects of Narayan in assessing his works, their evaluations by and large have remained academicist, not a holistic investigation. As a result, reaction to his works has been extreme. Criticism on Narayan is either a sort of indulgent nod to his humanism, his restricted wandering in the follies and foibles of the middleclass, his deceptively plain language and style, or a resistance in perceiving him as a writer of any serious consideration.

In placing Narayan's work in the Bakhtinian framework of polyphony and the carnival theory, one may find his interaction with his time, his grasp on reality more comprehensive than many committed writers. This is because the writers with a mission either channelize the

contents of their material through their very personal socio-political orientation and ideology or use the canonized narrative strategy to project reality. While canonization limits and universalizes reality, for both Bakhtin and Narayan reality is not static, as it is part of the interminable flow of time.

Besides, the subalterns of society, the simple and economically underprivileged people whose lives are a constant struggle for the bare necessities, are the most unbiased and spontaneous characters on whose lives time has the least impact as they hardly bother about fame, status and salvation. On the other hand, their intellectual counterparts are in a constant pursuit of the eternal. Narayan hailed these simple people into his world as he realized the importance of the mass, who In spite of the highflying idealistic zeals of the intellectuals, nonetheless constitute a world that is eternal beyond contradictory individual aspirations.

Illuminating examples of the 'inter-subjectivity' of meaning (as Ken Hirschkop names Bakhtin's 'dialogism' in language) may be cited from Narayan's novels. Monologic writers, using the epic time-scheme churn and put into order the chaos of life towards certain static valuational uniformity, be it personal or political. They usually use the

self-centred epic language in which the writer's words are the last words about meaning. But dialogism is not merely speech but about the two-sided aspects of meaning which Bakhtin calls 'double-voiced'. It is not in any sense, according to Ken Hirschkop necessarily about two people, but refers to the space between expression and understanding. This space is the very condition of meaningful utterances. Narayan, in his multi-voiced novels, provides this space by stratification of the unified national sentiment of pre and post-independent India into a multiplicity of life-positions, consciousnesses and individual expressions, without any attempt to command or control them with his own idiosyncrasies, if he had any. As a result, the various social positions and contexts are relativized and the dialogic meaning emerges. Dialogism renders meaning as ever evolving and unfinalizable, as it takes into account the various ever-shifting socio-historical facts and does not depend on perennial metaphysical norms.

Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), which uses the name of the great Gandhi in its title, provides a very interesting example of dialogism and polyphony. Practically, any of Narayan's works may be cited for this purpose, but this work is chosen for illustration precisely

because it uses a world-famous name that has tuned into a legend. Using such a legend in a novel would naturally compel writers to be piously true to the principles that stand for Gandhi, because Gandhi is not merely a protagonist in India's struggle for independence but a name which stands for the universal meaning, the perennial values that is India in the view of the world. What writers normally do is merely transcribe the legend into their fictional world. But the relation of carnivalized literature to legends, according to Bakhtin is deeply critical or dialogic and not of blind acceptance. The dialogism is brought about by a rejection of stylistic unity and multiplicity of tone. Double-voiced words and oxymoronic combination of the high and the low, serious and comic, prosaic and poetic play a leading role.

The relativization of Gandhian principles in Narayan's novel destroys the myth of Gandhi and critics have found the deglorification of Gandhi unacceptable. In *The Swan and the Eagle*, C.D. Narasimhaiah expresses his doubt about the authenticity of the Gandhian principle in the novel and thinks that Narayan has made a muddle of it. Supporting him A.N. Kaul writes: "... to the extent to which it is a political novel ... it 'hasn't enlarged our awareness of Gandhi or his era one bit' and

that Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* are incomparably superior 'Gandhi Novels' … ." (in Sundaram, 1973: 83)

This is an extremely interesting example of the confusion regarding the scheme of the *Waiting* that is often marked out by readers and critics as a Gandhi novel like *Kanthapura* or *Untouchable*. But, as we have stated before, Narayan's novels do not follow a definite scheme but project life as an amalgamation of different life-positions and the protagonists in his works, instead of developing with time, are thrown from one situation to another. The novels have no scope for the heroic or the ideal for they need the epic-time-scheme for exposition. Here the heroic and ideal get confused and dissolved with the quotidian. The randomness of experience that we find in Narayan's novels is true to the life led by the common man, a life that is not goal oriented but lived in moments. In such a world of short-sighted protagonists even a towering figure like Gandhi is restructured and redefined, as it happened in the story of the blind men and the elephant. Though Narayan brings the figure of Gandhi, his polyphony decentres him.

Thus, the effort to categorize *Waiting* with other monologic Gandhi-novels proves disastrous and Narayan's credibility as a novel-

writer suffers a lot. His friend Metro, also an author, opines about *Waiting*: "I think the book is weak in motivation, we don't learn anything about Mahatma Gandhi, and the narrative lacks punch." (Narayan, 1964: 115) This is recorded by Narayan himself in *My Dateless Diary* (1964). He goes on to comment: "...he realized that I was after all a writer of weak motivation, and with probably no theoretical knowledge of fiction writing." (Narayan, 1964: 115)

The irony of any form of creation is that the moment it is begotten it steps out of the creator's very personal world into a chaotic world criss-crossed with diverse consciousnesses and orientations. In the process it acquires diverse images and colours, often to such an extent that the creator himself finds it alien to his own consciousness. In *My Dateless Diary* Narayan relates such an experience with humour. While travelling through America, Narayan was often riddled with questions of multifarious angles about his novels, which were fired at him by students, friends and even strangers. He writes: "It gave me an odd feeling to reflect that a book written in a joy and hopefulness in that lonely splendour of my home in Yadavagiri should now be turning up to plague me." (Narayan, 1964: 49)

Again, it is doubly ironical that readers and critics who receive the creation tend to stop this process of evolution by compartmentalizing it or forcefully fitting it into pre-conceived formula. This leads to its death.

Thus, Narayan's *Waiting* has been compartmentalized by many critics as a 'political novel', and finding it inadequate for such a status they reject it as a pointless work, weak in motivation, etc. and therefore, as suggested by C.D. Narasimhaiah, should be withdrawn by the author.

Waiting is a novel that may misguide the reader from the beginning by virtue of its very title. The reader would start reading with an expectation of a theme of waiting for political and social salvation and the great Mahatma's all-pervading presence in the novel. But the novel starts with an ordinary day in the life of a very ordinary adolescent boy Sriram.

Sriram is an orphan brought-up by his grandma. He is weak in his studies, lazy, slightly spoilt. He spends his days lazing on his windowsill. It is, however, quite apparent that Narayan's heroes and heroines are ordinary people with ordinary vices and virtues, strengths

and weaknesses, beauty and flaws. Often there is no gulf between the hero and the villain, or it may be said that there is no hero and there is no villain, as the two concepts fuse and overlap. But the point which is most important about them, is that they are free from the burden of achieving some extraordinary feat, or creating that electrically charged field of sympathy around them that would deeply stir the readers' emotions. They do not seem to be images created to fulfill any certain scheme on the part of the writer. They are there as part of the everyday hubbub of Malgudi, often the more boldly outlined figures in the picture of a crowd, as we see in *The Guide,* where Raju's life evolves from one sort of crowd into another. Because of this ordinariness or lack of distinction, readers often find them lacking in punch. But this was Narayan's artistic perception – he could represent life only in the category of co-existence. His heroes can live only by co-existing with numerous other existences. In his world there is no scope for the lonely individual walking the path of his creator's design.

This point strikes home more clearly if we compare Narayan's *Waiting* with Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935). The touching story of the gracefully written *Untouchable* sets the mood of the reader

from the beginning with its very title. The reader knows beforehand that the story is going to be about some member of the lowest cast in India.

The reader's mind is now set to share some hideous nightmare of humiliation suffered by the victims of the orthodox Hindu society. In case of the Indian reader, the awareness of such grim reality is already there in his consciousness. Gandhi's life-long mission for the eradication of such social prejudices is known to the world and automatically his presence looms over the educated reader's consciousness from the beginning. In that sense it is a really well written "Gandhi novel".

In the *Untouchable* Bakha, a street-sweeper boy, experiences several humiliations in a single day which moves the reader deeply and the reader starts wishing the embalming presence of Gandhi to illumine Bakha's life and afford him peace and tranquility. The reader is not disappointed in his expectation. At first it is the soothing touch of the Salvationist: "Tum udas," said the colonel, putting his hand on Bakha's shoulder.' (Anand, 1935: 137) But Christ is alien to Bakha, and he soon gets bored by Colonel Hutchingson's recitations on Christ. This is immediately followed by Gandhi's speech which goes to Bakha's heart

directly, embalming the injuries deep within. Gandhi said: "I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should wish to be reborn as an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from their miserable condition." (Anand, 1935: 164) Hard upon this comes the poet's modernist solution – the idea of the flush system, relieving the untouchable of the indignity of attending to the public utility system. E.M. Forster, in his introduction to the *Untouchable* writes that he finds it straightforward and very convincing.

The necessary climax is achieved. Bakha returns a different person, reflecting on Gandhi and the machine, and the reader knows that the next day in Bakha's life would be more tolerable.

This novel is linear in pattern, evolving from one point to a different one. We are aware of the author's scheme and the sensitive and thwarted Bakha, with his silent questions and anger, successfully serves as the writer's mouthpiece. The novel is certainly monologic in its orientation.

Considering the protagonists of both *Untouchable* and *Waiting*, we find that both Anand's Bakha and Narayan's Sriram are almost of the same age and represent the average Indian. But Sriram's position in society is more or less affluent and he affords the luxury of falling in love and pursuing his beloved throughout the novel. Yet, it is not the love of a hero of stature that would wring the reader's heart but rather it provokes a smile of condescension, as one would, if one's neighbour's son falls in love. Sriram, throughout the novel, remains as a part of his surroundings – the people of Malgudi. There is not a single spark of any individual tenet in his personality.

Bakha of the *Untouchable* could have been part of a crowd too, like his brother or friends – callous, resigned and considerably happy. But that was not what his creator wanted him to be. So, from the beginning he is marked out as totally different from the rest. The writer draws his physique – his broad and sensitive face and his graceful torso with great care and love. He stands apart with his peculiar oversized English dress. He is like an artist who can do the meanest of jobs like cleaning the latrines with the utmost grace. Throughout the novel he is the alienated individual dragging his sensitive soul with him.

On the other hand, we may note while reading Narayan's novel that he never tries to describe Sriram. Throughout the novel Sriram is a voice – sometimes the inner voice and often the outer, the louder one. Thus he is left to our imagination, never to be finalized.

When we shift our attention to the story of *Waiting*, we see that there is nothing much in it. It is a simple story of an average boy falling in love with one of Gandhi's followers. The boy is dazed, uncertain, and awkward: the girl is intelligent, quick-witted and slightly flirtatious. There is no real tension or drama as their love is mutual from the beginning. Only the wedding waits for the permission of Gandhi. But the boy-girl affair is not the whole novel.

Considering the title we may shift our attention to the Mahatma. We can now say, without hesitation that *Waiting* is not a "Gandhi novel" in the sense the *Untouchable* is. Here, unlike Anand's Gandhi who appears as a legend, an oracle, the Mahatma stands in a dialogic relation with the people of Malgudi. This kind of relation brings out several facets, nuances and possibilities, which have been ignored or overlooked by history. Narayan brings the image of Gandhi among diverse and contradictory elements, the image thus entering into various

relationships with other life-positions, and the result is there for us to consider.

This comes out clear if we compare and contrast the public rally of Gandhi in *Waiting* with that described in the *Untouchable*. In the *Untouchable* the meeting comes at the end as a climax to the daylong agony and humiliation of Bakha. In *Waiting*, it comes at the beginning. Both Bakha and Sriram attend the meetings eagerly, but for different purposes.

While wandering near the railway station, Bakha learns about the meeting which was about to be held. "The word 'Mahatma' was like a magical magnet, to which he, like all the other people about him, rushed blindly." (Anand, 1935: 151) The whole experience acted as a catharsis; as if, at last, he was included in the fold of humanity. The writer describes: "Gandhi alone united him with them, in the mind, because Gandhi was in everybody's mind, including Bakha's. Gandhi might unite them really. Bakha waited for Gandhi." (Anand, 1935: 153)

The picture of a crowd rushing blindly, intoxicated by the name of Gandhi is as true as history. In *Waiting* there is a similar description:

"There was a general rush forward, and a number of volunteers began pushing back the crowd, imploring people not to choke the space around the platform." (Narayan 1958: 33)

Though apparently similar, a close look brings out a wide difference between the two rally scenes. In the *Untouchable* the author looks down at the crowd from behind a photographer's lens while in *Waiting* the writer is only one among the crowd, the heterogenous crowd, listening to the cacophony of sounds produced by them. Even the status of Bakha and Sriran is different. While Bakha is the focal point of the writer, "Sriram was a tiny speck" (Narayan, 1958: 24) among the huge crowd that waited for Gandhi. In *Untouchable* the writer pleases our mental eye by describing the crowd in a picturesque manner and we feast on the conglomeration of silks and *khadis*, reds and blues and whites, men and women, Hindus and Muslims and Europeans, *Lallas* and beggars. It is a colourful crowd with a single voice shouting "Mahatma Gandhi *ki jai*."

There are occasional conversations among men but they are about Gandhi and politics. Now, do these intellectual debates represent the whole spirit of the crowd? Is each and every Indian educated in politics?

This sort of pragmatic unity in diversity is not there in the crowd in *Waiting*. We are not mesmerized by its picturesque quality. Instead we listen to it and even the tiniest odd sound knocks at our minds door and a totally different idea about the crowd rises before us. If the scene in the *Untouchable* stands as a perfectly drawn picture, the other is a tongue-in-cheek question to it. Instead of a crowd with a single mind, we find it to be a battleground of contradictions. There is the heat of the sun and the chromium microphone hollering at the crowd. There are the busy-bodies asking people to remain calm, loquacious volunteers going about with great self-importance, the uncomplaining crowd waiting, keeping up a steady babble punctuated by the pop of the soda bottles or the subdued tone of the cucumber vendor. "Every ten minutes someone started a canard that the great man had arrived, and it created a stir in the crowd. It became a joke, something to relieve the tedium of waiting. Any person, a microphone fitter or a volunteer, who dared to cross the dais was greeted with laughter and booing from a hundred thousand throats." (Narayan, 1958: 25) To Sriram, Gandhi's meeting was the place where he hoped to find the beautiful girl. Sitting there, his mind wandered in a maze, in the style of cinematic montage, from the

khaddar clad volunteers to the police, from the pop of the soda bottles to the alluring call of the cucumber vendor. "Waiting for the Mahatma makes one very thirsty" (Narayan, 1958: 25) – Sriram thought. Again, when his wandering eyes fall on the khaddar caps his thoughts are almost anti-climactic: "That khaddar store of the Market Fountain must have done a roaring business in white caps today." (Narayan, 1958: 26) All these are dialogically set against the great Mahatma's coming. The whole situation is double-voiced and polyphonic.

At last Gandhi enters the scene. In *Untouchable*, it is the all too well-known scene – the showered flower petals, the garlands, the "little great" man huddled up between two ladies, swathed in a white blanket, his clean shaven head, protruding ears, expansive forehead, long nose bridged by a pair of glasses. It is the familiar pose of the numerous sketches of Gandhi. The scene almost comes out of the newspaper or a documentary film.

On the other hand, in *Waiting* Gandhi's entrance is signified just by a sudden lull of the babbling crowd. This lull is followed by an outburst of sarcastic comments on the chameleon-like qualities of Mr.

Natesh: "Some people conveniently adopt patriotism when Mahatmaji arrives", (Narayan, 1958: 26) the crowd sneered.

In *Untouchable*, there is a long uninterrupted speech delivered by Gandhi. The speech almost comes out of a page from his autobiography. It has a monologic, theoretical, finalized quality about it. But the scenario and atmosphere is different in Narayan's novel. Here, the Mahatma tries to coax the crowd to join him in a harmonious clapping of hands and chanting 'Raghupati Raghava'. The crowd is flabbergasted, and after much persuasion, some puzzled, half-hearted and hesitant attempts are made, and it is quite sometime before the expected effect is achieved. But does not this humorous scene evoke in our minds questions, which threaten to unsettle our complacent idea about the people of India in relation to Gandhi? It is true that the charisma of Gandhi could mesmerize and more the crowd to his will, but in a world inhabited by diversely motivated and selfishly oriented subjects, is the organization and momentum of a revolution as easy as our school history books would like us to believe?

When Gandhi speaks to the crowd, his utterances are constantly interrupted by diverse voices coming from the crowd and thus Gandhi's

ideas appear in a constant struggle among several individual consciousnesses, and turns into a living dialogue. Sriram is one representative of this heterogeneous crowd. He is all along torn between his awe and respect for the Mahatma and his own attention wandering away towards the women in the crowd. He remembers Gandhi's speech on the previous day: "All women are your sisters and mothers. Never look at them with thoughts of lust." (Narayan, 1958: 29) He tries to look away in the direction of men, but finding them most boring looks back and wonders: "So many sisters and mothers. I wish they would let me speak to them." (Narayan, 1958: 30) He tries to justify himself: "Of course I have no evil thoughts in my mind at the moment." (Narayan, 1958: 30) When his mind huddles up in the cozy warmth of the beautiful girls memory, his thoughts get mixed up with Gandhi's speech. When Gandhi tells the crowd that they could get rid of the British only when they forgot bitterness and purified their hearts for love to reside, Sriram answers to himself: "Definitely its not bitterness. I love her." (Narayan, 1958: 32) But this complaisance is not permanent. Gandhi is to him like the omniscient God and he is in constant fear of being found out by him.

In fact, the greater part of the novel stands on this dialogic relation between Gandhi's teachings and the people. Sriram joins Gandhi's volunteers in order to stay near Bharati. The Chairman hopes to become famous by letting Gandhi stay in his palatial house. The collector Mr. Natesh manages to get distinction with the borrowed glory of Gandhi by interpreting into Tamil Gandhiji's speech. To Sriram's granny Gandhi is a threat who weaned the youths away from their cozy comfortable homes to flirt with danger. Gandhi's famous '*Satyagrahas*' are nothing extraordinary to her. "It doesn't matter", she said, almost on the point of giggling. "How many years is it since I had a mouthful of food at night – must be nearly twenty years." (Narayan, 1958: 83) Again, there are the businessmen who impartially contribute money to Gandhiji's Harijan Fund as well as to the war-fund. The contractor who worshipped a portrait of Gandhi, which he hung on his wall, and gave five thousand to the Harijan Fund, contributes the same amount to the War Fund too. Bowing his head shyly he says to Sriram "I'm impartial; when the Governor himself comes and appeals how can we refuse? After all we are businessmen." (Narayan, 1958: 108) There are also ardent followers of Gandhi like Bharati and Gorpad who would like to

lay down their lives for *Bapuji*; again, there are men like Jagadish who pervert Gandhi's preachings to suit their own purposes. Thus each situation, each incident and each character stands questioning each other, and they are strong and isolated as ever. Narayan describes them in his characteristic style of irony and humour and the effect is double-voiced.

For example, when we see Gandhiji's meeting followed by the Loyalists' meeting with people waiting with equal enthusiasm, we are placed in a dilemma. Do not these people realize how opposed are these two meetings in principle? Do they possess any idealism at all? Do they really understand what Gandhi meant by non-violence? If so, how could they hail with equal joy a meeting that asked them to join the war? Or finally, are we to believe that while a small number of people take the responsibilities, a greater number callously live on, living for the moment. Perhaps, these meetings provide chances for the people of Malgudi to evade the boring routines of life and spend a day in spree?

When Sriram, with all seriousness tries picketing a shop selling English biscuits, he looks foolish and unreal. This is not Narayan's view, but Narayan looks at him from the eyes of the people who

surround him to enjoy the scene. To them, Sriram's serious efforts are monkey-like acrobatics, which divert them for the moment. When a little boy comes to fetch some snuff for his grandfather Sriram prevents him. The boy starts howling ... and the people try to pacify him by whispering: "Come and fetch your snuff after that fellow leaves." (Narayan, 1958: 122)

Sensing the atmosphere Sriram gives up. He is dejected and starts thinking that Gandhi's spinning-wheel, the hours Gandhi spent in walking, thinking and mortifying himself in various ways were pointless: "seeing the kind of people for whom it was intended". (Narayan, 1958: 124) His dejection, too, seems funny to the reader who is already acquainted with his personal reason of joining the Congress. Thus the whole novel is polemical. Did India really understand the great man? Did Gandhi know how insensitive and muddleheaded many of his admirers were?

So, the novel is not wholly about Sriram's passion for Bharati. It is also not a Gandhi novel like the *Untouchable*. It is even more than that. We see a totally different life passing by the Gandhi milieu, untouched by it and alien to it. It consists of Kanni the shopkeeper who

is kind and helpful towards Sriram but never lets go an opportunity when he could fleece some money out of him. In this life, granny continues to wait for the wayward grandson to settle down, fasts herself almost to death and magically resurrects. Superstition prevents granny from coming back to her own house from the cremation ground and she happily settles in Banares with other widows, and never looks back. Men like the family priest who exploits people's superstition that Sanskrit '*mantras*' are indispensable for this society, is feared and hated. At the same time, there are people like the Fund Office Manager, the doctor, Kanni's shop assistant and neighbours who volunteer to help Sriram's family without giving it a second thought. It is not known what they think of Gandhi, but they manage to exist in the novel in their own capacities.

Narayan's unusual artistic vision, like that of Dostoevsky's, helps him to create an artistic whole out of the heterogeneous and disparate material, which cannot be categorized or compartmentalized. Narayan presents the insignificant, overlooked areas of society in their multifariousness, totality and ambiguity. Perhaps Narayan's grotesque presentation of Malgudi renders the hitherto fragmentary picture of

India true and complete. Narayan projects the 'other India', the villages, small towns where most of the people live, which may have been hidden behind the façade of the 'Great India' upheld by writers and historians. The objective here is clear enough to take into account all these faceless characters and multiple voices.

Narayan's grotesque world-view has the elasticity to accept, and explore the ambivalence of life, and this initiates the depiction of life not as a harmonious unity, but as a battleground of diverse and contradictory tendencies and pursuits. Polyphony in a novel initiates a carnival spirit, a subversive surge within its structure, on the face of which the official truth established by mainstream literature loses ground. With its language of laughter, this literary tradition rises beyond the black and white official world, fearless enough to lay bare its weaknesses and black spots along with its laudable qualities, humble enough to laugh at itself along with others. Thus, while the bulk of serious literature, including the great biographies and autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi, and works by Devendranath Tagore and Ranindranath Tagore sought to unify Indian consciousness amidst imperialistic anarchy through ways of religio-cultural visions or socio-

political ideologies, Narayan's world plunged straightforward into the anarchy and chaos that history created. It is the 'other India' consisting of the common man that gave in to the bourgeoisie and capitalism imported by the British traders. The result of this bourgeois influence was the bursting of previous feudal hierarchical value systems, philistine sentimentalism and patriarchal idyllic relations. The growth of the market, the rise of demand for commodities, commerce and railway communication brought with it a new world-view which shamelessly nurtured greed, exploitation and selfishness. Narayan's world, we find, swarms with cunning shopkeepers, exploiting priests, loquacious railway guides, and greedy filmmakers. Critics have aptly shown the growth of this new imported capitalism within the old feudal framework of Malgudi society.

Raju of *The Guide*, encashing his own talent for rhetoric metamorphoses from one role to another, pursuing love, money and glamour. Margaya of *The Financial Expert* exploits the ignorance of the rural people and turns into a money-minting machine. Sampath of *Mr. Sampath* is an attractive character, versatile and helpful, but in a move that may be called a tragic flaw leaves his own peaceful niche in the

press and runs after the glamour world of filmmaking, which ruins him. In *The Maneater of Malgudi* Vasu is a perfect representative of the capitalist man, as he held no other relation worth consideration beyond the consideration of money. He is a talented artist, but in his blunt commercialism he explodes the previous myth of the artist as a man of high mental aspirations. Thus in Narayan's world man is exposed in his raw, who responds to the call of his bodily and material drives. It is not that this world is devoid of the higher aspirations of religious, social or political values, but the space or gap that creates the polemics between these opposite drives is the true rhetoric of Narayan's works. This 'dialogism' in a polyphonic novel, as Bakhtin calls it, invokes questions on the nature of human life. Is life a uni-dimensional phenomenon or a dialectical move from birth to death? Or is it energy, which is constantly at odds with the pulls and drives of other energies? Narayan's unique world-view destroys the organic unity of the material world, and thus in his works the scope for the manifestation of dialogic truth is created. Narayan found truth not in static forms (like myths, legends or other cultural motifs) but in the energy that goes behind the creation of new forms (the flux of historical reality). In order to understand this idea one

needs to go back to Socratic dialogue. Socrates believed that truth is not born or does not reside in the head of an individual; it is born out of the polemics of different positions. Bakhtin considered the Socratic dialogue as one of the forebears of the modern novel. This polemics pervades Narayan's world. He found that no amount of Gandhian spiritualism, Tagore's distrust of bourgeoisie and call for self-purification or Mulk Raj Anand's concern for the exploited could stop the India swept away by the imported virus of capitalism. It decentralizes human life, which turns unpredictable and unredeemable. Narayan's double-voiced novels unearth the inner contradiction that was latent in the colonial situation of India. An example from *Waiting* would perfectly illustrate this inner contradiction: "In his rally, Gandhi addresses the people of Malgudi and asks them to purify their hearts before asking the British to leave the shores of India." (Narayan, 1958: 32) This speech turns equivocal as it is addressed to an audience submerged in the struggle for their bare existence and knows only that it is the strong, the powerful and the cunning that will survive. The kind of sentiment, which upholds the power of love, fills the pages of Gandhi's autobiography. We hear an echo of it even in Tagore: "The Disease and

its Cure", written in 1907 ... "we must denounce our sins and not our enemies." Cultural codes like 'eternal', 'spiritual', 'truth', 'harmony', 'self-sacrifice' and 'self effacement' were polemicized by greed, exploitation, opportunism and selfishness. This latent contradiction is interestingly explored by Narayan through his polyphonic technique that provides scope for the play of heteroglossia. In the Gandhi rally in *Waiting* we find *khadi* shops, cucumber and soda water vendors exploiting the situation of a great gathering which Gandhi's presence has provided, and therefore enjoying a booming sale. With all his respect for Gandhi, Narayan could see the paradoxes and ironies in the world and lives of the average Indian. Supported by his carnivalesque world-view, his grotesque and multi-voiced characters, Narayan initiates a greater freedom and clarity of expression, which effortlessly conveyed the bitter truths about individuals, and society of a particular time in India.

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Chapter-IV

THE HERO AND THE WORLD: DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS AND NARAYAN'S UNUSUAL HEROES

I

The hero or protagonist in literature is usually the instrument of the serious mode of writing upon whom falls the responsibility to centralize and legitimize the idealistic aspirations of the author. But in a time of disillusionment and confusion, it is the comic hero, specially the rogue, the clown or the fool, who by parodying the hero's high language, maliciously distorting it, or by naïve incomprehension of it reveals a different plane of realism. This dialogic reality cancels all claims of universality or centrality. Bakhtin maintains that the rogue is deliberately deceptive; he is inconsistent, alternately brave and cowardly, criminal and honest. Moreover, the masquerading of the rogue mocks at the solemnity of heroes in other genres and opposes the finalized image of the human being they construct. For this very purpose, Narayan chooses to have roguish or at least irreverent characters as the protagonist of his novels. These characters constitute the 'others' in society and thereby managing a vantage position in order

to criticize society and expose the dualities or hypocrisies of the society that claims to stand upon a solid perennial ground of ethics and law. About these roguish characters Bakhtin writes: "Essential to these figures is a distinctive feature that is as well a privilege – the right to be 'other' in this world, the right not to make common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available; none of these categories quite suits them, they see the underside and falseness of every situation." (Bakhtin, 1981: 159)

The modern era with all its technological advancement saw the rise of a bourgeoisie that, according to Marx and Engels, put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. The bourgeoisie, they maintained, could not exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments and relations of production, and the whole range of relations in a society. The modern era may be defined by a line from *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), denouncing the bourgeois modernity that all that is solid melts into the air, all that is holy is profaned. With the advent of bourgeoisie during the different stages of capitalism, the process of dispersal started and this liquid uncertain mobility of modernity was watched with apprehension by no other than W.B. Yeats:

> Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity. (Yeats, 1962: 99-100)

Once the sense of centrality was obliterated, literature had to undergo its share of shuffling. In the past it was always the hero, who centralized not only all actions, but also the pulls of human consciousness towards very solid and universal qualities, thereby creating a relation of awe and reverence towards the hero. But that was a time when the enclosed traditional societies had their own notions of universal truths, which they experienced in their lives, being secured from any alien contact and cultural shock. In the time of *Ramayana*, it was Ram who was accepted as the universal cultural hero. But with the advent of science the closed feudal societies broke and gave way to Industrial Capitalism that entailed colonization, for it needed a new market everyday. This ruptured the sanctity of a society that was driven by the illusion of enclosed security. The new intercourse with alien cultures and societies resulted in unpremeditated shocks and confusion. The unsettling discovery of multiple other truths forecast plurality, but the modern era anxiously waited for another messiah to be born:

> Surely some revelation is at hand;
> Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
> (Yeats, 1962: 100)

With a desperate hope of getting recognition of its discourse that was couched in the 'Project of Enlightenment' the modern era created various belief systems that battled for universal agreement. As a result, over the layer of the historical flux of man's materialistic progress, was super imposed a false ideological layer. It thus turned into a domain of paradoxes and ironies, ambivalences and often hypocrisies. However, there was no chance of returning to the solid pre-modern condition; the paradise was lost and the cultural hero could not be created very convincingly anymore.

Mario Praz, in his work on Victorian fiction *The Hero in Eclipse* (1956) discusses how bourgeois influences invited a deliberate process of the hero's decline, replacing the glamorous and profane Don Juans with a meeker race; they denounced revolution and voted for a reformation. It was a tendency, like the ostrich in the midst of sandstorm, of shutting away the uncertainty and desecration that surrounded them, while seeking to find assurance of stability in the humble arenas of life.

Praz traces this process right from the Romantics. Singing the praise of the simple and the humble was nothing extraordinary since Wordsworth and Coleridge had already turned away from their revolutionary inclinations and settled down to observe more conservative sensibilities: "... a falling back from extreme positions, a slowing down into a quiet conformism, a dissemination of Romantic ideas in such a way as to make them accessible to the middle classes." (Praz, 1956: 39) They were now averse to the new and outrageous and held fast to the security of the known and familiar areas of life:

> I travelled among unknown men
> In lands beyond the sea;
> Nor, England! Did I knew till then
> What love I bore to thee. (Wordsworth, 1941: 229)

According to Mario Praz the true soul of Wordsworth was the "Biedermeir soul", and he became a sentimental bourgeois poet. Wordsworth chooses to praise and transfigure the grass-root people like the leech gatherer, the reaper or the village idiot; "the result of a deliberate programme to discover the nucleus of a lofty spiritual message in some humble human vicissitude, and in simple, childlike people, to whom Wordsworth attributed primitive virtues ..." (Praz 1956: 49)

The bourgeois inclination in literature continued in the Victorian era where the middleclass ruled the roost, though the mythmaking of the Romantics got obliterated. The immediate example which comes to mind is Charles Dickens whose novels thrive in the crowded atmosphere of the middleclass life of gutters, dark alleys and cramped habitations. It is the same middleclass that inspires Narayan and causes him to be pinioned by critics as a writer with a limited vision. Interestingly, though both Narayan and Dickens use the same materials to create the ambience where their middleclass protagonists live, the two writers stand poles apart in their attitude. Dickens is a bourgeois novelist in the sense that he cannot help moralizing. Instead of a realistic description of the repugnant objects of the London subaltern life, Dickens prefers to stand apart in a position of 'dainty delicacy' and use vague terms like 'polluted air', 'dirt', 'poisonous' that emanate from a bourgeois prudence, an unwillingness to speak out freely. On the other hand, Narayan's descriptions of the bad social condition, which the middleclass face, are enlivened by a human realism. He delivers with humour and his stance is participatory – "Carpenters, tin-smiths, egg sellers and miscellaneous lot of artisans and traders seemed gathered in

this place. The street was littered with all kinds of things – wood shavings, eggshells, tin pieces and drying leaves. Dust was ankle deep." (Narayan, 1955: 142) And again": 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 sun burned so severely most months that bacteria and infection turned to ashes. The place had a general clean up when the high winds rose before the monsoon set in, and whirled into a column the paper scraps, garbage, egg shells and leaves; the column precipitated itself into the adjoining street, and thence to the next and so on, till, perhaps, it reached a main thoroughfare where the municipal sanitary staff worked, if they worked anywhere at all." (Narayan, 1955: 142)

It will not be wrong to say that Dickens is a bourgeois writer who, in an author's role, suffers from the ambiguity innate to the middleclass. The middleclass tends to aspire for the material well-being and a genteel lifestyle that entails selfish acquisitiveness, though they are the strongest patrons of honesty, restraint and sacrifice. In order to undermine the paradoxes, Dickens creates his heroes with monologic

intensions. They are the upholders of sober and sound qualities, standing, as antitheses to the anarchic tirades of the brazen materialistic world constantly growing like the overwhelming baobab. His heroes like Pip, Oliver Twist, Nicholas always came out of the foul world which embarrasses the writer so much, yet they always prove as characters possessing all the bourgeois ideals – love and affection instead of sensuality, a sentimental view of life, honesty that is almost angelic. The lapses on their parts are overlooked as mistakes or temporary deviations. If they commit anything that touches the border of the dark underworld it is just because they are the unfortunate victims of their situations. Mario Paz writes: "With Dickens current moral standards penetrated right into the heart of the novelist: his heroes are figures conceived in accordance with the neo-classicism which, in the bourgeois nineteenth century, inspired sepulchral monuments: they are angels with mild stupid faces." (Praz, 1956: 136) These angels are highlighted by a conscious technique of contrast; they stand against a crude world that surrounded them, consisting of the deformed, nasty and slimy people like Quilip, Sikes, Magwitch or Uriah Heap.

Narayan is a piquant contrast to Dickens in dealing with his heroes. He never bothers to create them as ideal beings, but lets them struggle in their own ambiguities, which they adopt from the society around them. After all, they live in an anxious world pursuing its material dreams, and are torn between their inherited traditional values and their immediate provocations. How can their nature remain unscathed by the excitement constantly being created with new opportunities and lures beckoning them? But in case of Dickens, though his heroes undergo the pressures of their social conditions, they need not get corrupted. Most of them are blessed with a fairytale fortune – they always find a wealthy relative or well-wisher who await them at their miserable journey's end. Narayan, on the other hand, is not embarrassed by the shameless clamourings of his protagonists, and as he uses the comic mode of expression it is easier for him to speak out freely without inhibition. He creates heroes who are not heroic but very ordinary average men. He presents them without any sentiment and leaves them to act out their own nature. They are not ashamed of recognizing money as the only means to virtue and well-being. Margayya of *The Financial Expert* is the most vocal: "Money alone is important in this world.

Everything else will come to us naturally if we have money in our purse." (Narayan, 1958: 21) Margayya accepts the ironies – to achieve respectability one needs money, and acquisition of money may not be of honest means. "It made Margayya reflective. People did anything for money. Money was man's greatest need, like air or food. People went to horrifying lengths for its sake, like collecting rent on a dead body: yet this didn't strike Margayya in his present mood as so horrible as something to be marveled at. It left him admiring the power and dynamism of money, its capacity to make people do strange deeds." (Narayan, 1958: 28) With Narayan's heroes avarice is subtly infused with a dream. It is the eternal dream of the petit bourgeois; like the metamorphosis of the frog to a stunning prince, he yearns to be metamorphosed into the genteel aristocrat. A nagging feeling of inferiority spurns Margayya into an elaborate daydreaming: "His mind gloated over visions of his son. He would grow into an aristocrat. He would study, not in a Corporation School, but in the Convent, and hobnob with the sons of the District Collector or the Superintendent of Police or Mangal Seth, the biggest mill-owner in the town. He would promise him a car all for himself when he came to the College. He

could go to America and obtain degrees, and then marry perhaps a judge's daughter. His own wife might demand all the entire dowry she wanted. He would not interfere, leaving it for the women to manage as they liked. He would buy another bungalow in Lawley Road for his son, and then his vision went on to the next generation of aristocrats." (Narayan, 1958: 29) Narayan's heroes are carnivalesque to whom moral and ethical questions fizzle out in the intensity of their craving for money.

Yet the path towards fulfillment is not that of a smooth fairytale. Margayya's plans for his son are frustrated when his son falls prey to the evil abuses of wealth. The path of prosperity is delicate and an unmended weakness may turn dreams to nightmares. In spite of all Margayya's intelligent calculations, his son proves incalculable. It is an uncertain world where numerous doors open up and baffle man. The carpenter's son may turn into a share-broker, the teacher's son may run away to become a film star. It is certainly not a monologic tale with a premediated ending. The most incalculable is human nature at this stage of social transition because, for economic as well as other valuational reasons families are breaking up into small units, each creating its own

alien world, and sons no longer inherit the tastes, values and sensibilities, not even the dreams of their parents. Jagan the sweet-vendor piles up money in a hidden loft for his son, but his son turns out to be a puzzle for him: "Here he was trying to shape the boy into an aristocrat with a bicycle, college life striped shirts, and everything, and he wanted to be a 'writer'! strange!" (Narayan, 1967: 28) Unlike the novels of Dickens where in the end some sort of resolution is reached at, Narayan's novels leave us frustrated, confronting an open road.

It may be conjectured that there is something wrong about the whole process of acquisition. The protagonist's dependence on tricks and pranks, on his own sudden sparks of genius, that is, the very nature of a wit-conducted life ultimately proves stultifying and self-defeating. It is a life of ambiguity because it sparks an intense delight of control, however short-lived, and then again a sense of failure because, the protagonists, In spite of being infinitely clever, lack depth and easily fall prey to several irrationalities of human nature like vanity, prodigality or even simple carelessness. So the rogue's tale remains inconclusive, indicating unfinalizability of all phenomenon in the social sphere of life.

The rogue is the perfect instrument to flout the ills of society as well as get entangled in his own shortsightedness and blunders. By transgressing all social codes, the rogue saves the work from stilted banality, incorporating a mischievous liveliness and in the process alerts the readers to new meanings. Since the traditional concept of hero seems ossified in the new social context, the need for a lively substitute who may transmit meaning effectively can be very well felt. Narayan's use of roguish characters in the role of heroes is quite successful.

The rogue, with all imperfections and grotesqueness reveals human kind as flawed, a statement that requires some amount of humility in order to be accepted. Robert B. Heilman writes: "Within the capacious irony of the rogue's tale there lies, we may conjecture, humility: partly an oblique confession, partly an assumption of Everyman's rascality, a discovery of the heart masterfully transfigured into an urbane jest." (1968: 114) A rogue's tale cannot encompass experience in its densities because the rogue is always a shallow character, who lives on the crust of life and has no inclination towards finding the depth of meaning or value in his experiences. His un-conservative approach to life makes him a participant in the carnival

that literature unfolds. But carnival in Bakhtin's terms is a counter-value that opposes the monolithic official value-system and this entails both daring and humility.

If not capable of showing depth in character, the rogue in the role of the hero is very well equipped to flaunt the dynamics of human nature, the various oxymoronic combinations to expose man as a complex being. The rogue can at the same time be brave and cowardly, warm and detached, honest and corrupted. The rogue is a person carrying double-consciousness and his life, instead of following a steady journey, loses itself in the whirlpool of ambivalences.

It would be convenient to select certain characters from the novels by R.K. Narayan to show the working of the double-consciousness in relation to the world, which acts as the stimuli. Further, the rogue's double-consciousness constitutes a world of ambivalences by breaking down the structured values of society and subverting the dominance of superego.

Though most of the characters created by Narayan are participants in the carnival world of his novels, not all of them are

rogues. Two main protagonists, Swami and Savitri, are not rogues, for they possess an earnestness that is lacking in a rogue; moreover, they do not depend on their wits in order to achieve their own selfish goals. From their points of view their intentions are earnest and straightforward. Swami craves for the world of playfulness and the company of his friends above everything else. Savitri, on her part aspires for a certain dignity of life. It is only their paradoxical positions in the novel that turns them ambivalent. Though living at the center of society and their families, they are still the 'other'. Society, especially the unit of the family is incomplete without the woman and the child, yet the nagging sense that haunt them is of being treated as subalterns. The child is the eternal rebel against the adult world and the woman is 'the other' in the world of men; therefore any gesture of self assertion on their part make them seem like potent anarchists. They turn out as beings living on the border of society, as critics of its follies and dogmas. The rogue too is a person, who lives on the fringes of society, but it is his unorthodox nature that leads him to live outside the premises of the ordinary feeling of community; it is his irresponsible and playful attitude that turns him into a lawbreaker.

Chandran of *The Bachelor of Arts* and Krishna of *The English Teacher* too do not fall in the category of the rogue. Krishna, by the author's own confession is autobiographical. The character is the writer's attempt to assess himself from a different plane. Krishna too, in a different way, expresses the ambivalence of double-consciousness – the consciousness of Narayan who experiences and Narayan who writes. However, Krishna, with his intense soul-searching is not a rogue.

The creation of Chandran is based on Narayan's indulgent observation of youth. It is a stage of human life when man lives in a serious illusion of such idealisms as love, loyalty, chivalry, etc., yet does not possess the cool control to suppress the erratic drives of youth which leads him elsewhere. Thus it is a stage of bewilderment, fragmentariness; it is as fragile and transparent as the glass, yet a strong natural urge for life turns his wounds into Quixotic glories. Thus the youth, to a mature observer who has long left that lane of life to live on a different plane, is an inexhaustible source of humour. Narayan's treatment of Chandran and his youthful acrobatics unfold the ambivalences lurking behind the so-called values that society teaches us to look upon as serious and undeconstructible. In Chandran's world love

invades the youth on the flimsy path of a green *saree*, change of hearts take place as unpredictably as the moods of a pregnant woman, or marriages depend on the fluke of chance. Chandran is not a rogue; he represents youth. But Narayan's Quixotic treatment of the antics of youth and the natural carnal pulls that are happily sanctioned make this novel carnivalesque. Chandran is a carnival character because he is a rebel and a clown, and through him the carnal bodily life is celebrated.

Along with Chandran we may name two other characters representing the starry-eyed and energetic youth – Sriram of *Waiting* and Raman of *The Painter of Signs*. Sriram is average and lacks wit, but he has the instinctive desperation of the youth and without a second thought leaves his home to pursue his love. Desperation leads him to deception and finding Gandhism the most convenient garb to hide his longing, wears it without hesitation. There is, no doubt that he sincerely involves himself in Gandhian activities including suffering a jail term, but he succeeds at last to win his ladylove and the consent of Gandhi himself.

Raman of *The Painter* is an endearing young lover who does not hesitate to express his attractions for Daisy. Unlike Sriram or Chandran,

Raman is independent and talented. He loves his job: "I took it because I loved calligraphy; loved letters, their shape and stance and shade." (Narayan, 1977: 30) Love turns him bohemian and leaving his home and workshop in Malgudi he follows Daisy, sharing all inconvenience of traveling to remote places. Raman is obsessed with sex and the carnal pulls reveal certain unexpected glimpses of the rogue in him. In spite of himself, he succumbs to lewd thoughts: "Money and sex, he reflected, obsessive thoughts, too much everywhere – literature, magazines, drama, or cinema deal with nothing but sex all the time, but the female figure water-soaked, is enchanting." (Narayan, 1977: 14) In his yearning for Daisy he turns deceitful and wears coloured glasses to ogle at her without being noticed. While traveling, Raman and Daisy are forced to spend a night together. The enchanting combination of moonlight, stars, the cool breeze bringing the mysterious fragrance of the forest foliage stirs up the primeval instinct hidden deep in his nature and he blindly attempts to ravish her. His immediate realization and repentance save him from perversion. He is the ever confused youth puzzled by incompatible sensations working in himself at the same time – he worships his ladylove as a goddess, pure, and divine, yet he yearns

to violate her – "He was appalled at the potentialities that lay buried within him." (Narayan, 1977: 96)

A slight difference of shade may be observed in the novels that follow *The English Teacher*. Emerging out of the familiarities of Narayan's own life, these novels are culminations of the author's complete exposure to and understanding of 'otherness'. It is a different reality and has not much to do with his own organized belief-system. The realities of Margayya, Vasu, Raju, Rosie or Daisy are strange new variations. The author conceives them by dissociating the reassuring form of the identical, and by bypassing the whipping superego.

It is, however, specifically the transgressive nature of the rogue that turns him as the perpetual outsider. He is the perfect carnivalesque character in that his creation does not necessitate any form of sentimentality; instead, he is a trickster who thrives on wit. The Rajus, Vasus or Murgayyas are perfect rogues who cannot be eulogized as heroes, nor can they be derogated as villains. They reflect the nature of the ambivalent self of the middleclass in India. Emerging out of a native feudal system this class champions the multifaceted lures of imported capitalism. These middleclass people are the storehouse of all traditional

values; they are soaked in all forms of orthodoxy that had been inculcated in them through folk-tales, myths, and everyday rituals. Again, they are the most anxious lot who long to transgress their mediocrity and taste the new and adventurous; they dream of earning money and more money that would avail them of all the untasted pleasures of life. The full-fledged and unreserved exposure of this double-consciousness may be observed in many of Narayan's protagonists. These characters thrive on their aspirations for money, glamour and sex. Certain qualities like practical intelligence, a ready appraisal of life and a flair for adventurism lends them a dazzle, a halo, and rescues them from submerging into the humdrum world. R.B. Heilman's definition of the picaro fits very well in this context; for him the picaro implies flippancy instead of deliberateness of the criminal, harassment rather than serious attacks, the trick-or-treat prankster; seduction rather than rape, the securing of and playing upon the victim's consent, a relish of the game as such, in Dantean terms, less the perversion of right feeling than a non-function of right feeling. He further adds: "The picaro is the literary equivalent of that familiar abnormal type that must use talents, which are often extraordinary, not

for murder but for masquerade; who must take by trick what he could earn by effort; who must dazzle rather than seek respect; to whom the world is a theatre rather than a school; who by spectacular fakery can get by as a physician or even surgeon, but who would never take a medical degree. Though many variations, degrees of development, and overlapping are possible, the criminal has kinship with Iago, the picaro with Falstaff." (Heilman, 1968: 104)

An involuntary love for adventure and attraction for the unknown inspire the lives of the roguish heroes of Narayan. After being connected to the rest of India by a new railway line, Malgudi opens up to a new world and all sorts of murky characters start swarming about. These people of alien cultures as well as dubious or unorthodox occupations influence the lives of Malgudi. When Raju of *The Guide* takes charge of his father's shop in the station, the constant inflow of tourists affect his life and very soon he leaves his shop to become a tourist guide. He says: "It is written on the brow of some that they shall not be left alone. I am one such, I think. Although I never looked for acquaintances, they somehow come looking for me." (Narayan, 1958: 49) This may not be the whole truth. Protagonists like Sampath, Raju,

Margayya, The Talkative Man or Nagraj possess a natural warmth, responsiveness and an eager delight in the outer world. They all have an amiable disposition, as self-love turns them into extroverts. Raju's words in *The Guide* unfold the character of a man of Malgudi: "I never said, 'I don't know.' Not in my nature, I suppose. If I had had the inclination to say 'I don't know what you are talking about', my life would have taken a different turn." (Narayan, 1958: 49) The inability to say 'no' to the outer world entangle them with the lives of strangers or outsiders and they often find themselves in precarious situations. The Talkative Man thus suffers several inconveniences by asking the mysterious Dr. Rann to stay at his place as a guest. Nagraj's quiet world fills with unwelcome complications and turbulence because he could not say 'no'. So he takes up the responsibility of his brother Gopu's son Tim, and Tim starts exploiting his affection.

The fictional world inhabited by strangers affects the consciousness of the protagonists, goading them to expose unusual and hidden tenets of their characters that thwart all givenness of a small-town community by creating new fields of reality. When Raju accidentally meets the strange couple Marco and Rosie, his life starts

taking a strange colour. He feels an instant attraction for Rosie and very soon Raju the small-town shopkeeper turns into a Don Juan – enticing, manipulative, and desperate. He shows a sharp insight into responses that may be played upon advantageously. An instant understanding of the strained husband-wife relation helps him. He flatters Rosie by offering her to show her the cobra and later by praising her dance. Instinctively he plays upon her weakness, thus setting himself as a better alternative to her husband who never cared for her dance. He has so much confidence in his understanding of her responses that he offers to persuade her out of her room when she shuts herself against her husband. "A courageous idea was developing in my head. If it succeeded it would lead to a triumphant end, if it failed the man might kick me out of his sight or call the police. I said, 'I shall go and try on your behalf?'" (Narayan, 1958: 64) It is like gambling and luck favours him. Marco's response is encouraging – 'Go ahead, if you are bold enough.' (Narayan, 1958: 64) If Marco had had any idea of the extent of boldness hidden in Raju's nature, he would never have conceded. When Raju finds himself in front of Rosie's closed door, he instantly takes on the lover's role although he is hardly acquainted with her: "I

repeated, 'It is not him, but me. Don't you know my voice? Didn't I come with you yesterday to that cobra-man? All night I didn't sleep.' I added, lowering my voice, and whispered through a chink in the door, 'the way you danced, your form and figure haunted me all night.'" (Narayan, 1958: 64) All rogues have the instinctive attraction for the dangerous and they love to play upon chance. Each success leads him to play more dangerous games. Raju succeeds in coaxing Rosie to accompany him and Marco to the mountain guesthouse where he uses the opportunity to get closer to her. Again, anticipating Marco's response, he offers to entertain Rosie while Marco is occupied with his study of cave-paintings. Raju is confident that Marco will be too glad to get rid of his nagging wife. This is how they are thrown together and soon the town starts gossiping. Raju has no inhibitions, nor does he suffer from pricks of conscience. He simply disregards the society that spreads such scandal. Even when Marco comes to know about their intimacy, Raju remains bold and unrepentant. He is not concerned about Rosie's failing relation with her husband. He is unorthodox in his opinion and sees no reason in her dragging on such a worthless relationship. When Rosie is deserted by her husband he takes her under

his care and gives her all the support so that she could forget her husband and pursue her dream to become a dancer.

Raju's love for Rosie is a strange combination of altruism and self-interest. His eagerness to help others is as true as his selfish calculations. His quick calculative mind at once sees the promising prospect of using Rosie's talent for his own ends. Without the boredom of sitting in a shop or the strain of acting as a tourist-guide to moody and stingy tourists he could earn much more just by managing programmes for Rosie. So, without looking back, he launches his new career and soon experiences a meteoric rise. Yet, the rogue is, like the meteor, not destined for stability and permanence, and the seed of disorder lies in his very nature. He soon turns careless and extravagant and his shameless narcissism makes Rosie tired of him. His avarice as well as possessiveness towards Rosie leads him to commit a careless blunder. He forges Rosie's signature and soon finds himself in jail. Rosie tries her best to save him although there is no love lost between them. Soon they are separated.

Raju's next contact with another stranger Velan launches him into his final adventure. Velan mistakes Raju for a Swami and soon a crowd

of simple villagers start gathering around him with their offerings of fruit and milk. Though not having any hand in his new found importance, Raju soon starts enjoying his new role, gloating in the illusory glamour of a Swami's identity and also enjoying the easily earned food and the attention of the people. But soon his role-playing proves to be too good. People start expecting him to bring rain miraculously by fasting. Unable to convince Velan that he is not a saint but rather an ordinary character with a chequered past, Raju has no other option; he has to continue with his role playing. Raju's death is no final expiation, but retains the same false ring that had pervaded his life – he dies while playing a false role.

Raju is no Swami, though he plays the Swami's role. Again, he is neither an ordinary person. A fateful and ruinous self-love, a felt superiority makes him hungry for power, and for its realization he binds himself to the rest of mankind, because without them his own identity is impossible. This prevents him from fleeing the scene to save his own life. He could not afford to spoil the whole sport and disgrace himself. Throughout his life he had played the roles of deception with the natural adroitness of a talented artist. Ambivalence is his second self for his

love of ingenuity makes him prone to a fatalistic death wish – he dies to prove the worth of his roguish life. "The doctors appealed, 'Tell him he should save himself. Please, do your best. He is very weak.' Velan bent close to the Swami and said, 'The doctors say …' in answer Raju asked the man to bend nearer, and whispered, 'Help me to my feet,' and clung to his arm and lifted himself. He got up to his feet. He had to be held by Velan and another on each side. In the profoundest silence the crowd followed him down. Everyone followed in a solemn, silent pace. The eastern sky was red." (Narayan, 1958: 221) Raju has successfully simulated the saint's final departure.

Like Raju, Margayya, Sampath and Vasu are also affected by their contacts with strangers. Margayya's life had been smooth and uneventful under the banyan tree but for the peon Arul Doss and the Manager of the Co-operative Bank, he is transformed into money-mania. He grows restless in his longing for more money that would enable him to buy position and respectability in society. While desparately searching for the magic touch that would transform him into a prince he accidentally meets the temple priest and this gives a new turn to his life. Leaving everything behind, he worships the goddess

Laxmi rigorously for forty days. His rigorous routine atleast saves him from sinking into desolation, for his spoilt child Balu had thrown his account-book into the gutter, thus finally closing any possibility of his returning to his old practice.

Another accidental contact with a stranger named Dr. Pal of dubious occupation gives another piquant twist to Margayya's destiny. Margayya grows rich by selling an adult book on bed-life written by Dr. Pal. With the help of Madan Lal, a North-Indian printer, and under the more harmless name "Domestic Life" the book catches on, and soon Margayya finds a place among the cream of Malgudi society. But Margayya's prosperity is not permanent. The same Dr. Pal deals the fatal blow on his family and career and Margayya ends his meteoric existence by being thrown into bankruptcy.

Like Margayya, Mr. Sampath too is a versatile and extrovert character who thrives on his association with strangers. The novel starts with the exposition of the philosophic character of Srinivas who continues to exist on his own in the novel, and Mr. Sampath remains as a shadow-like personality who prints Srinivas' journal from behind a mysterious blue screen. It is after sometime that he is introduced to us

by his name, and only then do we realize that Srinivas is there to bring forth the more dynamic and worldly Mr. Sampath.

Srinivas is warm, sensitive, but philosophically detached. His sensitivity drives him to go out of his way to help others, or write burning editorials against corruption, but his intellectual capacity allows him the space to draw back into himself and thus remain unscathed: "Life and the world and all this is passing – why bother about anything? The perfect and the imperfect are all the same. Why really bother?" (Narayan, 1949: 30) But the worldly Sampath has no high philosophical shock absorber, to save him from the repercussions when he gets entangled into the problems of others. He is a man with open arms. Srinivas is first struck by this colourful man sharing jokes with all and sundry and ordering genially everybody about, as if they were his family. When Srinivas tries to get acquainted, Sampath whisks him away to a special room of the restaurant and showers on him all his hospitality even before knowing his name. Srinivas is puzzled: "I am after all a stranger." (Narayan, 1949: 67) Thus Sampath involves himself in the life of a stranger, though his nature would not allow any discrimination between the stranger and the familiar because "There are

no strangers for Sampath." (Narayan, 1949: 67) Without a second thought he takes up the responsibility of printing *The Banner*. It may be noted that Sampath's first crisis arrives after his association with the 'stranger' Srinivas. His natural reverence for the intellectual Srinivas, his characteristic altruism, and sensitivity towards his customer's feelings lead him to bear much of the financial burden, and one day he is forced to close the press. An incidental glance at his impoverished household, the tired and overworked wife and the burden of many children to feed comes as a shock after the initial idea of affluence when we see him treating Srinivas grandly in the Anand Bhawan or providing him the papers and printing virtually free of cost. How would one assess a character embodying so much ambivalence? He does not possess the philosophical detachment of Srinivas towards money or other worldly matters. Unlike Srinivas, Sampath clings to the felt surfaces of life. The dire need of money and the dream for a better life style is there, for his perfect simulation of a grand personality is a way of his wish-fulfilment. He had been so realistic in his role-playing that when Srinivas visits his house he is shocked: "On the edge of the compound there was an outhouse with a gabled front, a verandah screened with bamboo-trellis,

and two rooms. It was the printer's house. Srinivas felt rather disappointed at seeing him in his setting now, having always imagined that he lived in great style." (Narayan, 1949: 83) The "profound enchantment provided by the father and the daughters" (*Ibid.*, 87) when they sing and dance the tale of Krishna In spite of the "drab ill-fitting background" (*Ibid.*, 87) shows the longing in Sampath for the beauty and happiness of life which is denied to the middle-class man. Interestingly, his dire situation and poverty does not make him mean; he is a surprising combination of bohemian generosity and bourgeois cunning and energy. Instead of blaming Srinivas for his unscrupulous management that ruins his press, he plans to include him in his future plan of producing a film. He never disappoints Srinivas and tries his best to keep all his requests, however impractical they may seem to him. Being quick-witted and a man of the world he instinctively detects something wrong in Ravi's personality – perhaps the mad potentiality of destruction. He accommodates Ravi in his film company as he is generous by nature, but warns Srinivas to keep an eye on Ravi. Srinivas, being an idealist, mistakes Ravi's disjointed ranting for the overflow of powerful feelings of a genius and decides to pay no

attention to Sampath's apprehensions. Sampath's foreboding soon proves to be true because at the end Ravi turns mad and causes unimaginable damage to the film studio.

The ambivalence in Sampath's character, the incompatible marriage of the bohemian recklessness and the bourgeois materiality, which, for fulfillment demands discipline and perseverance, gives his life a fatal impotency. With his practical intelligence he is quick to take the right step whenever practical decision is needed, but then he submits to all the irrationalities of the flesh. He is capable of taking quick practical decisions. Without consulting the Editor, he puts a slip into the middle page of every copy of the journal, expressing regret for not being able to publish it any more and asking the forgiveness of its readers. He knows when a position should be given up for practical reasons. Instead of wasting time he quickly seeks for another opening. Again his practical foresight tells him that it is Shanti's face that alone can make the film a hit and bring profit to "Sunrise Pictures". However, instead of dealing with her with cool calculated professionalism, he develops a spontaneous warmth towards her and gets entangled with her in a passionate relationship. Shanti is another stranger who affects his

life and career. When Shanti leaves him, Sampath is left nowhere. It is his bohemian nature that blinds him to the social sense of right and wrong; in his desperation he had started dreaming of a life where both Shanti and his wife would accept each other and with his money he would make both of them happy. "If I buy Shanti a car my wife shall have another; if I give her a house I will give the other also a house; it will really be a little expensive duplicating everything this way, but I won't mind it. Later on, when they see how much it is costing me, I'm sure they will bury the hatchet and become friends again ..." (Narayan, 1949: 180)

According to P.S. Sundaram the book ends with a disciplined detachment. This is true from the point of view of Srinivas who bids a final goodbye to Sampath and walks 'homewards', while Sampath remains standing alone in the dark. But can one so easily erase Sampath from one's mind? How can we forget the spontaneous warmth of Sampath's nature, his eagerness to help all strangers that accidentally crossed his path? While Shanti returns to her son, and Srinivas to the peace and security of his home and family, is not there a corner in their conscience that bears some responsibility for Sampath's ruin? Sampath

is the solitary rogue with an eager delight in the world. He is a stranger to the society that he considers his own. Sampath, for all these ambivalences, is a lovable rogue and before his exuberance, the high philosophic quietism of Srinivas seems pale. Even after the novel closes with an apparently final note of relief, when the good and God-fearing Srinivas ultimately detaches himself from the so-called misguiding influences of Sampath, a feeling of injustice continues to haunt the reader.

Vasu of *The Man-eater* is the extreme case of selfish acquisitiveness; he would unhesitantly exploit every stranger who fascinated him. Unlike the others, who are more or less over-whelmed by the outsiders or somehow influenced by them, Vasu is a cool, calculating type, the prowling man-eater. His first target is a *phaelwan* whose strength appeals to him. Though he manages all the charity and learns his art, Vasu simply throws him away when his fascination dies out. "Vasu laughed at the recollection of this incident. "I knew his weak spot. I hit him there with the edge of my palm with a chopping movement ... and he fell down and squirmed on the floor. I knew he

could perform no more. I left him there and walked out, and gave up the strongman's life once and for all'." (Narayan, 1961: 18-19)

However, In spite of the dark villainous traits in his nature, Vasu's attitude towards the taxidermist Suleiman who taught him this art is of pure reverence. It may be noted that he keeps this part of his life to himself as if he considered it too sanctified to be shared in public. It is the only positive aspect in Vasu's life who otherwise leaves a bloody trail wherever he tramples. "No creature was safe, if it had the misfortune to catch the eye." (Narayan, 1961: 53) But his chance references to Suleiman are full of praise: "... he was an artist, as good as a sculptor or a surgeon, so delicate and precise!" (Narayan, 1961: 51) Again: "He sighed at the thought of Suleiman, his master. 'He was a saint. He taught me his art sincerely'." (Narayan, 1961: 17) Vasu does after all have the ability to appreciate men who are powerful in their skill and sincere in their mission. It appears that he has great aversion for the effete. His depreciating attitude towards Nataraj is because he is a moneyed aristocrat who wastes his time, energy and money in entertaining 'worthless' people like Sen and the poet. He keeps on teasing and provoking Nataraj on this subject.

Vasu possesses the energy of the bourgeois; he believes in human agency and shows with his life what man's activity can bring about. Vasu is one specimen of the modern capitalist society where man has accomplished wonders like the beggar turning into a millionaire through sheer enterprise. Though an M.A. in Economics, Vasu launches a different career that is both adventurous and profitable. He is an artist who challenges the myth of the artist being a man of high spiritual aspirations. Every honoured occupation revered with awe has been stripped of its halo by bourgeoisie. Vasu is the rootless man who has no sentiment for his pedigree. He is proud to be self-made and nowhere do we hear him speak about his family. Throwing away all social conventions and norms, he sees all relationships in the light of its utilitarian value. His opinion on marriage scandalizes Nataraj: " 'Only fools marry, and they deserve all the trouble they get. I really do not know why people marry at all. If you like a woman, have her by all means. You don't have to own a coffee estate because you like a cup of coffee now and then,' and he smiled, more and more pleased with his own wit." (Narayan, 1961: 33-34)

Vasu and Nataraj are the opposites; Nataraj possesses those qualities of his class that Vasu lacks and grudges, yet it is perhaps for those very qualities that Vasu is attracted towards Nataraj. Nataraj's generosity, sophistication, selfless altruism and the inherited smooth artistry of existence, so piquantly contrasted to his own crude and wild essence somehow draws him towards Nataraj. As he destroys the fascinating and beautiful tiger to recreate it with a challenge to defy and outdo nature, a similar sense of power and control leads him to deride Nataraj and all those subtleties that Nataraj stands for.

In fact, the whole novel deals with Vasu overriding the genteel Nataraj and exploiting his generosity. He uses Nataraj's press to print his visiting cards and deliberately forgets to pay the bill. He simply barges into Nataraj's attic and occupies it. He has no concern for Nataraj's feelings and starts leading a licentious life with all sorts of ill-reputed women, taking them up freely to his attic. Totally ungrateful, he even files a case against Nataraj, causing him great anxiety. He is so ill mannered and aggressive that he snatches away Nataraj's ledger, collects money from the people of Malgudi in the poet's name and squanders it.

Vasu is a rogue, but not a lovable one, because he is not like others who simulate a partial belongingness by their spontaneous warmth of response to society. Vasu is a veritable outsider to society, for he has eliminated from his nature any feeling of community. He is a rogue on the verge of a criminal. However, he is redeemed by certain Faustian characteristics. It is his Faustus-like craving for power over man and nature and the artist's soul in him questing for perfection and beauty that save him from ultimate degeneration. As a participant in the history, Vasu's shameless and egotistical demeanour legitimizes the common characteristics of a certain class at a particular time of man's socio-economic development. His behaviour in the novel accommodates perfectly all the traits of the rising bourgeois as defined by Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848): "The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors', and has left no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasms, of philistine sentimentalism, in the

icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, he set up that single, unconscionable freedom – Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation." (Marx, 1926: 31-53)

The rogue as the hero in Narayan's novels has to commute between two worlds – the enclosed world of his family where the aroma of tradition stubbornly lingers in every nook and corner, and the outer world in the form of the market and the public square, where each and every aspect of the inherited and traditional credences are constantly interrogated. All that is carefully preserved, fussed over, cherished with pride, and burdens the hero as the sacred responsibility of inheritance lose much of their sanctity when the hero comes out of his closeted home and family to face the world. It is this outer world that attracts the hero, that lures him like a candle attracting the moth. These encounters with the outer world continue to create and recreate the hero, who is as ever changing as Proteus. Self-love, paradoxically, binds them to the rest of mankind; it makes them extrovert and communicative, as it is

with the help of others that they discover themselves. These characters are invariably dexterous and talented and instinctively know that the outer world holds more possibilities of freedom and opportunity for the realization of their ingenuity. In the ambience of the public square or market place where human community is open to 'otherness' there is always the chance of meeting aliens who ignite their imaginations and change them.

It has already been shown how strangers influence the roguish characters and not their family members. But this is not to say that the hero is apathetic towards his family. On the contrary, these unusual characters, except Vasu, are strongly attached to their families. Narayan gives us only a glimpse of Sampath with his wife and children, but that is enough to prove his affection for them. Though he entangles himself unscrupulously with Shanti and is ultimately deserted by all, there is not a single word to prove that his affection for his family ever died out. His negligence of them is momentary, for he believes that one day he will be able to bring all of them together in a happy family reunion. In the cases of Raju and Raman, it is their unconventional choices of brides that separate them from their beloved elders – Raju from his mother and

Raman from his aunt. These separations are not smooth and cause them much sorrow. When Margayya daydreams, it is the image of his son around whom he weaves all his future hopes and aspirations. His lust for money, surprisingly, is not for the promotion of personal comfort. While he tries to give his son good education, and asks his wife to buy *sarees* and jewelleries, he does nothing to uplift his personal life-style or to better his external appearance. His money-minting tendencies are self-denying and self-destructive, for he ruins his health in the process. In fact, the weakest spot in the lives of both Margayya and Jagan are their sons. Though they are themselves semi-educated, they dream of sending their sons for higher education that would uplift their social status. Both of them dream of seeing their sons at par with the aristocrats. Thus attractions of the outer world and rebounding ties of family was to make these characters turn ambivalent. They are at once grotesque and tragic. Their clumsy attempts in taking recourse to their wits in order to deal with every situation, their funny unconventional views of life against which the 'normal' seems hollow and pretentious, and bloated self-confidence causing them their 'great fall' arouse a mixed feeling of amusement and sympathy. They are middle-class but

they are not ordinary, for they are participants in the carnival, which gives them a special value. They are there to subvert all givenness that is considered normal by the official world. Being rebels by nature, they are keen on frustrating the family expectations with regard to everything – starting from education to their profession. In spite of being endowed with extraordinary intelligence, all of them except Vasu fare as average in their formal education. They are eternal dreamers, unable to find any compatibility between their aspirations and realities. Their dreaming does not turn them into visionaries or poets; they lack the depth for insight or the aptitude to grasp the greater realities of life that could equip them with the power of foresight. They are shortsighted beings who are prone to committing blunders. Mr. Sampath's uncritical pursuit of the capitalist impulse of filmmaking in a self-righteous manner turns his situation unpredictable and unredeemable. Too much confidence in his ingenuity and lack of foresight brings the fall of Raju. His shallowness forestalls his understanding of the emotional depths and intricacies of human nature. While his practical intelligence helps him to create a star out of Rosie, he is completely blind to her emotional needs. His lack of understanding makes her tired of him. His forgery is

also another example of his lack of foresight as well as his over confidence that makes him careless. All these finally launch him in jail and he loses Rosie forever. The intelligence of Margayya and Jagan work on the felt surfaces of life. Their business acumen cannot be challenged and their dealings with people in this field are impeccable. Both of them are mistrusting and always count the money in the cash-box in utter privacy. They are quick-witted, skilled in the art of repartee or persuasion, they can intelligently manipulate ideas to suit themselves and can take advantage of any opportunity they happen to stumble upon. They love their sons, yet they lack the depth or insight to realize the gap in their emotional relations, which turns the fathers and sons veritable strangers to each other. They are bewildered by the behaviours of their sons. The total unpredictability of their relations make the fathers stand in awe of their sons. They are turned into pathetic creatures when they mistakenly try to buy their sons' affections with money.

In fact, it is the downright materiality of their nature that makes them what they are. The transformation of Raju to 'Railway Raju' has the potentiality to grow into a story of self-realization. It could well have been the story of an ordinary person suddenly awakening to his

own hidden talent for rhetoric, like the life of *Noti Binodini* – the socially downtrodden woman taking the theatre-world by storm by the realization of her own hidden talent for histrionic performance. There are several lines scattered here and there in the novel indicating the sense of wonder in the discovery of lurking potentiality. While teaching the children of the rustics Raju "was hypnotized by his own voice; he felt himself growing in stature as he saw the upturned faces of the children shining in the half-light when he spoke. No one was more impressed with the grandeur of the whole thing than Raju himself." (Narayan, 1958: 42) A little reflection on this matter tells him that it was a tendency in him from the beginning because throughout his life his mind had been open to all sorts of information, either through scraps of papers, reading materials or through the small-talk with strangers he enjoyed so much: "It seems to me that we generally do not have a correct measure of our own wisdom." (Narayan, 1958: 42) This very knack lures him out of his shop. for he enjoyed talking nonsense with tourists, bemused by his own power of words. This skill reaches its height of perfection when Raju is forced to act as a Swami. When he spoke to the people: "He was surprised at the amount of wisdom welling

from the depths of his being." (Narayan, 1958: 41) His words work wonders that surpass his expectations and soon the whole situation goes beyond his own control. Raju's own power, which he exerted on the people, now haunts him and he starts fearing its potentiality – "He was afraid to open his lips." (Narayan, 1958: 27) But Narayan, who will never let his creation walk on the abstract airy field of philosophical investigation or pursuit, instead of letting the story dwell or focus on the mystery of the innate powers of the human mind, weighs it down with an undercurrent of more palpable and materialistic drive. All of Raju's flair for verbal articulation boils down to the urge to earn money and more money, and to be raised from his dull humdrum life, along with Rosie, to the breathtaking world of glamour. In fact, the thirst for glamour is the key to the understanding of Raju's inspirations and aspirations. It may be noticed that from the beginning Raju has been an extrovert character who flourishes when at the centre of people's attention. He has been a loquacious tourist-guide, a smooth-tongued lover, and successfully simulates an enlightened teacher in the jail and in the role of a Swami. Glamour means the charisma of personality that would enchant and hypnotize the public. Raju uses this tool of his to

hoodwink the public for his own materialistic ends, his pursuit of sensual love, power and prosperity. In the jail he uses it to befriend the hard-bitten convicts and to impress the jailor in order to win certain facilities. It is his strong survival instinct – even within the restricted boundaries and minimum resources of the jail he creates for himself a smooth social life and a sort of luxurious living: "I got my food, I had my social life with the other inmates and the staff, I moved about freely within an area of fifty acres." (Narayan, 1958: 204) When in the role of a Swami, he uses his charisma to hoodwink the susceptible crowd. Raju is not driven by any divine inspiration; he is a conscious actor with a purpose of mesmerizing the credulous and gullible: "Ever since the moment this man had come and sat before him, gazing on his face, he had experienced a feeling of importance. He felt like an actor, who was always expected to utter the right sentence." (Narayan, 1958: 14) He is clever and calculated in his move: "The essence of sainthood seemed to lie in one's ability to utter mystifying statements." (Narayan, 1958: 46) Raju enjoys his own power of control with great rhetorical dexterity as he drags the innocent men: "deeper and deeper into the bog of unclear thought." (Narayan, 1958: 46) Raju achieves his sainthood and enjoys

the power of glamour, but it is not an end in itself. The purpose behind his histrionics is more materialistic and down-to-earth. Narayan will never mislead his readers to think that a saint survives on abstract wisdom and there is no need to bring the thought of food in fear of spoiling the saintly image. In Narayan's world, the most important point to be taken into account is the inability of the characters to transcend and overcome their material bodily drives. Narayan negotiates with a truth that lurks in the grotesque sphere of the world. The essential principle of this grotesque form of realism is degradation, lowering of all that is ideal and spiritual. As against the upward movement of the official value system, grotesque realism moves downwards, respecting earth's gravity. By way of degradation the grotesque world brings all its subjects down to earth, materializes them and turns them into flesh. Throughout his career of sainthood, Raju is paradoxically haunted by the thought of food. "He anticipated their arrival with a certain excitement. He composed his features and pose to receive them. The sun was setting. Its tint touched the wall with pink. The tops of the coconut trees around were aflame. The bird cries went by in a crescendo before dying down for the night. Darkness fell. Still there was no sign of

Velan or anyone. They did not come that night. He was left foodless; that was not the main worry, he still had a few bananas over. Suppose they never came again? What was to happen? He became panicky. All night he lay worrying. All his old fears returned." (Narayan, 1958: 31) What are Raju's fears? It is the rogue's fear that the shortcut way of earning food by beguiling others being forestalled and returning to the more dull and routine path of the ordinary people where nothing can be achieved without a serious struggle: "If he returned to the town he would have to get his house back from the man to whom he had mortgaged it. He would have to fight for a living space in his own home or find the cash to redeem it." (Narayan, 1958: 31) As R.B. Heilman has rightly described, for a rogue the world is a theatre and not a school. The fear of starving to death haunts him, but instead of taking recourse to some normal ways to earn his living he prefers to gamble – he offers his last piece of banana as a bribe to a shepherd boy and sends him to call Velan.

However, constant role-playing sometimes makes Raju tired. One day he hides behind a hibiscus bush until the visitors leave. But Raju does not forget to look for his food: "He waited till they vanished

altogether from sight. He went in and lit a lamp. He was hungry. They had left his food wrapped in a banana leaf on the pedestal of the old stone image. Raju was filled with gratitude and prayed that Velan might never come to the stage of thinking that he was too good for food and that he subsisted on atoms from the air." (Narayan, 1958: 30) Narayan's characters are not created in the scheme of epic-values where the chaos of bodily life is churned and united towards certain static official values and norms that one considered immutable. If Narayan had followed it, he would have helped Raju to transcend his trivial material drives to achieve the sense of stability and peace in some moral or spiritual revelation. Raju's story could have become like the story of Ratnakar the social offender, who, after a divine revelation turns into 'Rishi Valmiki' with all the appropriate penance and repentance to legitimize the sainthood. But Raju's mind is blissfully innocent of any dark repentance or the suffering of conscience. His sainthood is accidental, a result of Velan's misunderstanding. Fasting too is enforced on him by a misrepresentation of his words and Raju has to give up his food-thoughts because he loses all privacy and has no chance to look for food anymore. "He felt enraged at the persistence of food-thoughts.

With a sort of vindictive resolution he tells himself, 'I'll chase away all thought of food. For the next ten days, I shall eradicate all thoughts of tongue and stomach from my mind'." (Narayan, 1958: 213) Paradoxically, desperation brings an enforced peace and calm and like a true saint he finds himself uttering: "If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?" (Narayan, 1958: 213) These are unresolved ambiguities; a desperate need to beguile the public to save his self-created image blur into an intensely qualitative moment for himself. Words are strange things. Raju's own words often mesmerize him into honest and sincere feelings: "For the first time in his life he was making an earnest effort, for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application, outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested." (Narayan, 1958: 213)

Raju is no saint or magician. His helpless resignation when he has his back to the wall is pathetically human. Burdening him with a sainthood would rob Raju of his true beauty. Even when at the end he utters: "Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs", (Narayan, 1958: 221) it sounds more like the coldness

of death creating hallucination to the semi-conscious brain of the dying Raju than a conscious and confident forecast of a saint. The pathetic beauty of Raju's ordinariness is more true because the memory of him stealing the last bit of stale food to appease his hunger still lingers in the reader's memory. "In the inner sanctum, he briskly thrust his hand into a niche and pulled out his aluminium pot. He sat down behind the pedestal, swallowed his food in three or four large mouthfuls making as little noise as possible. It was stale rice, dry and stiff and two days old; it tasted awful, but it appeased his hunger. He washed it down with water. He went to the backyard and rinsed his mouth noiselessly – he didn't want to smell of food when he went back to the mat." (Narayan, 1958: 211)

It is truly impossible for a saint with his necessary philosophic detachment to invoke a scene of such moving poignance; only a man who is innately earthly in all his encounters with life may come out to be as ambivalent and unredeemable as Raju.

The characters in Narayan's novels are not conscious of their strengths and weaknesses. Even the author seems unpredisposed and unprepared. Only the daily accidental encounters with the life surround

them bring out their flairs and foibles. Raju's life has been a series of accidents that never cease to surprise him as well as the readers. The Railway Raju is a loquacious guide, but there has been no indication of the lascivious and calculating lover that he later turns out to be when he meets Rosie. Again, when on the height of prosperity, he displays the pomp, prodigality and damn-care attitude unimaginable in the Raju who once inspired and supported Rosie, even at the cost of his own mother. And immediately after this display of haughtiness, Raju does not experience any discomfort in his jail-life, and the servility that he adopts to please the jailor is a far cry from the Swami who demonstrates nothing but dignity, wisdom and self-effacement.

In the case of the sweet vendor Jagan, the most throbbing and weakest sides of his nature are buried under the burden of his Gandhian philosophy and his daily rituals of life so carefully and proudly undertaken to give his life a well-defined pattern. Jagan's character is neatly laid out to the reader with apparently no paradox to imply a double-decked existence of meaning. Jagan leads a neat and disciplined life. His Gandhism is no pretention like Sriram's; his *charkha* and non-violence are not stained with hypocrisy, though certain human touches

are there, like compromising his own industrious attempt to tan the dead cow's leather to make his own shoes. The pollution it created and the revolt of his family enforces him to give it up and depend on a cobbler's words of trust: "Afterwards he just trusted the cobbler at the Albert Mission to supply his rather complicated footwear." (Narayan 1967: 10) Jagan believes in naturopathy and submits his own body to the benevolence of fresh vegetables in his diet and to the medical potentialities of herbs and leaves, specially the margosa. Jagan has great faith in the potency of margosa for he believes that it is the ambrosia that kept the Gods alive. The stark simplicity of his diet of a little stone-ground wheat cooked with honey and greens is not an excuse for miserliness like the landlord in *Mr. Sampath* who is too eager to consume the delicacies that he gets free. Sitting all day long surrounded by the mouth-watering aroma of sweetmeats fried in pure ghee has no effect on him; rather, he is a bit philosophical, believing that all sweetmeats are after all the same. Jagan's obsession for purity stands him apart from other businessmen. While others cheat their customers by using vegetable oil, Jagan tries his best to procure the pure and aromatic ghee made from cow's milk: "I had sent one of the cooks to

collect cow's butter from Koppal, he came back at five in the morning and I came straight in before eight in order to melt it right. A fortune had been spent on it, and I didn't want to risk over boiling it." (Narayan, 1967: 90)

His honesty in this matter earns him the confidence of his customers and he thrives well as a businessman. Being an astute Gandhian he is sincerely keen on neatly fitting his life in the uncomplicated philosophy of the Mahatma – the philosophy of simple living and high thinking. He gets up at five in the morning and brushes his teeth with a margosa twig. He spins everyday for an hour and wears a simple loose *jibba* over his dhoti made from the crude materials spun with his own hands. He lives in a simple house and foregoes any renovation to equip it with modern facilities: "Everything in this house had the sanctity of usage, which was the reason why no improvement was possible." (Narayan, 1967: 19) He reads the *Gita* regularly and his mind often wanders in the luxurious habit of philosophizing: "He stood for a moment gazing at the stars, enthralled at the spectacle of the firmament. 'One still wonders,' he told himself, 'but the problem remains. Who lives in those? We are probably glimpsing the real

Heaven and don't know it. Probably all our ancient sages are looking down at us. What are those constellations?' He couldn't be clear about them. His astronomy was limited to the location of the Polestar from Orion's Belt or Sword or some such point, for which knowledge he had been awarded a second-class badge many years ago when he was a Boy Scout. For all the million stellar bodies sparkling, as far as Jagan was concerned, they might not be more than the two he had been taught to identify. In addition to Orion and the Polestar he often noticed an extraordinary lively firework in the sky, which sometimes stood poised over the earth in the westerly direction. He called it sometimes Venus, sometimes Jupiter, never being sure, but admiring it unreservedly and feeling proud that he was also a part of the same creation." (Narayan, 1967: 18) Jagan loves to contemplate – either on some abstract philosophy that often visits the simplest of minds as a vague and beautiful mist, or to walk down memory lane to his childhood or youthful days, when his home was too crowded to offer any privacy to its inmates. Here, he is slightly different from Margayya. Margayya considers such activities as useless and consciously subverts this tendency whenever they threaten to overwhelm him. He too, possesses

an imaginative mind, and even the smooth surface of his wooden desk sends him day-dreaming: "Margayya loved to gaze on its smooth, rippled grains – remnants of gorgeous designs that it had acquired as a tree trunk – hieroglyphics containing the history of the tree. Whenever he gazed on it, he felt as if he were looking at a sea and a sky in some dream world. 'But what is the use of gazing on these and day-dreaming?' he tells himself, sharply pulling his mind back." (Narayan, 1952: 149)

These characters are surprising combinations of ambiguous traits that turn them into beings with a double-consciousness. Margayya is enchanted by the vision of blue mountains, forest, and green fields, but unlike the poet he sees them as the potential source of wealth. Because of his worldly shallowness he refuses to consider anything abstract as having any value. For him, money is the only "reality which he could touch and calculate and increase." (Narayan, 1952: 150) Jagan too is trapped within his limited vision. He has ample control over his own life-style, for here his activities speak for him, which is a far more simple way of expressing oneself than in words. Words are abstractions and these characters are at a loss when facing questions that are not

tangible or concrete. Though the saint-like rigour and self-control in his daily life often inspires him to utter certain philosophic banalities, Jagan is unable to explain them when questioned. In fact, Narayan opens the novel by warning his readers directly not to take Jagan as a person of great spiritual wisdom, In spite of his sincere Gandhism: " 'Conquer taste, and you will have conquered the self,' said Jagan to his listener, who asked, 'Why conquer the self?' Jagan said, 'I do not know, but all our sages advise us so'."(Narayan, 1967: 7) Jagan is the mediocre person who is all admiration for the great sages, and in his attempt to supersede his mediocrity by following the uncomprehended foggy path of their philosophical utterances he muddles his life, turning it grotesque.

Jagan is unaware that the most throbbing and sensitive point in his life is money. This becomes apparent in his funny and self-deceptive activities like stealing his own money to avoid tax payment: "This cash was in an independent category; he viewed it as free cash, whatever that might mean, a sort of immaculate conception, self-generated, arising out of itself and entitled to survive without reference to any tax." (Narayan, 1967: 14) On this subject, he is free of any prick of conscience since

the Mahatma has not set any dictat on this matter. Jagan, we find, is very much secretive on the subject of his daily earnings and does not trust even his son. He keeps his savings hidden in the loft. He counts his daily income only when his staff has left. He keeps his drawer padded with a folded towel in order to muffle the sound of coins being emptied from the bronze jug. It is money that creates a gaping void between the father and the son. While for Jagan, earning money is the only means of his wish fulfillment, Mali takes the affluence for granted. Economic opulence gives Mali the confidence and boldness to defy his father and even society. He gives up his studies, steals his father's money to fly to America, returns with a girl of foreign birth whom he introduces as his wife. He continues to blackmail his father emotionally with a purpose to fleece a huge amount of money from him in the name of a strange project of manufacturing stories. Jagan ultimately realizes the evil effect of money when he discovers that Mali's marriage is fake and finds him leading an immoral life in the company for some other spoilt children of the rich society of Malgudi.

Now, how would one expect Jagan to handle the murky situation? Jagan and the likes of him have a narrow focus of life. This implies that

only certain faculties in their nature function, like a quick wit, a power to handle only the practical and material aspects of life, etc. Their natures lack the various emotional traits that usually bring depth of perception and the power to grasp the enormities and densities of human life, a power to realize the psychological complexities which work to transform the most beloved person into a veritable stranger. These characters, thus, never develop or show signs of growth. They remain confused and muddle-headed, groping to solve the confusion of their situation and failing squarely. They became unpredictable and unfinished beings full of loopholes. They lack the integrated givenness of their personality while moving beyond the dialectical closures. Thus their reactions to difficult situations are very unexpected and often on the verge of dangerous adventurism. When Sampath faces the breakdown of his press, he immediately switches to the more adventurous project of filmmaking. Raju's whole life has been a series of misadventures. Dr. Rann of *The Talkative Man* (1983) as a youth faces the bitterness and feud that turn his love life sour. His sensitive and young mind cannot overcome the shock of his beloved's sworn statement against him in the court. His reaction is peculiar and

desperate. Instead of suffering the normal period of depression and gradually recovering to outgrow it, as is the way of normal people, he suddenly disappears from his wife's life. When he leaves her, he is an unredeemable misogynist. Wandering through countries, he entraps pretty women, lives a conjugal life for a brief period and abandons them right and left. He is erratic and elusive in his ways and the police or the girls have a hard time to pursue this global philanderer. According to his wife, "he had unsuspected depths of duplicity." (Narayan, 1967: 118) The myopic perception of the rogue conceives life as a muddled continuum and he tries to manage it with wit and cunning. With his/her impulse to shun the persuasion of the long and exacting unity in life the rogue prefers, according to R.B. Heilman, to live by breaks and shifts, dividing his life in small episodes which is manageable by wit and does not need the foresight of the more subtle mind.

Jagan's life is no exception. His joining Gandhi's Satyagraha is an attempt on his part to give a certain meaning to his life. Most of his life has been passed under the discomforting impression of himself as an imbecile. In spite of the innocent revelry of childhood, Jagan's fate had allotted him a secondary role of acting as a shadow of his elder

brother, who, by virtue of his age and the confidence of a 'born diplomat' dictated him. While hunting grasshoppers, Jagan is on no account permitted to catch one himself. Instead, "He could only stand behind his brother and wait for his luck, with his own little tin in hand." (Narayan, 1967: 141) The mildness of his nature beside his more dashing siblings could command neither love nor any respect. On reflection Jagan realizes that they never had liked him. After his marriage his happiness is marred by the family pressure for a child, the twisted remarks on his wife's barrenness and his own sense of ineptitude: "Despite all his bragging there was no outside proof of his manhood." (Narayan, 1967: 164) Jagan's desperate adventurism is surely an unconscious reaction to all the pent up feelings of inadequacy. "He remembered how as a volunteer over twenty years ago he had rushed into the British Collector's bungalow and climbed the roof in order to bring down the Union Jack and plant the Indian flag in its place. Helmeted police were standing guard in the compound but the speed of his action completely took them by surprise and they had to clamber after him to the roof, but not before he had seized the Union Jack in a crocodile grip and hugged the flag post while attempting to

plant his own flag. They had to beat him and crack open his skull in order to make him let go his hold." (Narayan, 1967: 132) It is almost a death wish, an answer for Jagan's feeling of ineptitude, as if the very deadly step could provide his life with some dignity. Later on, the emotional domination of Mali over his life disturbs the tranquility he wishes to gain in his simple mode of living. It all begins when, on the day his wife dies, he loses his nerve and catching hold of Mali's hands he wails like a woman. Mali's reaction is far from sympathetic: "Mali had shaken himself off and watched his father from a distance with a look of dismay and puzzlement." (Narayan, 1967: 37) Jagan's feminine vulnerability, his eagerness to mother the motherless boy distances Mali further away from him. Jagan is not mentally equipped to find its root, and his son's behaviour never ceases to puzzle him: "Secretly his mind was bothered as to why there was always an invisible barrier between them. He had never been harsh to the boy; so long as he could remember, he had always got him whatever he wanted these twenty-odd years; during the last ten particularly he had become excessively considerate, after the boy lost his mother." (Narayan, 1967: 36) All attempts of Jagan to take care of his son and his motherly personal

touches are met with indifference and cynicism: "I do not want you to cook for me hereafter. We have our college canteen. I can look after myself." (Narayan, 1967: 24) Jagan mistakenly tries to earn his son's love with his hardly earned money and this proves disastrous. His son continues to ignore him and instead starts hunting him for money. Again, Jagan's reaction is quick and surprising; he disturbs the steady profit of his sweetshop by cheapening the price. This is another desperate adventurism that surprises everybody. It is a sort of death instinct that visits him, an impulse for self-destruction and degradation when he faces a situation that he is too ordinary to grasp and comprehend. While facing the problem of his son he tries to find an individual order of feeling that would give him some clue. He is incompetent to dwell on abstraction and has no other way but to go back to the solid evidences of the past that had already happened. His own life stands as a shocking contrast to Mali's. The gap with his son does not open him to the complexities of modern life, nor does it make him realize the inevitability of a generation gap that has characterized the modern era. Being glued to his own prejudices he takes over a very ordinary pattern of feeling in his bewilderment and incomprehension:

His uncharacteristic peep into his inner self leads to a foamy sentimentalism. He finds money as the root of all problems and decides to distribute his sweets in half price. But his charity brings unusual complications, as it affects other businessmen who come to threaten him. It is true that he gets a chance to palliate his conscience by allowing the children to indulge in sweets, whose wistful, longing looks had haunted him everyday. But the hypertrophy of practical intelligence has never allowed a full emotional development in his character. So In spite of having potentialities of greatness, characters like Jagan can never turn into a saint, for his mind is submerged in materiality. Jagan's outburst of charity is short-lived and he soon resumes his usual course in business. However, Mali's problem continues to persist and his home turns into a hell for Jagan. A chance meeting with a stranger gives him the break; he immediately leaves his home for a different life.

It is quite noticeable how, when faced with a crisis Jagan wastes no time in shifting his path to a different direction. He has no qualms in reducing the price of his sweets and suffering loss, or leaving his son Mali to taste his 'dose of prison life'. (Narayan, 1967: 184) Jagan and the likes of him are beings who never grow but manage their life in

breaks and shifts. Their shallowness forestalls the prolonged process of maturing. Jagan's '*banaprastha*' is not the final ripening of growth; in fact it is far from voluntary. Like Raju's sainthood it is an act of desperation. When the bearded sculptor tells him that at one stage of life one should retreat to '*banaprastha*', Jagan cannot but agree: "Jagan felt so heartily in agreement that he wanted to explain why he needed an escape – his wife's death, son's growth and strange later development, and how his ancient home behind the Lawley Statue was beginning to resemble hell on earth – but he held his tongue." (Narayan, 1967: 120) If Mali had shown the slightest respect for his father's sentiments, Jagan could hardly have estranged himself from the home he loved so much. Like Raju's death, Jagan's segregation is also a forced one. A normal '*banaprastha*' is undertaken with a matured understanding and hence renunciation of life, but in Jagan's case it is a stark reality like death: "He'd breathe, watch, and occasionally keep in touch, but the withdrawal would not be different from death." (Narayan, 1967: 177)

Like all his previous adventurism that he pursued in the name of some idealism, he escapes, from the hell of his home in the name of installing the Goddess Gayatri. Some critics have made much of this

hint of an ideal. Som P. Sharma writes: "R.K. Narayan's novel *The Vendor of Sweets* is a quest novel in which the protagonist Jagan, now nearing his sixties, is searching for the feminine. Beginning as a lean ascetic when the novel opens his quest culminates with the prospect of having a new orientation to the archetype of the feminine concretized as the Indian goddess Gayatri Devi." (Ram, 1981: 160) This depicts Jagan following a linear quest in life and in such a project a character cannot be ambivalent. But a closer look at the text will show how Jagan is eternally caught up in his ambivalences – the Gandhian ascetic piling up lakhs of money in his loft and dreaming of his son wearing striped shirts and riding bicycles to vie with the aristocrats. Jagan's aspiration for the feminine is unquestionable for he is found regretting the absence of his mother or his wife who had made his home so bright and happy. This felt vacuum instigates him to accept Grace and wait anxiously to hear her footsteps. But the creation of the Goddess is not the culmination of Jagan's life-long quest. Jagan is not a uni-dimensional character but in him is perceived the confusion of different pulls. In fact, when the sculptor asks him to buy the land and help him to install the Goddess, Jagan is resistant. But when the sculptor hints about a possible retreat

for Jagan, his disturbed mind immediately sees a way of escaping from the galling chains of paternal love. He sees the sculptor as his saviour: "The man had said that he needed help for installing the image of the Goddess, while he himself thought that he was being helped." ((Narayan, 1967: 122) It is true that the sculptor's powerful imagination of the Goddess' beauty mesmerizes him, but it does not turn into an inspiration for him. Instead, his practical mind starts weighing the pros and cons of the project: "the man had really communicated a thrilling vision when he described the Goddess with five heads. Should he help him or not to complete his task? He knew nothing about him. How could he trust him? On what basis? After he finished the image, what then? ..." (Narayan, 1967: 122) Jagan tries for the last time to stay back and cleanse his home of any taint that was made by Mali and Grace. He tries to persuade Mali to marry Grace, but fails. It is only when he loses his last straw that Jagan decides to follow the sculptor's advice. The final chapter, it may be noted, is filled with all sorts of practical settlements and mental preparation on the part of Jagan, and nowhere in the confused corners of Jagan's mind do we perceive the illuminating presence of the Goddess. Like Raju's death, Jagan's renunciation too is

situational. Raju, while playing the role of a saint to earn his food is trapped in his own role-playing. When hungry, he could not convince the stupid and fanatic villagers that he was not a Swami. Thus he could not break his fast and resolves to die. Jagan too is entrapped in an irreconcilable situation. His love for his son is not reciprocated and the lack of any satisfaction continues to keep him thirsting for it, even at the cost of his own dignity. Jagan's renunciation is stark and inevitable for him thought it comes as a surprise to others.

Though Jagan should not be viewed in the light of any ideal, he is a lovable character. He is not equipped to show much greatness but he has a sense of ultimate values. When a schoolgirl stands longingly in front of the display of sweets in his shop, Jagan is torn between his conscience and his business instinct. He is warm by nature and immediately accepts Grace, as the angel of his lonely existence. He is able to rise beyond his prejudices to perceive her goodness. He is a conscientious person and acknowledges his obligation to her. He asks his cousin on the last moment of his departure to tell Grace "that if she ever wants to go back to her country, I will buy her a ticket. It's a duty we owe her. She was a good girl." (Narayan, 1967: 185)

The prominence of Jagan's vivid and excruciating consciousness misleads us to analyse Jagan's story as a spiritual quest, for we as readers are trained to appreciate only the higher aspect of human life that we expect a literary text to project. As social beings, we are institutionalized and tend to appreciate literature as the medium of expressing the higher values created by the official world. But the novel is a unique genre having an inherent ability to dialogize anything abstracted as higher value or sacred. So it needs a different orientation of mind to perceive how the apparent psychologisation of Jagan is dialogized by an ineffaceable materiality. It is his innate habit to embrace with a solid faith all that is material – the daily exchanges with other human beings, the solid equipments that help us to run our life on easier wheels – like a room with sufficient light, a bathroom, a floor of cool clay that makes the hot days tolerable, a writing-desk cherished by all, a backdoor that helps a convenient escape if the house turns into a hell. And over all these is an imperishable dependence on the security of money. In the entire tantrum created by Jagan's psychologisation we as readers tend to forget a solid fact – when Jagan leaves for his

'*banaprastha*', his eyes brimming with tears and his heart anxious for his son in jail, Jagan is careful to take his passbook with him!

Narayan's grotesque chracters are permeated with ambivalence for they are dominated by the carnal. As the earth is both the grave and the womb, carnality entails the ambivalent existence of heaven and hell, creation and destruction, a warmth for life and at the same time an inclination towards death. These characters, like Icarus dare to fly but are eternal victims of earth's gravitation. Raju is neither a hero nor a villain, but both the characteristics of the hero and villain are the ambivalent reality in Raju's nature. His love for Rosie drives him to leave his dear mother but at the same time he uses Rosie's talent to mint money. It is difficult to thrust a final comment on the characters. How would one define, for example, the financial expert? Margayya is a financial wizard and piles up money with feverish zeal. To achieve his success, he religiously undertakes the rituals to please goddess Laxshmi for forty days. Yet, on the other hand, he does not hesitate to take all advantages of the war situation to suit his purpose. He does not hesitate to publish 'Domestic Harmony', yet when his son turns lecherous he is full of concern and anxiety for his daughter-in-law.

Narayan's heroes are not made to wear a halo or stand out as extraordinary. They are flawed beings and their weaknesses are not like the tragic flaw, which glamorizes the doom of a tragic hero. They are ordinary people who commit blunders or cannot resist their carnal attractions. Though they love to thrive amongst the crowd, in a way they are lonely creatures because they are the 'others'. The implication is that these characters who depend on society for their existence and some of whom are social parasites are rudderless floaters. While the ordinary people restrict their lives to a certain pattern of existence following the social norms with a sense of purpose, the floaters may launch themselves anywhere, irrespective of time and space constraints. For this very reason they can best expose the social life denuded of its artificial pattern. These are heroes in a reversed or inverted sense: instead of upholding certain humanitarian values, some noble causes or philanthropic sentiments they remind us that there is always a hidden underbelly, that though the moon may look like a flat silver plate it is actually round and there is a darker side of it hidden from our view. While heroes of serious monologic writings achieve certain identities of invariant structures to be used as parameters against which we justify

their actions, their identities are metamorphic or series dependent. While heroes of monologic novels depend on time and memory to ripen and culminate, these characters have no sense of memory; hence their path is ridden with the repeated history of blunders.

The question normally arises as to how a blundering, law-breaking, flippant trickster can achieve the amount of sympathy and admiration to claim a hero's status in a novel. Though a loner in his psychological orientation, he is certainly not a creature of necessity. Rather, society often becomes a victim of his thoughtless pranks or even deliberate selfish schemes. But quite paradoxically, these characters are charismatic, warm, responsive and often show flickers of very lovable qualities. Their actions are often undecipherable, ambivalent; a subtle mix of some noble intension caught within the limited premises of a selfish project. Mr. Sampath's self-appointed guardianship of Srinivas is good-natured and the inclusion of Srinivas in the film-making project is an extension of this good-will and responsibility. Yet, at the same time Sampath makes use of Srinivas' penmanship and shrewdly coaxes out of him a good script for the film. Thus, ambivalence turns these characters into interesting studies of human nature.

It is also true that had the author, by his technique evoked pathos around the victims of these erring heroes, the rogue character would have found it difficult to secure the hero's status. But Narayan as a writer is impartial and somewhat stoical, and he projects the victims as equally imperfect beings. The method is, as Heilman puts it: "giving no place, or atleast no prominence, to other characters who, by being larger or nobler people and thus having a stronger claim on our 'right feelings', might usurp the sympathy due the picaro." (Heilman, 1968: 104) Even the good people in Narayan's novels possess certain disagreeable personal traits, while the rogue seems more just in claiming our sympathy. We find that before Sampath's exuberance Srinivas is too philosophical; before Raman, Daisy is too sterile, and before Vasu the good Nataraj is too effete. In fact, it would have been hard for Narayan to procure for the '*rakshasa*' Vasu the legality of a person of wisdom in the novel, had he wanted to crowd his works with flawless characters. But when the novel ends with Vasu's mysterious death we perceive how characters who had previously enjoyed a camaraderie fall out from each other's company as they are all infected by the virus of a secret suspicion. These characters begin to mistrust

each other and behind each other's back they point at their friends as murderers. It is interesting how Sen's high-sounding rhetoric against Nehru or the poet's emotional rendering of love and beauty boil down to such petty gossip mongering. Instantly are forgotten Nataraj's altruistic deeds, his enthusiasm to publish the poet's work with aplomb or to save the temple elephant – at first from sickness and then from the bloody claws of Vasu. At the end when he stands alone, abandoned by all, how right, we feel were the deriding words of the sniggering Vasu regarding Nataraja's friends, though at the time of congenial friendship his words had sounded mean. Vasu outshines the good Nataraj because beside his zealous and active pursuit of his art or his cool professionalism, the lazy and passive world of Nataraj and his circle seems meaningless and hollow. Beside the tyranny and open enmity of Vasu, the chameleon like friends of Nataraj looks sick and languid. Narayan's rendering of his heroes is made in the spirit of the carnival in literature. He never lets them grow above the human, neither as supermen, nor as demons. Though throughout the novel Vasu inflicts terror in everybody's heart and achieves the stature of a '*rakshasa*', the whole image crumbles down like the sandcastle when it is found how a puny unsuspecting

mosquito was the cause of his fall. Narayan, in a single pull brings him down to the level of the human, and around him the pathos is created that is always due to the fallible human race.

Narayan's impartiality and motiveless presentation of characters is obvious, for he never imparts any special treatment to the female characters in order to highlight the cause of feminism. Though many of his female characters like Savitri, Rosie or Daisy pursue their soul's aspiration or yearning for dignity and a distinct identity in society, these characters undergo the expected trials for walking against the tide, Narayan never tries to secure for them the reader's sympathy. In a way they are victims, however, they do not stand out as flawless on this count, Rosie is the finest of Narayan's creations as her naïve beauty, her feminine vulnerability is subtly and imperceptively diluted with an obstinate spirit selfishly making way towards a goal. Rosie is a natural artist, but her feelings and thoughts are not elaborately dwelt upon by the author. This makes her seem more automatic and less human. Even Raju does not have access to the working of her soul. Her differences with her husband are known by her sulky moods. Her attempts to love her husband are not strong enough and her married life is a failure.

Raju, instinctively finds her weakness and praises her dance. He gives her much attention, and everything that her husband failed to provide, and she is at once drawn to him. But, it should be noted; there is no mention of her falling in love with Raju. She starts depending on his ingenuity. It is true that she tries hard to make up with her husband, but she fails. Somehow Marco, who is absorbed in the past through his research on cave paintings, denotes a sort of withdrawal from the present flux of life; in spite of being an intellectual, his views on the art of dancing is prejudiced and backdated. Raju, on the other hand, exudes the spirit of life's forward movement, a throbbing life force that Rosie instinctively grabs at for her own survival. When her husband rejects her, she surrenders herself completely to Raju. She lives with him and turns a deaf ear to all insults flung at her by Raju's mother and uncle. She is not the self-effacing girl who would walk away from Raju's life to save him from social derision. Unlike Savitri, who foolishly tries to live alone without realizing how a middleclass housewife economically depends on the male, Rosie is more cautious and proceeds to strengthen her economic freedom.

After her husband's desertion of her, Rosie craftily makes the best use of Raju's infatuation for her. She does not regret or suffer any prick of conscience when Raju's poor mother leaves her home for Rosie's sake. Rosie goes on practicing her dance and acting as a housewife to Raju. She is the artist whose emotive life is lived only within the sphere of art. She has no feeling or sentiment outside this sphere. She is sometimes ingratiated towards her husband for being a gentleman and towards Raju for protecting her, but any sign of emotional attachment on her part is hardly pronounced. Her husband's success brings tears to her eyes and for a moment she becomes nostalgic, but the overwhelming force that motivates her life is the fulfillment of her own goal. Her only love is the image of herself performing on the stage. Even the audience does not count. She confesses that for her the audience is nothing but a blank space. She has no care for money or glamour. When Raju is sent to jail she tries her best to help him, though in her mind she remains stoical: "This is Karma. What can we do?" (Narayan, 1958: 193) Nothing is said about her feelings. She does not go back to her husband, which Raju had needlessly feared. She does not wait for Raju to come out of the jail.

Her life has gained a momentum. She has risen in society through her husband, and in her profession with the support of Raju. After this she never looks back. Her emancipation is unlike Nora's. There is no attempt by Narayan to analyse her feelings or to idealize her. She is like a bird – all physical and instinctive in its existence, leaving its nest, the fledglings, and rising up in the blue sky for the sheer pleasure of it.

The polyphonic style of presentation and the carnival spirit of materialization of the ideal provide a different angle to the question of emancipation. No movement is ideal, for to achieve a practical goal, very practical questions have to be dealt with, and in the material life the path towards freedom is neither bedecked with flowers, nor are the treaders of the path flawless angels. Thus the movement always creates its own history of power, subordination and selfishness. Though women suffer in the male dominated world, consciously or unconsciously her helplessness often achieves a dangerous potential for subordinating or browbeating the male. Women are not above the human, and not above their own share of solipsism. Narayan never attempts to idealize them as selfless angels. The Savitries, Rosies and Daisies are not educated in the history of the feminist movement initiated in the West, but as human

beings and women of their society they react against their own predicaments in their own ways, along with their flaws and drawbacks. This realistic presentation of them and their reactions bring to surface certain questions – is the freedom from subordination achieved by counter domination? Which is the right path – Savitri's silent darkrooms or Daisy's vocal protest on behalf of her mission, excluding everything else from life? Which is the right choice – Savitri's surrender or Daisy's escape from the bonds of marriage: "Married life is not for me. I have thought it over. It frightens me. I am not cut out for the life you imagine. I can't live except alone. It won't work." (Narayan, 1977: 178-79) If Rosie has achieved her ideal condition of a meaningful existence, is it not achieved by using the support of her husband and her lover? Is it possible for both the male and the female in society to achieve anything without the support of each other? Narayan never ventures towards any conclusion on this, his task seems to end in presenting the dialogics on women's position, her predicaments and her reactions. In Tagore's musical play *Chitrangada* the plain looking princess demands to be accepted as what she is. Neither does she crave to be valorized, nor treated as ordinary. She would like to be Chitrangada and only herself

beside Arjuna. Ideally, Chitrangada seems to be the epitome of feminism, but if we try to fit her perspective into Narayan's world, it turns out as inadequate and superfluous. Deep within her soul every woman may crave to be a Chitrangada but not every woman is fortunate to be a born princess, plain or beautiful. Narayan's carnival world would never allow us to ride the clouds, as the compulsions of life cannot be avoided or overlooked. The princess Chitrangada's life had been devoid of complications until Arjuna displays his indifference to her love. This causes her to realize her plainness. Savitri too looks at the mirror to find the trace of beauty, which she thinks, would bring back her husband from the other woman. But she faces a truth starker than her husband's atrocities, when she ventures out of her sheltered existence. It is her economic dependence on her husband that turns out to be her 'heel of Achilles'. It is this economic subordination that makes her subservient. Her eagerness to please and suppress her voice from uttering her preferences makes her husband take her for granted. Chitrangada the princes would never face the problem of an ordinary Savitri. While Chitrangada wins the respect of Arjuna by her brave deeds and altruism, the Savitries have to waste most part of their lives

struggling to achieve a certain amount of dignity in their limited existence. Rosie's achievement, beside Savitri's, is more positive, though, ironically, a certain amount of selfishness was required.

Though Rosie shows no sign of avarice, it cannot be denied that her money, combined with Raju's ingenuity has done much of the magic. It is her money that buys her a spacious room, ideal for a dancer to practice her dance. With her money she is able to own a group of musicians who could accompany her rehearsals day and night. She has a dancing teacher permanently residing within the premises of her house. Money and fame bring actors and dancers flocking round Rosie and her days are passed happily in their company – "Nalini enjoyed their company immensely, and I often saw them in her hall, some lying on carpets, some sitting up, all talking and laughing, while coffee and food were being carried to them." (Narayan, 1958: 169) Relieved from the household chores, she now enjoys more spare time and the ideal ambiance to improve her God-gifted talent. Although Raju is pompous and funny when he congratulates himself for creating a star, he is of course right in many aspects. Raju deftly adopts various promotional ploys to heighten the image of Rosie as a danseuse, while mystifying

her personality to the general public by creating a barrier between them. This aura of mystery heightens Rosie to a cult-level. Raju may be pompous, but the public too is subservient, for they worship not only Rosie's dance, but are awestruck by the aura created around her by her fame and prosperity. The more she is alienated from them by residing in her upper apartments while they wait for her below, the more they revere. It is true that Raju's avarice goes too far and becomes the cause of a strained relation between himself and Rosie.

Narayan obliquely throws up the debate between nature and culture. Rosie is an icon now. She has the economic independence and also choices that are taken by herself: In spite of all these, the question that seeks an answer is, is nature changeable? Is culture predominant over nature? Narayan may not bring the postmodernist argument that culture is everything; similarly he may not fully subscribe to the innate aspect of human nature. In spite of the roguish nature of most of his protagonists, one finds that culture has some impact on them. Rosie's transformation helped her to rediscover herself; however she never discloses her feelings, if any, towards her husband and even for Raju, because it is in her materialistic and utilitarian nature not to be

sentimental. Similarly, Raju after his jail term is no more sanguine and sentimental about Rosie. He is only adapting to a new situation. In this argument we may find a similarity between the two. Therefore Narayan's world is multifaceted and open to various strands of articulation.

II

In Narayan's polyphonic and carnival world the tiniest of voices, if taken notice of, is capable of overturning any established and sanctified pattern of meaning. As in a household the most insignificant material turns out to be the most important – like the cup to hold the tea or the nail to hang a picture, Narayan's world too turns meaningful with the support of such apparently insignificant factors. It is a totally material existence, where even the inanimate objects have their own language or message and become signs that regulate the meaning of the work. It has already been observed how the unique non-violent footwear, the margosa or the pure ghee made of cow's milk contribute to the meaning of Jagan's Gandhism; Sriram's easeful indolence is signified by a

special chair, the dark suffering of Savitri's mind by the darkroom or Margayya's surprising flair for numbers by his ragged notebook.

In *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983) the accepted theme is of a tiger achieving true enlightenment with the help of a guru. This theme has the timeless quality of a fable, or in Bakhtin's words, a monologic linearity of pattern. But this is achieved only when the insignificant materials that are scattered everywhere in the novel are overlooked. These ordinary unobtrusive factors question the apparently idealistic theme of the novel and have the potentiality to polemicize the whole project. Even if Narayan had this monologic project in mind, his habit of depending on the materiality of human life or the polyphonic system of placing each character against the other, or placing ideas on the same platform with other ideas bring out unexpected nuances that can embarrass the project. The first question that faces us is – is the story a fable or not?

Critics have often deciphered that in *A Tiger*, Narayan has used the traditional Indian experience of the fable as a means of expressing some age-old moral, religious or philosophical beliefs. This has occurred to the critics precisely because Narayan has introduced a tiger and not a human being as the hero of the novel.

When a writer in his narrative replaces the human hero with some animal, it may turn fabulous, but not unusual. Fables are designed, according to L.T. Lemon, to make a point quickly, clearly and sharply. In fables animals often act out human roles. In one of Aesop's fables about a lion and a goat, the two animals resolve to be polite to each other instead of fighting when they see the vultures hovering to pounce upon whichever should fall in defeat. The instant moral served to us by this story is – it is better to drink second at the spring than to furnish food for vultures. This realization of this moral is due to the age-old human experiences that work behind our cognizance. It is nothing new but recognition of the inevitable patterns of human struggle for existence. Thus in fables lions and goats are actually human beings wearing the appearances of these animals. The reason that works behind such adaptations of animal identities is not because the writer wishes to understand the animal consciousness but because these animals are ready-made signs; they are human creations and stand for universal qualities. In a fable the lion is almost always strong-headed, the vulture greedy and pouncing, the fox cunning, the wolf deceiving, the owl old

and wise and the sheep mild and foolish. These signs help the author to manage a quic`. or immediate transmission of his message.

Narayan's story about the tiger Raja may be taken as a fable if one recognizes the broader outline of the story that shows a wild and ferocious tiger that, under the influence of a yogi explores through philosophical discourse the pathway to enlightenment. In that case, as in a fable, the tiger may easily be replaced by a human being, like, for example Vasu of *The Man-Eater*, who has those villainous qualities we usually attribute to a man-eater. Thus it can easily be a story of a villain whose life is spiritually enlightened by a yogi.

But Na¬ayan's stories do not thrive on the broader outlines, which are often found to be deceptive. To understand Narayan, one has to notice the puny unnoticeable details, materials as insignificant as a chair, a whip or a pot of milk. Narayan depends on the solidity of material to create his world that is axiomatic, and not upon any preconceived idea according to which pattern as story is usually moulded. In that case a fable character would have been appropriate. That Narayan is not using a fable character but a tiger fresh from the jungle who's ·nind is still innocent of human society and its complicated

paraphernalia is inevitable when we notice how Narayan carefully brings in the small details of human life – a chair, a torch or a whip and shows the reaction of the tiger when it encounters these objects. A fabled tiger imbibes the human consciousness and so is never surprised by these insignificant details that characterize human existence. But bringing a true tiger is a successful way of introducing a hero, whose 'otherness' to human society is unquestionable. Though the rogue is the 'other', but he is after all a human being, but bringing a wild tiger from the jungle and measuring human society through his innocent consciousness is a unique experiment of Narayan.

As we have already discussed, in order to break any predetermined inevitability and to show a world more generative and dynamic, Narayan has often used a rogue character as the hero. A rogue who cannot be pronounced as good or rejected as evil enjoys a more flexible position in society, a freedom to explore life without any inhibition. The rogue often treads upon the darker and hidden paths of life, a life that is carefully covered up by man's sense of civilization. In spite of his secretiveness, this underworld is the most throbbing and living part of human existence as it exposes him in his raw. The rogue

being mischievous but warm by nature draws out the sensitive and sensuous emotions like passion, anger, gluttony, lust, etc. Wherever the rogue treads, all the scrupulousness for propriety and social codes are exposed in a different light and a new angle is given to the conception of mankind.

What strikes as so interesting about Narayan is that he is always on the lookout for a pretext that would enable him to observe the pranks of mankind and enjoy himself. While he writes about Gandhi, he is not interested in the great man but in the reactions of the average man when thrown into the magnetic vicinity of the legend. He chooses the middleclass because, as William Walsh observes, it is "the most conscious and anxious part of the population. Its members are neither too well off not to know the rub of financial worry nor too indigent to be brutalized by want and hunger." (Walsh, 1990: 74) These people are neither satiated to be complacent, nor too hungry to forget the rational or mental acumen specially gifted to man. They are active consciousnesses, who, though not much educated or sophisticated, nevertheless, with all limitations live a critical existence. It is this dwindling position of the average man that provides for Narayan an

inexhaustible source of humour along with tenderness. The average man's pretensions and hypocrisies are brought out by the rogue and the profound ambivalence haunting the social man's existence is revealed.

In order to expose this world in an unbiased light Narayan chooses the rogue because the rogue is an onlooker, one who shuns the normal path of society and therefore is in an objective position to criticize it. Yet, the rogue too is a human being, born and brought up in the normal social ambience and cannot escape the racial unconscious he is bound to inherit psychologically. These complex psychic predispositions inherited by the character regulate his reflexes and as Jung has ascertained – it is impossible to find among human beings a mind as clean as a slate. The single human being who bore this innocence had been Adam, and since then another Adam is an impossibility. So Narayan, who never ceases to enjoy the pranks of the ordinary people, and uses all possible means to bring out the humour and pathos that enfold them, tries yet for another angle of observation. Leaving human gazers, he now finds a creature whose mind, with regard to human society, is as clean as a slate. It is a tiger fresh from the jungle and not a monkey or other tamer variety that are often brought to

human contact, because the tiger is a mystery to man who evokes in him various contradictory feelings like awe, reverence and fear. Even a lion, so grand and ferocious has been stereotyped by man as the king of the jungle and thus connotes everything grand and majestic. But the tiger has somehow escaped such canonization and man is still undecided whether to hate it or fall in the trap of its fearsome beauty. Narayan brings in a tiger, one of the most richly endowed with physical beauty by nature (Raja is eleven feet and has a bright and shining coat) to act as the unusual hero of his novel. Raja is appraised of human life through the reactions of men around him as he walks into their society.

Raja is unusual because he is not a fable character to provide merely an animal appearance to represent human quality. Narayan, instead, takes a bolder step and ventures to try the impossible. He enters the tiger's consciousness to experience the paradisal state of innocence and then returns to himself to authorize the human world from the tiger's point of view. It is a complicated venture because the author is himself placed in a peculiar position, for in order to express the tiger's uncorrupted state he has to use a language that is beyond pre-lapsarian innocence. The experiences of the tiger turn ambivalent. The very act of

expressing the innocence of the tiger through language entails constant destruction of innocence. Narayan's intention to articulate the tiger's point of view is clear from all the trouble he takes to follow the tiger's supposed mental exercises. To achieve this end, Narayan, as usual falls back upon the solidity of objects that are co-relatively tied to the first step towards consciousness. Raja's introduction to the human race is a sad affair – he sees the solid evidence of human atrocity in the carcasses of his wife and children laid out on a cart. For the first time Raja's confidence as the autocrat of the jungle is shaken. Being still an "unmitigated animal" (Narayan, 1983: 24) he is innocent of grief, and his only negative emotion is fury. He follows the procession with a determination to destroy, but is ultimately prevented from such action by the arrival of a "strange vehicle" which later when he is educated in human language finds to be a jeep. The strangeness of human gadgets bewilders him and gradually he starts suffering from the pangs of fear. This, for him, is another step towards degradation and degeneration. He leaves his natural abode in the jungle and digresses into human society. Desperate and vengeful, he turns into a scheming animal, surprising the villagers with his attacks and succeeds in remaining as elusive as a

mirage: "I had perfected my system of snatching cattle at night. I became quite familiar with their movements and timings and weak points in the enclosures that the creatures were penned in." (Narayan, 1983: 31) Once when he becomes too confident he is almost captured. This encounter brings another revelation for him – he sees man using fire. "More than their weapons, the sight of their flaming torches, red-coloured and smoking viciously, was completely unnerving." (Narayan, 1983: 27) For him it is like visiting the devil. It is only by sheer luck that he escapes. The villagers are confused at Raja's retreat and when they report to the Collector they fail to convince him.

However, by now Raja's contact with human beings has corrupted his pristine chastity and he is now fatally bound to the destiny of man. His next exposure is to human deception in the form of a bait used to trap him; it is a fat and well-fed goat. Raja is captured and carried away in a cage. Experiencing locomotion for the first time Raja feels "strangely uncomfortable" (Narayan, 1983: 43) to be moving without the use of his legs. It is an unnatural feeling for it is man's challenge to nature and defiance of the natural law. Nature has created the limbs for the purpose of movement, but the discovery of locomotion

has stolen away much of this purposiveness. Man, with his gadgets has created a world of leisure around him – a striking contrast with the world of the jungle where rest is not languorous but is taken for the purpose of revitalization. Raja is now forced into this world of meaningless activities. His feeling of emptiness comes while living inside the cage where he has no chance of hunting his food. His life loses all-purpose: "I ran round and round in circles in pursuit of nothing – and that seemed a very foolish senseless act. Atleast a hare running ahead would have provided a show of reason for running." (Narayan, 1983: 51) Unhindered by any obstacle throughout his life in the jungle, Raja is puzzled by the resistance created by the metal bar: "I had had no contact with any sort of metal in my life; now this combination of man and metal subdued me – metal which in various forms served the evil ends of man as prison bars, traps, and weapons." (Narayan, 1983: 47) His efforts to dash out through the metal barriers seem foolish to Captain. He remarks: "All these stupid creatures are alike! They all expect the bars of the cage to be made of butter. No harm if he learns the facts of life in his own way!" (Narayan, 1983: 47) An atmosphere of relativity is created. Raja finds all human activities meaningless and

foolish. On the other hand, Raja bred in the wild, draws a blank with gadgets and Captain gets exasperated with Raja's stupid ignorance. Seen from the animal's point of view man is revealed as an interfering creature, all the time poking his nose in the lives of others. Bloated with self-employed mission, they barge in to tame and train other creatures. The ape enjoys more freedom than other animals and is often accepted in human company, but he too has no illusion about Captain: "He is a damned fool, but doesn't know it; thinks that he is the Lord of the Universe." (Narayan, 1983: 51) Animals find men living in an endless illusion of holding power over the world with the help of all their contraptions. In fact, Raja's life in the circus may be assessed by the numerous mention of human devices like the whip, the endless rows of cages, the electric rod, the chains, enclosures of different sizes for different purposes, floodlights, trapezes and galleries, exposing human vanity and the feigned world of meaningless motions that man creates around himself in the name of civilization. Raja is innocent of this sham world, and of all the strange objects he has to encounter, it is the harmless chair that strikes terror in him and enslaves him to Captain. Later he recalls: "Now I know a chair is a worthless, harmless piece of

furniture but at that time, I dreaded the sight of it. It appeared to me a mighty engine of destruction. How captain and men like him could ever have realized how a chair would look to a tiger is really a wonder." (Narayan, 1983: 53) Raja's predicaments turn endless as Captain continues to teach him new tricks for the circus. The most incongruous situation is created when Raja is forced to drink milk which he finds strange and tasteless, and that too with a goat sharing from the same bowl! Raja would have preferred to taste the goat instead of the bland milk. He is kept hungry for the show and finding Captain's expectations of the tiger's self-restraint going too far, he disobeys and in the middle of the show nips off the goat's head as neatly and deftly as a great surgeon. Captain, however, takes kindly of the matter and overlooks it as a slight mischief: "Don't take too harsh a view of Raja for it … . He didn't do it out of malevolence, but a sudden impulse of mischief. That's a way of life in their jungle society." (Narayan, 1983: 79) He misinterprets Raja's intolerable hunger as a silly prank and nonchalantly generalizes on jungle society. However, the incident brings into relief the hollowness of man's complacent assumption that he is capable of understanding the dumb world around him. He legitimizes his bullying

and meddling with the garb of love and understanding. If he has to be strict and punishing it is not his fault but the sheer stupidity of the others who fail to learn and obey.

Raja's freedom from the circus cages comes with Captain's degeneration under the influence of the film world. Raja recalls: "Although he was indifferent generally in money matters, now a certain degree of greed was overcoming him, a gradual corruption through contact with the film world." (Narayan, 1983: 109) Until now he had retained certain principles of his own, and his relation to his animals, though utilitarian, had the warmth that comes from mutual appreciation and dependence. Madhusudan, the Cine-Director and Producer corrupts the circus-world with a promise of quick-money and more new gadgets, the most vicious of them being the electric rod. At first Captain rejects the rod, but his greed turns him desperate and he starts using it on Raja, turning a deaf ear to Raja's warnings. Raja unintentionally kills Captain when in desperation he uses his forepaw to knock out the rod from Captain's hand. This sudden discovery of his own strength and the comparative fragility of the human body is a revelation to Raja: "It was surprising that such a flimsy creature, no better than a membrane

stretched over some thin framework, with so little stuff inside, should have held me in fear so long." ((Narayan, 1983: 114-15)

The understanding that man's power is illusory and fragile is driven home effectively and meaningfully because it comes after Raja's experience in the circus as well as with the film-people. These are the two make-belief worlds where costumes, make-ups, floodlights and human skill ally together to present the ordinary human being as dazzling and glamorous. In the circus the ringmaster's performance simulates the myth of Androcles – the kind, powerful and the brave whose personality influences the lions who bow and obey him. These dazzling performances hide the back-stage story of whips and chains and unending days of starvation. However, the circus is still better than the film-world because the circus people earn money with the help of skilful performances, tricks and a bit of eyewash, but certainly not through hypocrisy. Madan makes a virtue out of necessity – he exploits Gandhi's non-violence as a sensational theme for his film, that would, he declares – educate his audience, though his secret ambition is to fleece money out of the sentimental viewers. This bloated balloon of a world is punctured by Raja who finds man as puny and insignificant: "I

got a totally wrong notion of human beings at that angle. I had thought that they were sturdy and fearless. But now I found them fleeing before me like a herd of deer, although I had no intention of attacking them." (Narayan, 1983: 116) This cowardice is embodied in Jaggu the giant man, who, in spite of possessing a very strong physique, dashes into the cage and shuts himself inside it, while Raja the tiger wanders about in freedom.

Raja's wandering among human beings naturally invites various reactions and gradually numerous other facets of human nature unfold. Raja finds them quarrelling, fighting, spreading rumours, boasting, scheming. He comes to know opportunists like the assistant headmaster, ruthless poachers like Alphonse, corrupted officers like those of the Save Tiger Project. Apart from these individuals Raja feels the existence of a phantom-like crowd of unknown faces, always pushing and fighting and talking and wondering. Raja has lost forever the silent peace of the jungle. "For one used to the grand silence of the jungle, the noisy nature of humanity was distressing. In due course, I got used to it. When I imbibed my Master's lessons, I realized that deep within I was not different from human beings, and I got into their habit myself and

never had a moment's silence or stillness of mind – I was either talking (in my own way, inaudibly) or listening, and thus became fully qualified to enter human society." (Narayan, 1983: 44)

With the help of his master's yogic power Raja is enlightened and learns about mankind. But was this enlightenment necessary? The textual probing shows Raja's life in the jungle filled with a paradisal peace – his cave beside a cool rivulet, the peaceful shade of the bamboo cluster, and all the other animals acknowledging his superiority. His only worry used to be the mischievous monkeys. Though the jungle too has its own problems of uncertainty and violence, it does not know meanness and hypocrisy. In the wild every action is taken for the sake of survival. Raja misses it and often lapses in a mood of reminiscence: "When I recollect my forest life, I am likely to lose all restraint." ((Narayan, 1983: 15) So considered beside this pristine innocence of the jungle, is the enlightenment welcome at all? Is it worth compromising so much on Raja's part? The result of Raja turning into a creature of human attributes does not show us a satisfactory picture.

Instead of a clean and vacant mind that knew no grief or fear, Raja's mind has tuned into a disturbing beehive where the buzzing of

his newly acquired power of language cannot be stopped anymore. His statement that he finally became qualified by learning the language: "and never had a moment's silence or stillness of mind" (Narayan, 1983: 44) sounds double-edged, for the purity implicated in the word 'silence' discredits the achievement of "language". Moreover, his natural habits now disturb him leaving him nowhere. He will never be able to eat leaves and roots, yet his usual food of animal meat turns unpalatable. He goes about with guilt for hunting animals, though Nature had created his beautiful and strong limbs and muscles for this purpose. Hunting for his food had given his life a purpose and also a sense of glory over each achievement or victory. Raja's health now deteriorates not merely because of aging, but malnutrition and lack of healthy exercise were taking their toll. If he had lived in the jungle, as before, he would have been forced to work hard for his own survival and thus maintained his natural health.

The only redeeming aspect of this enlightenment is the wonderful magic of a tiger and a man living in mutual trust. It is truly magic-like, a wonderful exception constructed to reveal man and beast as the creations of the same authority. It is a totally different plane of truth and

offsets all the noisy meanness of human existence. It stands as a promise of hope for salvation, the utopian dream for a future paradise where man and beast would again combine to enjoy the bounties of God. In the story this unusual friendship of a Swami and a tiger starts showing some influence and we find the rival groups of fighting men joining hands to come to the Swami and ask for his pardon. The condition of man is not utterly hopeless and the writer finds a sense of ambivalence that doggedly follows human nature while destroying as well as recreating the world. The friendship of the Swami and Raja is not for the purpose of showing a tiger's enlightenment. In that case the writer would have shown the Swami in a halloed light instead of filling the pages with the description of his human imperfections. The writer impresses upon us the image of a human being and not a saintly saviour. The main motive lurking in the work is exposing human nature in all its colours. Raja's association with the circus people had exposed the grotesque side, while his friendship with the Swami reveals hope. It is a beautiful metaphor to express faith in human nature.

Narayan, as a writer is neither a satirist, moralist nor a critic of human behaviour. He finds the world vibrating with different colours

including black, and it is the ambivalences that attract him more than anything else. Although he creates the magic of the man and tiger friendship, he does not let us imagine the Swami as a god-like figure who emerges out of thin air to save the tiger. Solidity is Narayan's forte and he methodically builds a solid history behind the Swami's yogic existence. It is Jayraj the photographer who remembers him as a familiar face out of his memory:

> At one time I used to see him cycling up the Market Road every morning to his college. He lived in Ellamman Street in one of those solid houses built by an earlier generation. I can't remember that man's name now, Govind, Gopal, or Gund? I don't know. He was arrested during the Independence Movement for climbing the Collector's office roof and tearing down the Union Jack, and then again for inscribing on the walls, with brush and tar, 'Quit India', aimed at the British. I was told that he drove his mother mad by his ways. She would cry her heart out every time he was sent to prison. He didn't pass his B.A. – too busy, mixed up as he was in every kind of demonstration in those days. When things quietened down after Independence, he came to me one day to have his passport photo taken, but never collected it, though he had paid for it in advance. His photo must still be there somewhere in those piles of stuff unclaimed by my customers for reasons best known to them. I must put them all to the fire some day before all that junk drives me out of my own shop ... .
>
> Later on, I used to see him occasionally coming to the market with his family, driving a motor car. At this stage, he was completely changed, looked like a fop with

> his tie and suit and polished shoes. One day I had the hardihood to hail him and to say that he should take away his passport photograph, since he had paid for it. I'm not the sort to keep other people's property. He halted his steps but before I could pick up his stuff and pack it, he muttered 'I will come again' and hurried out. He was perhaps a busy man, as he was said to be holding a big job in a foreign insurance firm which had its office in New Extension.
>
> I never thought of him again until I heard one day that he had vanished, abandoning his wife and children. The police came seeking his photograph but I didn't give it. If that man chose to disappear, that was his business, why should I be involved?" ((Narayan, 1983: 152-53)

Later, when his yogic power over the tiger is well known, his wife comes to him with the hope of taking him back with her. She cannot accept his spiritual talk and retorts back with all the solid experiences of the life she had shared with her husband and which she has borne all her life as a very precious memento:

> Husband, husband, husband, I'll repeat it a thousand times and won't be stopped. I know to whom I'm talking. Don't deceive me or cheat me. Others may take you for a hermit, but I know you intimately. I have borne your vagaries patiently for a lifetime; your inordinate demands of food and my perpetual anxiety to see you satisfied, and my total surrender night or day when passion seized you and you displayed the indifference of a savage, never caring for my health or inclination, and with your crude jocularities even before the children, I shudder!" (Narayan, 1983: 170-71)

In this way the hermit is brought out of his hallowed existence and recreated by others bit by bit into a being who cannot be classified. It is surprising how a man can never be a single unit. Through his contacts with others, he leaves behind contradictory impressions. For Narayan, even a holy man is a human being and not a supernatural agent created out of thin air. It is a carnivalesque attitude and would tolerate no monologic canonization.

The Swami's yogic power is unquestionable here; he has achieved the impossible. But when his renunciation is compared to the life of Buddha, it is impossible to take the comparison on its face value. In his style of presenting the Swami, Narayan has involved many self-contradictory informations that create a ground for polemics. This double-voiced style is typically carnivalesque as it raises doubts in the reader's mind – should one appreciate this renunciation or criticize it? Is it not sheer irresponsibility on the part of the husbands who suddenly leave their family to fend for themselves and in the name of God decide to live alone? The Carnival is not anti-religion, but because of its down-to-earth approach to life it is not blind to the ambivalences that characterize all religious feelings. Carnival has the tendency to insult

deliberately, for it is critical of all that is canonized. Narayan's shocking exposition about the holy man is deliberate, for his religious feelings are connatural to man's corporeal life. This corporeal life of man is full of blunders and blemishes, inconsistencies and frailties. Though quick to detect man's weaknesses, the carnival never fails to appreciate the aspirations, which are like the lotus blooming in the sludge. At the end when Raja's physical condition turns hopeless, some men from the zoo come with the promise of looking after Raja for the rest of his life and we almost inhale the heavenly fragrance of the blooming lotus. The visitor from the zoo is a kindly person and brings no whip with him. He appreciates Raja's stature as magnificent, grand and regal. Without much hesitation he approaches Raja and Raja cannot help feeling at ease in his company: "At first sight, I could understand that this man was fearless and used to the company of animals, and had sympathy, and not another Captain." (Narayan, 1983: 175) There is an instant rapport between this man and Raja: "The man came near and stroked my back, and by his touch I could see that I had a friend." (Narayan, 1983: 175)

Swami's yogic communications with a tiger is an exceptional phenomenon which seems magic-like and unusual. But the message is

comprehensible. If this unusual friendship of a man and tiger has given the hope of realizing the dream of paradise, that paradise is partially but solidly achieved by the practical and kindly men of earth. The visitor is determined to save Raja for he considers Raja as one of the most magnificent gifts of nature. For this end, he does not need any help from the supernatural, but the simple benevolent touch of science: "Oh, truly the most magnificent of his kind, regal, of grand stature, although you think he is faded. We have our own system of feeding and improving with tonic and he'll be record breaking. Our zoo can then claim to have the largest tiger for the whole country." (Narayan, 1983: 175)

Raja, the unusual hero of Narayan's novel opens our eyes to the surprising contours of humanity. Paradise, it seems, is achievable on this earth, and with the help of the same hands of humanity that destroy it.

Narayan's inquiry into the natural and unsophisticated feelings of mankind results in a disruption of the idea that the human race is rational. Man is far from uni-dimensional, and even after granting him his due portion of rationality, consistency and uniformity are characteristics applicable to any other creature except man. Thus if his

rational inclinations lead him to his scientific aspirations for progress, sense of justice or a general goodwill, certain other mysterious and incomprehensible bents of the same human mind would playfully proceed to undo it. This paradox of man is granted a cheerful acceptance by the carnival worldview. In the carnival world the earth is at once the womb and the grave, and this paradox is imbued in man who is at once glorified as the king and degraded as a clown. Monologic and serious texts tend either to overlook such inconsistency of human nature, or authorize a sense of unity in the aesthetic ambience of the text. Sir Joshua Reynolds criticizes this tendency: "Critics seem to consider man as too uniformly wise, and in their rules make no account for the playful part of the mind. Their rules are formed for another race of beings than what man really is." (in Fussell, 1969: 124)

Novelists who project human race as imperfect and grotesque often run the risk of countering the reader's most cherished belief of life as a harmonious song. Yet it is in the imperfections that one may read the history of human aspirations and endeavours, it is in the weaknesses and frustrations that one may see the germination of still further yearning to survive. To be precise, it is the life force imbued in this

carnival world that redeems all imperfections of man. Paul Fussell writes:

> Man is thus a mighty curious creature. A flesh-machine of self-destructive depravity fraught with ignorance and vanity, and at the same time inspirited somehow with an *anima* which has it in its power to redeem all defects except, perhaps, mortality; he is a wandering paradox perpetually looking for a place now to hide and now to exhibit himself. He both is and is not like an angel; he both is and is not like a brute. (1969: 110)

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Chapter-V

CARNIVAL AND THE NOVEL: THEMES AND NARRATIVE ENDINGS IN THE NOVELS OF NARAYAN

I

In his well-known thesis on Rabelais, Bakhtin writes: "In every historical epoch there has always been a square filled with the laughter of the folk ...". (Clark & Hoquist, 1984: 306) Bakhtin realized that specially at the threshold of history, such as during the Renaissance or the Russian Revolution, it was impossible to marginalize the common people from the drama of history. For him, the public square and the laughter of the folk which he names the 'carnival laughter' acquired a very meaningful significance in the understanding of the oncoming radical changes. Carnival laughter in the literary mode is called 'grotesque realism' that celebrates "the gaps and holes in all the mappings of the world laid out in systematic theologies, legal codes, normatic poetics and class hierarchies." (*Ibid.*, 1984: 300) Thus carnival laughter obliquely interrogates the orthodoxies and emphasizes change. Through carnival, the folk are freed from the oppressions of

gloomy categories such as 'eternal', 'immovable', 'absolute', 'unchangeable', and "are exposed to the gay and free laughing aspect of the world, with its unfinished and open character, with the joy of change and renewal". (*Ibid*, 1984: 301)

In the Indian context the 1930s, was a threshold period of history. Narayan's unusually light and humorous novels are sited at the trajectory of an understanding of tradition and change, interrogation and renewal. While many mainstream writers nostalgically held back to the Indian past heritage, Narayan was attracted by the public square where the common people were thrown willy-nilly into the flux of history, into the tug of war between East and West, medieval orthodoxy and modernization.

Carnivalesque situations emerge at a crisis period when the status quo is threatened. It is a time when life does not remain as it used to be, a time when anyone can hold the stage. It initiates the participation of each and every member of society. Thus in such periods the boundary between stage and gallery is blurred and the drama is enacted without the footlights. These unique periods may invite unusual dangers as well as unique opportunities. In grotesque

realism the previous vertical world of absolute values breaks down and a kind of existential heteroglossia takes place.

Narayan's unusual heroes move about the threshold with a sense of adventurism and self-evasion. They are part of the two contradictory historical forces — imperialist and the emerging nationalism. While the British used force to subjugate the people through the powers of the state, Indian nationalism emerged as a force of resistance combined with ideologies of self-sacrifice and bravery, while underpinning the moral and cultural codes. Narayan's heroes escaped these repressions, callously offsetting the catalogue of superheroes drawn out from the history of India's freedom struggle like Rani Laxmibai, Sivaji, Tipu Sultan, to Matangini Hazra and Khudiram Das. Functioning as mythic figures, these heroic names were considered examples of the Indian ethos. The singling out of people and ideals automatically created a rhetoric of the 'high' and the 'low'. In fact culture critics like Tagore believed in the elite, the selected few, who could uphold or exemplify cultural codes to counter historical anarchy. Such an age created its own norms of expressions in language and the texts had their own architectonic inhibitions. But this is not the only face of India.

According to Clark and Holquist, the carnival spirit is an automatic response against the rhetorics of 'high' and 'low'. They locate the peculiarity of carnival laughter in its "indissoluble and essential relation to freedom". (*Ibid*, 1984: 308) The official world is always monologic and serious. But carnival ethos laughs at and undermines such absolutism by creating a spirit of joyful relativity. It functions by a process of democratizing everything, including language. Narayan turned to the public square, as he did not believe the official reality to be the only face of India. Bakhtin had remarked in his book on Rabelais that every historical act has been accompanied by the laughter of the chorus. It appears that Narayan listened to what the chorus said.

Narayan's first step in removing the footlights from the Indian theatre was by selecting the unknown, unassuming small town named Malgudi as the locus for all his novels. Fictitious but none-the-less real, Malgudi is the amalgamation of all the factors that embed the lives of the common ordinary middleclass people. For the readers of the Malgudi novels, Malgudi signifies streets and public squares, taxi stands, market places and cricket grounds. We are hardly given the

privilege of voyeurism as bedrooms and closets do not assume central roles. There is hardly any scope for deeply intimate conversation or private introspection. Enclosed places in his novels consist of dingy presses, cinema halls, shops, school buildings, the headmaster's room, the courtyards or dining-halls where there is no chance of isolation or any private thought and action. Even if there is an attempt at isolation, as we find in *The Dark Room*, it is shown as ineffective. In fact Narayan adopted all the humorous forms – the open-air-spectacles, parodies of the high and official and a very common non-poetic language to create his own world of Malgudi.

To say that Narayan chose the common people as the subversive force does not mean that Narayan became the spokesperson for the common exploited people, as Marxist writers like Mulk Raj Anand did. There is no question of Marxist binarism of the exploiter and exploited in Narayan. Rather, Narayan saw through the more intricate play of power in various strata and shades of social relations, where encounters may happen between any set of characters irrespective of age, sex or status. We see frictions between fathers and sons, headmasters and students, husbands and wives, shopkeepers and customers, grandmas

and grandsons, and even among strangers. Narayan joyfully exposes that the play of power is relative and not always gradient, that is, at any moment the king may be decrowned and the clown may usurp all the glory. It is a jolly world-view that accepted this uncertainty as a sign of life and change. Narayan chose the common people because they are not learned in cold scholastic introspection, analysis and revaluation, and their bodies are more orificed or responsive to changes. Thus they are the most transparent participants of history.

Narayan's first novel *Swami* is apparently a humorous narrative that records the adventures of Swami and his friends. Swami and his friends constantly encounter the grown-up world that tries to curtail their cheerful riotousness. This adult world consists of parents, schoolteachers, doctors, policemen, gatekeepers and numerous other self-appointed guardians. Swami and his friends are nurtured by a colonial education-system. So the large and repressive school-building and the fastidious teachers forever preaching discipline, the examination system, the strict classification of time in periods of history, geography or moral science affect Swami and his friends in a special way. They are always short of free time and the moment they

hear the last gong, the children rush out of the school like a herd of wild deer just freed from a cage.

This tension about the shortness of free time and the yearning for each other's fellowship and the out-door life is best expressed in a passage of Chapter XIV:

> At the end of this you ran home to drink coffee, throw down the books, and rush off to the cricket field, which was a long way off. You covered the distance half running, half walking, moved by the vision of a dun field sparsely covered with scorched grass, lit into a blaze by the slant rays of the evening sun, enveloped in a flimsy cloud of dust, alive with the shouts of players stamping about. What music there was in the thud of the bat hitting the ball! Just as you took the turn leading to Lawley Extension, you looked at the sun, which stood poised like a red-hot coin on the horizon. You hoped it would not sink. (Narayan, 1935: 123)

But the passage that best illustrates the carnival sense of freedom where the children are almost challenging and defying everything the school taught — discipline and etiquette, etc. is recorded in Chapter IX:

> At the end of the prayer the storm burst. With the loudest, lustiest cries, the gathering flooded out of the hall in one body. All through this vigorous confusion and disorder, Swaminathan kept close to Mani. For there was a general belief in the school that enemies stabbed each other on the last day. (Narayan, 1935: 65)

The situation is a product of childish riotousness and a hint of dark instinctive evil:

> Mani did some brisk work at the school gate, snatching from all sorts of people ink-bottles and pens, and destroying them. Around him was a crowd seething with excitement and joy. Ecstatic shrieks went up as each article of stationery was destroyed. One or two little boys feebly protested. But Mani wrenched the ink-bottles from their hands, tore their caps, and poured ink over their clothes. He had a small band of assistants, among whom Swaminathan was prominent. (Narayan, 1935: 66)

This carnival situation is complete with the painting of the face, turning the face both frightful and funny, and the paint acting as a mask that liberates the mask-wearer's soul from any social compulsion of propriety:

> Overcome by the mood of the hour, he had spontaneously emptied his ink-bottle over his own head and had drawn frightful dark circles under his eyes with the dripping ink. (Narayan, 1935: 66)

It should be remembered that a similar playful painting of faces by children in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* brought metamorphosis, and the children turned into creatures full of evil potentialities. However, in *Swami* the passage signifies the non-verbal expression of suppressed emotions. It indicates how in society, an enormous sphere of speech remains latent. Children, when together,

feel a sort of camaraderie which in fact ensures them freedom and fearlessness. Thus the unofficial or ethically unacceptable speech is let loose. One such example is when Mani boasts that given a chance he would have hurled on inkbottle at Ebenzer, wrung his neck and broken his back as a punishment for debasing Krishna, the Hindu God. Again, in the heat of the political agitation Swami remarks that his friend's father – the police-superintendent is a traitor of the nation. There are bouts of rhetorical flourish as well as moments of silences that move together in a narrative flux.

Apart from the headmaster and teachers, the school has other agents of surveillance too, and the children are often brought to encounter them. The gatekeeper, the peon or the clerk are not mere meaningless ornaments in the scene of the school but are active agents who affect the children in some or the other way. With the approach of the school examinations Mani is suddenly changed from the bully of the school who was 'afraid of no one' to a wheedling creature who was seen dogging the steps of the school clerk. Mani had suddenly realized that the clerk was the 'avatar of the moment, who could rescue him from his immediate calamity. So he appeared at the clerk's place with

bribes of fresh brinjals, with the hope of flattering out of him some 'valuable hints' about the question papers. Mani's unashamed flattery gives the clerk his opportunity to hold his power over Mani and he grasps the opportunity to advice him.

In Narayan's world there is a constant reversal of roles and shifting of power. It is brought about with the change of place and circumstances or with respect to the various levels of social relations. A face that is lighted from below seems terrible, but again when the light falls on it from above, as if from heaven, it looks calm and blessed. Narayan is conscious how truth can be perspectival, and so, with his natural sense of humour, he plays a light and shade game. Swami looks up at Mani as the prototype of the unvanquishable Hercules, but when he goes to visit Mani at his own place, Mani appears in a different light. Before the big man with bushy eyebrows who was Mani's uncle, Mani was dumb and docile. When Swami entered Mani's room, "Mani was standing behind the door, tame and unimpressive in his domestic setting." (Narayan, 1935: 72) Again, Swami's open admiration for the newcomer Rajam incites jealousy among his friends Somu, Sankar and the Pea. Somu, the class captain and the 'uncle' of the class suddenly

sees a threat in the form of Rajam whose nonchalant behaviour, a certain air of self-confidence, fluent English, immaculate uniform etc. had the magic to overturn Somu's position. So Swami had to bear the brunt of such political jealousy — he was nicknamed the 'tail' of Rajam. Swami, for the first time in his life gets a taste of the changing faces of human relations:

> The same fellows ten days ago, what they were! Now what formidable creatures they had turned out to be! Swaminathan was wonderstruck at the change. (*Ibid*, 1935: 34)

But this is not the only shock of confrontation in Swami's life. Swami is again faced with another antagonist, this time not from his own tribe but from a different stratum of society. When Swami is cheated by the coachman, Swami's frustration leads him to the threshold of a different class — the slum dwellers of Keelacheri. Here he confronts the coachman's son, dark and dirty, who turned into Swami's nightmare. This "little man of three feet or so, ill clad and unwashed" (*Ibid.*, 1935: 76) exhibited such unthought-of cunning that even Mani with his club and Rajam with his halo of a Police-Superintendent father had to show

their rear side and accept defeat: "They became blind and insensible to everything except the stretch of road before them." (*Ibid.*, 1935: 77)

It is true that in Narayan's world it cannot be predicted when and at which point a puny character turns into a living bomb. For example, on a fine morning the harmless school-peon turns into the instrument of Swami's undoing. On the day of the '*hartal*' Swami, from behind the human wall of the adult crowd had thrown a stone and broken the Headmaster's windowpane. Swami felt quite secured in the idea that he "was an unobserved atom in the crowd." (*Ibid.*, 1935: 97) But when the Headmaster charged Swami, the peon appeared out of the blue as the most damaging witness to Swami's bravado.

The transient play of light and shade turns Narayan's world into a world of carnivalesque impulse where masks are worn and exchanged and thus it is difficult to trap a character with any single ideology or principle. Transience here becomes the theme of 'being' or 'living', establishing the link of the micro-life of the individual to the macro-life of society. The individual lives in the illusion of his soul's absolutism and immortality, but seen in relation to society the individual looks transient, a moving dot in the flux of life. In the biography of Bakhtin,

Clark and Holquist write that the mask is the very image of ambiguity, the variety and flux of identities that otherwise, unmasked, are conceived as single and fixed.

Again, worn over the face as a second identity, the mask defies our normal paradigm of the human face. The usual idea and expectation of the face asks for symmetrical beauty, where beauty aspires beyond the biological reality of the body into an idea that satisfies the aesthetic sensibilities. But the mask with its grotesque protrusion and abnormal opening of the orifices like eyes, ears, nose and mouth reveals the grotesque aspect of humanity.

In Narayan's carnivalesque world of masks, characters attain their freedom from the bindings of behaving 'prim and proper' and they unashamedly display the odd side of their nature, which is usually kept under cover or suppressed. So, without any hesitation or second thought Swami defies the Headmaster's cane, overturning the absolute world of Dickens' children for whom the authority of the cane is an inescapable reality. Swami, in the face of the inevitable punishment in a sudden rush of desperation leaves the Mission School never to enter it again. In fact, the little protagonists of Narayan's first novel are

constantly rushing out of boundaries. The very first chapter is a description of Swami's aversion for the confines of the awesome school-building or the terrorization of his teachers:

> He shuddered at the very thought of school: that dismal yellow building; the fire-eyed Vedanayagam, his class teacher, and the Headmaster with his thin long cane ... (*Ibid.*, 1935: 3)

From the very first page the narrative unfolds two opposite forces — one that attempts to domesticate the unruly and the other eternally protesting. When in his classroom, Swami's soul hovers on the window-sill:

> To Swaminathan existence in the classroom was possible only because he could watch the toddlers of the Infant Standard falling over one another, and through the window on the left see the 12-30 mail gliding over the embankment, booming and rattling while passing over the Sarayu Bridge. (*Ibid.*, 1935: 4)

The train for the Indian mind has always been a symbol of the boundlessness of the unknown that, while passing, conveyed to them a sense of freedom. In Bibhuti Bhusan's *Pather Panchali* made immortal by Satyajit Ray in a film with the same title, Apu and Durga run miles through the paddy fields to have a glimpse of the train that passed by their village. Ironically, the introduction of Railways in India was

accompanied by commercialization, urbanization and the growth of a new bourgeois class. This new development had its necessary evils. This irony may be perceived in Narayan's novels where he explores the potentials of the train — evil or benign, brazen or romantic.

In Narayan's world nothing is uni-dimensional. From his classroom little Swami inhales his sense of freedom as the train passes by. Yet at the end of the novel this very train takes away his dearest friend Rajam forever into the vast unknown. In *The Guide* Raju's corruption starts while loitering alone among Railway-track builders. Much to his father's consternation he collected a rich array of abuses from them. Later he sets his stall at the Railway Station where he came to be known as 'Railway-Raju'. His constant contact and communication with tourists led him to the realization that he was a natural rhetorician. This, along with his chance encounter with Rosie as she was coming down from a train turns out to be the tragic flaw of his life. Raju's life turns out to be a series of misadventures.

Thus, in Narayan's world, reality is like the train, ambiguous, strange and distant, for man's existence is not set on a linear journey from darkness to light or from the primitive to the civilized, but

perpetually struggle in a tug-of-war among diverse forces — elemental, biological, social or mystic. Carnival is the acceptance of this reality, which means that at any moment a reversal of the civilized into the primeval may happen, totally overturning the complacent myth of man's journey the other way. It is an uncertain world where masks and costumes are changed and interchanged, and the protagonists do not come out in any permanent light. And the best exposers of such a world are the children as they are more clear-sighted and uninhabited.

Romantics, in tune with Rousseau's 'primitivism', idealized man's childhood as a stage of pristine innocence. For Wordsworth growing up is a journey from innocence to experience. In *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* Wordsworth writes:

> Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
> Shades of prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing Boy,
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
> He sees it in his joy;
> The youth, who daily farther from the east
> Must travel, still in Nature's Priest,
> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended;
> At length the Man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.
> (In *Eight Poets*, 1941: 244)

But Narayan's child characters are not burdened with any idealism. If given the chance, they can turn quite dark and violent. The most blatant example is Mani whose utterances are filled with phrases like – "break Somu's waist", "He will sprawl in the dust with broken bones", "to get that Pea under my heel and press him to the earth", "Sankar is going to hang ...". Mani reminds us of Jack in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. This implicates that Mani, if taken out of the social boundary of Narayan's novel can very well turn out to become a savage who actualizes the hidden dark instincts, which are already there as innate. In *Lord* this is expressed in the chant: "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Bash her in". (Golding, 2000: 243) Even the tender Swami gives in to such an instinct at the heat of the moment: "

> On the flash of a bright idea, he wriggled through the crowd and looked for the Infant Standards. There he found little children huddled together and shivering with fright. He charged into this crowd with such ferocity that the children scattered about, stumbling and falling. One unfortunate child who shuffled and moved awkwardly received individual attention. Swaminathan pounced upon him, pulled out his cap, threw it down and stamped on it, swearing at him all the time. He pushed him and dragged him this way and that and then gave him a blow on the head and left him to his fate. (Narayan, 1935: 99)

The picture of childhood is never complete without these merciless bullying. In *Lord*, which too is a story about children without the jolly gaiety of Narayan's carnival ethos is strewn with pictures of the 'littluns' being constantly bullied. Roger callously destroys the sandcastles of the 'littluns' and throws sand into Percival's eyes who starts crying. Percival's suffering, instead of inviting sympathy, further ignites cruelty, and now Johnny, following Roger's example, "began to fling up sand in shower, and presently Percival was crying again." (Golding, 2000: 64)

The most astounding instance of politics and power play lurking in the child's psyche is Rajam's usurping the leadership from Somu and Mani. Rajam uses all the devices of a politician with great dexterity to establish his supremacy over others. When the crude and ingenuous Mani challenges Rajam in a duel, Rajam is confident of his own cultural and economic superiority and readily accepts the challenge. His entrance into the stage is dramatic: he has certainly dressed to impress:

> At the sound of the creaking of boots, they turned and found that Rajam had come. He was dressed in Khaki, and carried under his arm an air gun that was given to him a

> couple of months ago on his birthday. He stood very stiff and said: "Here I am, ready." (Narayan, 1935: 19)

His next step is equally calculating; he stuns his rivals by firing a shot into the air. Now Mani is psychologically defeated: "He stood still, his club down." (*Ibid.*, 1935: 19) Mani then gives vent to his annoyance: "But this is unfair. I have no gun while you have ... It was to be a hand-to-hand fight." (*Ibid.*, 1935: 19) But Mani's reasoning sounds like grumbling beside the crystal-sharp logic of Rajam: "Then, why have you brought your club? You never said anything about it yesterday." (*Ibid.*, 1935: 19) Mani hangs his head. Finding the weak moment of his rival to be an opportunity, Rajam tries plain and direct attack: "What have I done to offend you?" (*Ibid.*, 1935: 19) Mani is now completely disarmed, so he tries a crooked device, "You called me a sneak before someone." (*Ibid.*, 1935: 19) It was an obvious lie and he could not deny it. Having thus disarmed his rival step by step Rajam now can afford to be broad-minded, and his last offer is irresistible: "If this is all the cause of your anger, forget it. I won't mind being friends." (*Ibid.*, 1935: 19) Rajam lowered his gun and Mani dropped his club. Rajam now throws a feast with the biscuits he had brought in his pocket in order to

celebrate this newfound friendship. Thus the political game of the moment ends properly with a feast.

However, Rajam's ascendancy to leadership does not end here. Rajam had to exhibit his power over the grown-ups too. So he invites his new friends to his house. Swami and Mani were certainly impressed by the bungalow of the Police Superintendent with its posh surroundings, uniformed guards and a battalion of eager and amiable servants. They are impressed again when they enter Rajam's large room: "There were chairs in it, actually chairs, and a good big table with Rajam's books arranged neatly on it. What impressed them most was a timepiece on the table. Such a young fellow to own a timepiece!" (*Ibid.*, 1935: 26) Rajam's intention to impress and enthrall his friends is obvious as would be the case of an adult with similar intention: "Presently, Rajam entered. He had known that his friends were waiting for him, but he liked to keep them waiting for a few minutes, because he had seen his father doing it. So he stood for a few minutes in the adjoining room, biting his nails." (*Ibid.*, 1935: 26) It is a parody, which has its double-voiced effect, for it includes both adults and children in its laughter. Rajam's aping of the adults exposes simultaneously the

frivolity of adult-politics and the unexpected artfulness of children. The artful Rajam mesmerizes his friends further when in a princely gesture he throws open his cupboard full of expensive toys for them. He orders for coffee and tiffin, instinctively aware of the cheery influence of food. He impresses his friends with the "ease and authority with which he addressed the policeman" (*Ibid.*, 1935: 27) and with his bullying of the cook with angry rebukes like - "You rascal, you scoundrel, you talk back to me?" (*Ibid.*, 1935: 27)

Rajam proves at last to be the only unchallenged leader when he finally wins over the rival camp consisting of Somu, Sankar and the Pea. He invites them, along with Mani and Swami, disregarding his friends' embarrassment and irritation. Finally, he unites them with a lecture on friendship.

Rajam's lecture is an interesting specimen of political reasoning, which is beyond the pale of rational discourse. He employs the most successful method; he instigates religious fear with a terrible description of the hell, a place, which he said, is reserved for those who do not respect friendship. He legitimizes his reasoning invoking the Hindu sacred text the *Veda* that cannot be challenged. Rajam is a

typical charismatic leader who binds his subjects by sheer aura. After the lecture that enthralls the audience and leaves them dumbstruck, there is the oath taking and finally, Rajam rewards each of his subjects with a precious gift of a pocketknife, a pen or a belt. Rajam is a happy amalgamation of the two rival characters of *Lord* — Jack and Ralph. He has the charisma, the promise of fairness, justice and generosity that nestled in Ralph's nature. In *Lord* Ralph is a creature apart from the tribe. He has a stillness about him and a sort of detachment that struck as attractive and automatically persuaded everyone to vote for him as the leader. Rajam possesses some of the aura and detachment. He is able to unite the boys in the form of a cricket team while they are on the verge of being split off. His dealing with his team is fair but firm, and till the end of the novel Rajam remains almost cruelly unpardoning towards Swami's irresponsible and impulsive behaviour. Yet Rajam is a lesser form of Ralph. Introspective and dreaming, Ralph has a poetic aura almost at one with the brooding nature that surrounds him. These tender and poetic touches do not go in the creation of Rajam. In this context he is closer to Jack who is instinctively cunning. Jack's final triumph over Ralph in the race for leadership comes due to his

understanding of the weaknesses of human nature. Jack lured the boys with roasted pork and wild thoughtless revelry. Rajam too, uses his affluence to win over his friends; he offers them tiffins, expensive gifts and finally buys them the entire set of cricket accessories. It may be argued that the hunting of animals, the roasting of meat, the public feasts and masked dances in the *Lord* are also the ingredients of a carnival. However, the situation in the *Lord* does not have the carnival ambience being deprived of the shelter of a society.

The novels *Lord* and *Swami* show children in a different light, opening up the dark and not so innocent potentialities lurking behind their angelic exteriors. But *Swami* is secured within the boundaries of a society. Thus it is a carnival with all the inherent tendencies of balancing, moderating, opening up and relativizing. In Narayan's world, no character is allowed to turn authoritarian and totalitarian. Rajam's gradual ascension to the leadership is suddenly toned down when as the captain of the cricket team he opens the batting and is at once bowled out by no other but the little Swaminathan! Swami, who is looked down as a 'peculiar fellow' suddenly reveals an unexpected skill in bowling and is unanimously accepted as the 'Tate' of the team.

In a bat of the eyelids Swami becomes the most precious player of M.C.C. Again, Somu the monitor and the 'uncle' of the class had at the beginning of the novel emanated absolute confidence and calm. Narayan describes him as a person who carried himself with an easy air and was believed to be 'chummy' even with teachers who never reprimanded him or asked him questions. So it is a shock when we hear that Somu failed in the examination and was automatically eliminated from the group.

Narayan creates his seesaw world often with the help of parody and irony. Narayan never closes the possibilities of meaning by direct statements. In *Swami* hidden carnival laughter is often posed as a serious problem that disturbed Swami — thus rendering meaning as inconclusive. It is difficult to take sides or even seek the author's guidance by following his biased steps. When Swami is forced by his father to devote his time in worthwhile enterprise like solving mathematical problems instead of roasting himself in the sun, the incongruity of their views even look absurd. We cannot decide whether to laugh at Swami's unconventional and un-mathematical reasoning or at the inadequacy of dry-scholasticism of his father and the education

system in general, which seems absurd beside Swami's blatantly down to earth questions.

Swami and his friends subvert the official worldview and the reasoning of the adults thereby carnivalising the whole atmosphere. Whether it was choosing a name for the cricket team or passing and failing in examinations there is an embedding of points of views that are played up in a parodic mode which add either to the open or subdued carnival spirit. Very often a narrative makes the best use of the darker side of the carnival. Golding in *Lord* creates a stark primeval world away from the taboos and restraint of society. It is devoid of ambivalence for the choice is strictly in terms of black and white — it is either Ralph or Jack, either reason and responsibility or carnal instinct.

As the novel proceeds the absence of the secured ambience of a society is clearly felt. The sunshine, the dreamy afternoons turn into the charring reality of forest-fire, while a group of savages are on a manhunt. At the beginning, evil was held back by the nurturing forces of society still lingering in the children's consciousnesses. When Roger shadowed Henry like a hunter after a prey, his intentions of bullying

Henry was obvious. But when he started throwing stones at the self-absorbed Henry he did not dare to hit him:

> Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them. Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law. Roger's arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins. (Golding, 2000: 66)

But the moment Jack, initially for the purpose of camouflage smeared his face with colour, it acted as a mask:

> He began to dance and his laughter became a bloodthirsty snarling. He capered towards Bill and the mask was a thing on its own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness. (*Ibid.*, 2000: 68)

From then on evil is set free and beyond control, leaving its marks with actual dead bodies. The unbridled savagery reaches its height when Ralph, the only holder of sanity is chased by the bloodthirsty group. The tale takes a sudden turn with the arrival of the uniformed naval-officer. It is important to note that Golding does not introduce a person; instead, he introduces all the symbols of authority and governance:

> It was a white-topped cap, and above the green shade of the peak were a crown, an anchor, gold foliage. He saw white drill, epaulettes, a revolver, a row of gilt buttons down the front of a uniform. (*Ibid.*, 2000: 228)

The magic power of relativity that arrives with the uniform and all its social connotations of restraint and discipline suddenly restore a sort of security and sanity. The savage Jack suddenly turns into the indistinct redheaded little boy while the wise sensible Ralph cries like a child: "And in the middle of them, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy." (*Ibid*, 2000: 230). On his return into the folds of civilization and society, Ralph at last confesses the true value of Piggy, who had been the butt of ridicule throughout.

Skeptics may point out that the carnival is the extreme licentious expression of man's 'lower-bodily life' that is promoted by Jack in the *Lord*. Yet it must also be remembered that Jack's world-view is devoid of the carnival laughter, which is the essential spirit of the carnival. The carnival-laughter is the healthy laughter that laughs at the official ideologies; but again it does not spare itself from ridicule. Clark and Holquist maintain:

> In creating a relativity of speech practices, Rabelais relativizes world-views, all of which seek hegemony and claim unique privilege. He carnivalizes language itself

> and, in so doing "discrowns" the authority that official ideologies seek to claim for themselves within the isolation of their own characteristic discourses. (Clark & Holquist, 1984: 318)

They continue to explain that "Rabelais' importance lies not in his particular ideology but in his awareness of the limits, the incompleteness, of any ideology." (*Ibid.*, 1984: 318) Naturally, the carnival needs the serious official world for its purpose of relativization. The carnival comes to operation by debunking and lowering the mandated canon. Bakhtin's representation of the church's role in Rabelais' achievement tells us that without the authoritarianism of the church, Rabelais would not have achieved his purpose. In the *Lord* it is only when the naval officer, representing the official world appears that our perception opens up to the ambivalences in Jack and Ralph. In Narayan's *Swami* the looming presence of the draconian adult world lights up the children with impish qualities, which seem nonetheless innocent, and the incongruities between these two worlds offer the scope for jolly laughter. The world of the *Lord*, denuded of any social garb, transforms these harmless 'impish qualities' into dire criminal activities, the potentialities of which lurk deep in the system of mankind. But the mask that liberates Jack from any remaining social

taboos, serves differently in a carnival. The mask in the carnival liberates man from epistemological megalomania, and reveals the ebullient and variegated form of life.

In this variegated life the intercourse of different consciousnesses often prove disharmonious and create ludicrous situations. This is often perceptible when grown-ups and children try to communicate. Such funny incongruity is best illustrated in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*. In this enchanting parable the author narrates how, at the age of six, his first step in becoming an artist was nipped in the bud by adults. The six year old was inspired from his reading of the *True Stories from Nature* to draw a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. To his extreme disappointment, the adults interpreted this meaningful piece of art to be a mundane hat! So the little boy had to draw the inside of the boa constrictor, for he realized that the grown ups: "always need to have things explained." (1974: 8) The story of the little artist abruptly ends when the grown-ups advice him to give up drawing boa constrictors, whether from the inside or outside, and devote himself instead to geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. The little boy had to give in, but not without protest. His final comment before his

departure for a different direction (he became a pilot when he grew up) is replete with cynicism: "Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them." (1974: 8)

Children are the eternal protestors against institutions and thus stand in a subversive relation to the world of the adults who represent the serious official world constituted of schoolteachers, lawmakers, priests, etc. Relatively free from the theorized world of academic institutions, children are more open to imagination as well as to the micro-world of everyday realities that cradle them. In *The Little Prince* when the pilot drew three sheep at the request of the little prince, the pilot could not satisfy the little boy because he found the sheep either too sickly or too old. When the pilot drew a box, which he said carried the sheep inside, the little prince was happy, as the box sparked his imagination and he found the perfect little sheep inside the box, just right for the small asteroid that was his home. Similarly, in Narayan's *Swami*, what looked like a simple problem of fractions to Swami's father, was a world of animation for Swami, and the cold names in arithmetic looked like his real-life friends. Rama, who wants to earn

fifteen *annas* by selling ten mangoes to Krishna sounded like Sankar, the first boy, because of his determination to sell ten mangoes for fifteen *annas*. Swami felt a surge of sympathy for the gullible Krishna, for he sounded like the apprehensive, weak and nervous 'Pea' of his class. For Swami, the question of how much Krishna will have to pay for four mangoes was irrelevant. A deep uncomfortable suspicion was rising in his mind, that Rama was trying to sell unripe mangoes to Krishna:

> Swaminathan felt utterly helpless. If only father would tell him whether Rama was trying to sell ripe fruits or unripe ones! Of what avail would it be to tell him afterwards? He felt strongly that the answer to this question contained the key to the whole problem. It would be scandalous to expect fifteen *annas* for ten unripe mangoes. But even if he did, it would't be unlike Rama, whom Swaminathan was steadily beginning to hate and invest with the darkest qualities. (Narayan, 1935: 87)

The process of growing up indeed becomes a process of elimination of the elastic potentialities of the mind, which would have created a more dynamic world-view, a world-view that does not obliterate the spontaneous and elemental aspects of life. Thus children, fresh and uninhibited, can blurt out truths, which are carnivalesque, because carnival is the pulling back of man to his basics. It is often the

children, one finds, who create the carnivalesque ambience. R.K. Narayan's *Swami* is a very good example.

II

Apart from subverting what is serious and profane, the comic genre works as a balancing agent. Comedy enforces mankind to see its limitations and laughs down the super-ego from flying with the wings of Icarus. Although it is man's heavenward aspiration that prods the journey towards his hope for a better civilization, it is the brakes or fuses that render the journey sound. No movement is complete without a healthy self-criticism, or having the guts to accept the weaknesses and limitations. Comedy enforces man to look away for a moment from his self-created glorification of human existence and perceive the darker underbelly. Nothing other than a doze of irony can cure human life from its megalomaniac obsessions.

Irony, as a worldview, is integrated in Narayan's works because it is one of the techniques used to invoke laughter that destabilizes any tendency in the work towards a monologic culmination. Like other laughing forms, irony too is a participatory form, i.e. it makes meaning inter-subjective. Thus meaning is not dictated but is created in the

space between expression and understanding. According to Bakhtin, laughing forms are serious in the sense that by demotivating the tendency of the monolithic fabrication of meaning into stiff theories or humourless arrests, it sobers and humbles man into true self-recognition — to see oneself as a minor player in the world of other players. It humbles man by recognizing death on the face of the illusion of immortality and again subverts death's autocracy by recognizing life's vital colours. Thus between life and death or any other extremes. ironic meaning is being constantly created.

Narayan introduces his story with a title that is often ironic. In the chapter on 'polyphony' it has already been mentioned how the title *Waiting for the Mahatma* deceives us in our expectation of a 'Gandhi novel'. *The Man-Eater* creates a stifling situation with a cruel fanatic like Vasu terrifying the people of Malgudi by threatening to kill the innocent and most-loved temple-elephant for his own greed. Vasu's unexpected and pathetic death at the end of the novel as the temple-elephant passes by his window with great aplomb suddenly opens our eyes to the hollowness of the title. Similarly we realize how in *The Guide* Raju totally misguides his own life, turning it into a series of

misadventures. In *The Financial Expert* Margaya, who is found exploiting the gullible rural people with his astonishing financial wizardry is finally brought down by the same people who had been his victims. These are the typical themes of 'uncrowning the king', about which Bakhtin discusses when he speaks of carnival ambivalence. "In such a system the king is the clown. He is elected by all the people and mocked by all the people ..." (Morris, 1994: 223)

Narayan's *The Darkroom* is another novel in which the title, with respect to the work is ironic. Savitri, with a gesture of protest, first enters the material darkroom and later her mental darkroom, but both these gestures prove ineffective. Savitri fails to create any impact of her darkrooms on the life around her, which goes on as if nothing had happened. Yet *The Darkroom* is different from the other novels that are named in this context because unlike them, *The Darkroom* refers to the psychical world of Savitri and figures out her deep mental agony. However, *The Darkroom* does not fall in the category of the 19th century psychological novel that resulted from middleclass prudence against any open celebration of the human body. *The Darkroom* in fact laughs at the tendency of the serious mainstream writing that tends to

psychologize the material body by replacing or disguising the carnal and worldly questions with inner cynicism, double-speaks, crime, corruption and sensual reflections. Despite Savitri's deep brooding on the repression of the female in a male dominated society and her drastic step that would have been ideal in an Ibsenian manner, the novel falls back on the worldly concerns of money and physical security. When unable to die, Savitri has to face the stark questions of fending for herself and securing a shelter to protect herself from dishonour. Till now sheltered and overprotected, Savitri's femininity is sensitive and vulnerable and smarts even at a stare. For the first time she senses this vague and unknown fear as people start flocking the temple to see "the mysterious woman' who was engaged to work in the temple. This would not have happened if it had been a male or even a female from the lower section of society: "So many people kept staring at her that Savitri slipped out and shut herself in the shanty." (Narayan, 1938: 187) It is the middleclass female who carries the aura of sexual prudence that, when facing the world, turns totally defenseless. When faced with such stark and staring worldly problems, Savitri compromises her previous idealistic concerns for true love and self-respect and instead

gives into a starker reality – the craving of the body not for love but the coziness of sheer habit that, even in the absence of love, overcomes the members of a family. It is the sheer habit of staying together in a house, interacting in mundane routines and mandatory chores, the simple habit of touching each other and getting used to the security of close bodily contacts that proves irresistible and true: "And she grew homesick. A nostalgia for children, home, and accustomed comforts seized her. Lying here on the rough floor, beside the hot flickering lamp, her soul racked with fears, she couldn't help contrasting the comfort, security and un-loneliness of her home. When she shut the door and put out the lights, how comforting the bed felt and how well one could sleep! Not this terrible state .... And then the children. What a void they created!" (*Ibid.*, 1938: 189)

To say that it is firstly the 'inescapable weakness' of the 'bamboo pole' and not the vibrating arrow of Cupid that bind together the husbands and wives in society would be committing a sacrilege against the ideal, but can Savitri herself deny her longing for the comforts and security that her husband provides for her? Again, this argument may not follow a feminist angle because the husband too is

weak and dependent on the industry of the wife regarding household matters. Despite Ramani's initial enthusiasm to prove himself quite comfortable in both the roles of the bread-winner and the home-maker, this is a temporary drive that would have died with time. Can Ramani deny the joy and relief that he experiences when he sees Savitri back home? "Ramani paused on the doormat and threw a genial look around – 'How are we all today?' he asked, and the children made some indistinct sounds in reply. 'What does your mother say?' he asked, and the children giggled. He went in to change." (Narayan, 1938: 207)

According to P.S. Sundaram, *The Darkroom* "is apparently not a favourite among critics." (Sundaram, 1973: 41) Professor Narasimhaiah writes – "One may without loss skip the intervening *Darkroom* which for all its pathos develops melo-dramatically and has a didactic ending". (Narashimhaiah, 1969: 143) According to Prof.Narashimhaiah the ending cheaply moralizes about the place of women – which is one of submission to man.

Prof. A.N. Kaul writes it off as a badly written anti-domestic novel. According to Kaul, it is obvious that Ibsenism or the feminist

idea can inspire Narayan's imagination as little as the political idea of Gandhism.

It may be noted that *The Darkroom* suffers the similar fate of *Waiting* which was first assumed to be a 'Gandhi novel' and then rejected as a failure. It is true that Savitri suffers in the hands of a husband whose character is soaked in a blind chauvinistic bias for the inherited idea of the supremacy of men over women. This naturally leads the enlightened reader towards the question Ibsen had raised in favour of women. It is again true that the question of feminism arises, but only when we take the case of Ramani and Savitri in isolation, disregarding all the other characters that surround them.

The female characters in the novel, apart from Savitri, are Savitri's two closest friends Janamma and Gangu, Savitri's rival Shantabai, and Ponni, the matriarchal figure who protects Savitri in her distress. Between themselves Janamma and Gangu are implacable enemies and Savitri is often caught between them trying to maintain a subtle balance. Gangu's ambition is to become famous and without discrimination she chooses to aspire to become either a film star, a musician or a Congress leader. Narayan writes: "She prepared for her

film career by attending two Tamil pictures a week and picking up several screen songs in addition to wearing flimsy crêpe sarees and wearing her hair and flowers in a eccentric manner. She talked irresponsibly and enjoyed being unpopular in the elderly society of South Extension. She left home when she pleased and went where she liked, moved about without an escort, stared back at people, and talked loudly." (Narayan, 1938: 19) Her loud feminism is unmistakably the cause for carnival laughter that is flattering and abusive at the same time. Beside the depressing state of Savitri whose every step has to be taken according to her husband's moods, Gangu's presence comes as a relief like a free and fluttering butterfly. Again, her shallow feminism acts as a foil to the depth of Savitri's soul that deeply and imperceptibly surges against her own predicament. On the other hand, Janamma is a staunch and unashamed supporter of the patriarchal system. In order to persuade the brooding Savitri out of her darkroom she argues:

> You should either let your words out or feel that everything your husband does is right. As for me, I have never opposed my husband or argued with him at any time in my life. I might have occasionally suggested an alternative, but nothing more. What he does is right. It is a wife's duty to feel so. (*Ibid.*, 1938: 59)

She remembers her peers who supported her beliefs with the experiences of their lives:

> her own grandmother slaved cheerfully for her husband who had three concubines at home; her aunt who was beaten everyday by her husband and had never uttered a word of protest for fifty years; another friend of her mother's who was prepared to jump into a well if her husband so directed her." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 60)

Yet Janamma is no docile follower because her argument in support of patriarchy almost sounds condescending, as if her power lies in her ability to tolerate the atrocities of men, thus turning the whole case dialogic. The sympathizer always holds the elevated position and she is full of sympathy for men: "Men are impetuous. One moment they will be all temper and the next all kindness. Men have to bear many worries and burdens, and you must overlook it if they are sometimes unreasonable." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 60) It seems to her that men are equally burdened as women and have their own share of suffering: "If they appear sometimes harsh, you may rest assured they will suffer for it later." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 60) Janamma's convictions act as counterpoint to Savitri's dark moods and fatalistic introspections.

Two other women who contribute to this debate on the relation of men and women are the Cook's wife and Ranga's wife. Interestingly

they do not appear in person but are revealed in the conversation between their husbands. Ranga is a man who is completely terrorized by his wife. He recalls one occasion when he had tried to prove his fatherhood by punishing his wayward son and was chastened instead: "And the wife sprang on me from somewhere and hit me on the head with a brass vessel. I have sworn to leave the children alone even if they should be going down a well. Women are terrible." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 51) But the cook counters his argument with his own. "Only once has my wife tried to interfere, and then I nearly broke her bones. She has learnt to leave me alone now." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 51)

The cook advises Rangu: "Women must be taught their place." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 51) Like Ramani he too believes in bringing up children by the rod and without the interference of their wives, "It is no business of a wife's to butt in when the father is dealing with his son. It is a bad habit. Only a battered son will grow into a sound man." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 50)

The village priest advices Ponni's husband to take similar measures to domesticate his boisterous wife: "If she won't let you rest, thrash her; that is the way to keep women sane. In these days you

fellows are impotent mugs and let your women ride you about." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 167) It implies a game of power play where there is a constant tension to hold the reign. One spouse's weakness will empower the other. That Narayan is not upholding the women's cause alone is clear from his creation of Ponni who provides a counter argument to man's domination. When Savitri tells Ponni of her husband's moods, she advices, "Sister, remember this. Keep the men under the rod, and they will be all right. Show them that you care for them and they will tie you up and treat you like a dog." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 136) Ponni has great potentiality for love and her theory on men does not imply that she is a hater of men. When Savitri asks her if she liked her husband Ponni turns into a blushing bride, but she is also very possessive and wants to control her husband. The question is not of antagonism but of management: "You see, that is the way to manage them." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 136) She echoes the priest's apprehension that if let loose the spouse will usurp the upper hand: "He is a splendid boy, but sometimes he goes out with bad friends, who force him to drink, and then he will come home and try to break all the pots and beat me. But when I know that he has been drinking, the moment he comes home, I trip him up

from behind and push him down, and sit on his back for a little while; he will wriggle a little, swear at me, and then sleep, and wake up in the morning quiet as a lamb. I can't believe any husband is unmanageable in this universe ..." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 136)

There are enlightened men too who need no managing as Gangu's husband. But the author's presentation of this broad-minded husband is as double-voiced as his depiction of his wife Gangu's feminism: "Her husband never interfered with her but let her go her own way, and believed himself to be a champion of women's freedom; he believed he was serving the women's cause by constantly talking about votes and divorce." ((*Ibid.*, 1938: 19) Evan Ramani, who is often seen as a man of villainous proportion is not totally averse to women's liberation, that, according to him, should be limited to reading English novels, playing tennis and having their All-India-Conference. Narayan's tongue-in-cheek rendering of views on men and women, about their tactics of harnessing each other, and totally possessing each other, dialogizes the idealistic relations and questions of true love or marriage of souls.

Thus, around the more defined figures of Savitri and Ramani the argument continues, a process of dialogizing various strands. In a carnival, there is no possibility for a character to turn totally authoritarian, backed by the author's patronage, nor is there any chance for any ideology to grow strong and staring. There is no attempt on the part of Narayan to create Savitri as the epitome of perfection in order to sentimentalize her suffering. She is different from the female characters of Tagore who enjoy the author's support and are blessed with more refined and elevated mental endowments. Savitri cannot rise beyond the ordinary and her suffering cannot reach the grandeur of the heroic. Savitri is lost in the blind allies of her infertile mind. She cannot imagine beyond the problem of herself becoming middle-aged and Ramani's natural attraction for a more beautiful and younger woman: "I am middle-aged, old-fashioned, plain. How can I help it? She must be young and pretty." ((*Ibid.*, 1938: 101) But in a way Savitri is right because she is dealing with a man who is mediocre too. Ramani finds Shantabai fascinating because she is different from the timid Savitri in her free manners, her artfulness, her eloquence. Savitri's self-abasement, her total unconcern for her body has robbed her of her

freshness. On the other hand, the self-conscious Shantabai is fresh and glowing and she wears her saree in style: "How well a simple voile saree sat on her! Why couldn't one's wife dress as attractively?" (*Ibid.*, 1938: 72) – Ramani wonders.

A hurried judgement of Ramani would find him villainous but Ramani is not so. Ramani is devoid of any cunning and not schematic and deceptive. In his first encounter with Shantabai, he is completely bowled over, which does not escape the clever lady's notice. From then onwards, she starts exploiting his awe and admiration and literally drives him by his nose.

Critics have often looked upon Ramani as a tyrant who openly and unashamedly flirts with Shantabi and defies society, but there are certain passages which show how Ramani is often mesmerized by Shantabai's artfulness. His helplessness to ignore Shantabai's attractions comes out in lines like: "This was threatening to become a daily habit. It was almost impossible to go home directly from the club." ((*Ibid.*, 1938: 87) It is like an addiction that replaces his addiction for bridge in the club. With her pathetic life-story, her soft voice and her posing as defenseless and vulnerable, Shantabai wins his

sympathies. He is now bound to be chivalrous and act as a 'man'. The artless Savitri fails to do so because she tries her best to make things smooth for her husband, trying to meet with his expectations and her husband takes her for granted. Shantabai takes care to prevent Ramani from taking her in his stride. On the day of Shantabai's confirmation, Ramani dramatically pushes the letter before her and eagerly awaits her thanks for all his trouble. But Shantabai's reaction – "I am rather disappointed" (*Ibid.*, 1938: 72) – shocks him out of his complacency. The following passage shows how Ramani is often pushed to an extreme irretrievable situation:

> She asked suddenly, "Shall we go to a picture tonight?" This was the first time she had suggested this, and Ramani sat more or less stunned. "I said shall we go to a picture tonight?" She repeated with emphasis.
>
> "Tonight?" Ramani asked in weak apprehension. There were already rumours abroad, and now to be seen in public ...
>
> "Tonight. Answer in a word, yes or no." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 89)

Shantabai is confident of making him dance to her tune and does not care to know whether he actually wanted to see a film or not. In the cinema hall in a sudden reversal of mood she decides to quit the hall and go to the river instead. After this she makes him sit on the

riverbank, drive around the town, again return to the river and finally stay awake beside her the whole night because she could not sleep that night. We find Ramani listening to her dictates 'faithfully' and like an obedient follower asking, — "What shall we do now?" (*Ibid.*, 1938: 91) It is interesting that Ramani here is replaying Savitri's role. The only difference is that what seems sweet and naughty in Shantabai seems bullying in Ramani. We may recall a similar situation when Ramani dictates Savitri to accompany him for a movie without caring to know whether she liked it or not –

> "It is getting late. Are you coming with me to the cinema or not?"
> "Now?"
> "Immediately". (*Ibid.*, 1938: 24)

Savitri cannot enjoy anything without including her children and she is unhappy to leave them behind, but Ramani wants his wife to come alone.

It cannot be said with conviction that Ramani has no soft feelings for his wife and only uses her as a slave. He is proud of her beauty: "He was very proud of his wife. She had a fair complexion and well proportioned features, and her sky blue saree gave her a distinguished

appearance. He surveyed her slyly, with a sense of satisfaction at possessing her." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 27) Staunch feminists may object to the word 'possessing' but aren't there enough evidences where love has been a game of conquering and possessing? From Shakespeare and Donne to the present day love has always been disappointing in its idealized version and has strayed to the paths of possession. Narayan stays away from any attempt of idealizing love and thus bares the material and sensual aspect of love, which is unashamedly possessive. This carnivalesque rendering of love devoid of any platonic garb hurts the aesthetic sense of many readers and critics. Professor Narasimhaiah writes: "It is probably the only novel in which Narayan has also introduced sex overtly, something that would embarrass his admirers ...". (Narasimhaiah, 1969: 143) This prudence emanates from the social taboos that makes critics like Narasimhaiah conscious of various human emotions that originate from bodily dictates like desire, possessiveness, jealousy, carnality, etc. Bakhtin spoke for the 'living actuality' of the bodily life that links mankind to the earth and in the process frustrates man's superciliousness. This downward movement of the comic genre saves man from the fog of deontic abstractions created

by the official world, which blurs the vision from seeing the blatant truth. After all, even one of the world's greatest love-tragedies could not save Othello from sinking into the quagmires of the inevitable obsessive possessiveness for Desdemona.

The sensuality of love sits well in a mediocre character like Ramani who has very limited mental resources. His relation with Shantabai is just an 'affair', as P.S. Sundaram rightly puts it, but it is not at the cost of Savitri, for whom Ramani undoubtedly reserves a place in his mind. We cannot overlook the fact that whenever he sees Shantabai in an artistic jacket or saree he cannot help remembering Savitri and her carelessness about her appearance. He is not deriding Savitri but secretly wishing her to look prim and proper: "Why can't they put on some decent clothes and look presentable at home instead of starting their make-up just when you are in a hurry to be off. Stacks of costly sarees, all folded and kept inside, to be worn only when going out. Only silly looking rags to gladden our sight at home." (Narayan, 1938: 26) We cannot complain that Savitri's husband is a miser who does not care to buy her good clothes. When Savitri leaves him he complains: "How could she forget the six-sovereign necklace he had

bought for her at the beginning of his career, when he had not a bank account and was subsisting on insurance canvassing?" (*Ibid.*, 1938: 141)

Ramani is not the intellectual sort and his way of showing his love is *gifting* her with sarees and jewels, and as he is egocentric he expects Savitri to understand his worldly way of lovemaking. His love is mean and possessive: "It is only the outsider who has the privilege of seeing a pretty dress". (*Ibid.*, 1938: 26) But there is no instance of his complete rejection of Savitri. Even when he is admiring Shantabai he feels guilty and rude and his sympathy reaches out for Savitri: "He felt unhappy at thinking disparagingly of his wife. Poor girl, she did her best to keep him happy and the home running. He told himself that he was not criticizing her but only implying that with a little education she might have been even better." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 89) Ramani is not a brazen sinner and his sense of guilt is apparent in his mellowed behaviour at the end of the novel. He stops bullying his wife, eats without criticizing and goes about with his head hung. He even tries to flatter and please her.

Savitri's dark moods too are interspersed with sudden light and happy moments. Although forced to accompany her husband to the cinema, she starts enjoying it and is completely enchanted: "The whole picture swept her mind clear of mundane debris and filled it with superhuman splendours." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 30) Away for a while from the worries of her children, alone with her husband, her romantic feeling surges on the surface: "As she sat beside her husband, she felt grateful to him and loved him very much, with his blue coat and the faint aroma of a leather suitcase hanging about him." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 30) Can we blame Ramani for forcing her to leave the children to themselves for a while?

The problem in the novel is not that of chauvinistic husbands exploiting and bullying their wives. It is the problem of two human beings living under the same roof. The two characters are mediocre and uneducated. Enlightened and educated characters would have afforded to be broadminded, uninhibited and thus more elastic. But this elasticity is lacking in Savitri and Ramani who follow the dictates of society and their characters lack the space for accommodating each other. They are egocentric and do not have the imagination to understand each other's

point of view. Ramani is not a bad father, and we often see him petting his children or sharing a joke or two. But his principle on bringing them up does not tally with that of Savitri's. When he forces Babu to go to school he is not wrong in his presumption that Babu's headache is a got-up excuse and Babu is exploiting his mother's over-indulgence. When Babu confesses that his headache left him in the afternoon he says: "Certainly so that you might not miss the cricket in the evening; isn't it so?" (*Ibid.*, 1938: 15) He also has the sense of humour that makes him share his childhood secrets with his son: "I've been your age and played all these dodges in my time." ((*Ibid.*, 1938: 15) He treats his wife in the same fashion as he treats his children: "You have to learn a lot yet. You are still a child, perhaps a precocious child, but a child all the same." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 15) Instead of equality and mutual respect, a kind of paternal affection and reproof sometimes constitute Ramani's addresses to Savitri. This attitude is quite normal in India where husbands are often much older than their wives. Narayan's treatment of Ramani as an individual subject and not as an object in any pre-conceived scheme of writing prevents the character from turning into a uni-dimensional creation. Though Ramani the mediocre man

lacks any dynamics of possibilities, he is placed between the good and the evil, never to be entrapped into definitive categories. Ramani is dialogic and the dialogue on valuational questions may never end. Savitri is a good mother and a faithful wife in the sense that each day of her life is passed in an unselfish dedication to her husband and children. Yet Savitri too has her limitations, for she looks at everything from her own point of view. This often makes her character stubborn and unbending — specially in matters, which she thinks, is her forte. In spite of her husband's nagging, Savitri sticks to her own rule in the kitchen. It is interesting that nowhere in the novel do we find Savitri indulging in the luxury that her husband wishes and nags for: "Brinjals, cucumber, radish and greens, all the twelve months in the year and all the thirty days in the month." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 2) The cook has to make do with the rationed raw materials carefully allotted to him by Savitri. It is only when Savitri shuts herself up in the darkroom that he gets the opportunity to show his master his expertise: "The cook had prepared the meal very well because he had the run of the kitchen cupboard, and he had made unstinting use of rarities like pure ghee and parched coconut while Savitri would have allowed him to use only gingerly oil

and no coconut." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 54) So it is not merely to deride Savitri that Ramani enjoyed the food that day. Ramani likes to live in a grand style, he wants everyone to have good food, he wants his wife to wear good sarees and look beautiful, he wants his guests to be served with plenty and also wants the leftovers to be distributed among beggars: "Make it a rule everyday to give some food to the beggars." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 13) Ramani is reasonably well off. Savitri is helped by a servant, a maidservant and a cook. After her husband and children leave she has time to take a nap. She also has the afternoon to herself when she has no work and goes to meet her friends. So Savitri cannot be seen as a toiling slave to her family. She rules over her servants and has complete control over them. She keeps them half-starved, keeps her larders carefully under lock and key, rebukes them when they come late and keeps them busy. As Ramani bullies his wife, Savitri too bullies her servants. Unable to get back on her husband, she gets back on them instead.

The Darkroom is polyphonic with numerous characters contributing to the unending dialogue on the relations of men and women, husbands and wives, children and their parents, masters and

servants, bosses and employees. It is carnivalesque because it never allows any character or any group to override the others — and a constant crowning and decrowning goes on. The novel does not uphold any certain ideology, or any placard, nor is it didactic It is a grotesque world, which avoids any high-flying tenets and keeps itself down to the mundane.

Yet *The Darkroom* invokes a feeling of pain and loss, and the readers would unanimously call it 'A moving tale of tormented wife.' In spite of numerous characters popping up around Savitri and debating on hegemonic gender norms, Savitri remains the least vocal. But a sensitive reader cannot avoid noticing that Savitri, though uneducated and homely, is neither light-hearted nor servile. Her houshold, which is her forte, is completely in her control and in spite of her husband's nagging and bullying, there is no evidence of change until she leaves the house. Savitri is serious in her role of a wife and mother and seldom neglects her duties. Gangu acts as a foil who holds forth her fickle moods as a means of skipping now and then the uninspiring duty of making tiffin for the household: "I felt perfectly disgusted with the home, and so threw everything up and came out. Sometimes I do get

into such a mood, you know." ((*Ibid.*, 1938: 98) In contrast, Savitri's retreat to the darkroom, the only time when the household has to do without her, turns out to be a dark and serious matter. The foil characters of Savitri bring to relief the depth of Savitri's pain and her silent resistance to what seemed to her as a breach of her right as a wife and mother. It may be argued that while Gangu's husband is condescending, Ramani is unbending. But it may also be pointed out that Savitri has hardly made herself clear. What Janamma says about her is true — either she has to speak out, or follow her husband blindly, but Savitri can follow neither. Even her sulking in the darkroom is devoid of language and neither her family, her friends, or even the readers have access to what goes on in her suffering soul. But finally when she walks out of her house, breaking away even from the bonds of her children, her silent gesture speaks out firmly. This gesture does not fail to move Ramani: "Ramani got up from bed after a night of disturbed sleep. With all his bravado before his wife, he was very much shaken by her manner. Such a thing had never happened to him at any time for fifteen years. She had always been docile and obedient, and the fire inside her was a revelation to him now. Though he had invited her

to walk out of the house last night, he had not expected her to do it. He had expected she would go into the darkroom and sulk for a few days, a few days more than usual; then she was bound to come to her senses and accept things as they were." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 139) Beyond the callous exterior and egocentric nature nurtured by age-old patriarchal values, Ramani is weak and loving. The important point in the novel is the inability of Ramani and others to comprehend the language of Savitri's darkroom. When Savitri finally returns Ramani is happy and fusses over her: "'Oh, I should have bought some jasmine for you,' he said, looking at her mischievously." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 207) He is also concerned about her health: "He watched her for a moment while she was eating 'Oh, how poorly you eat!' he exclaimed. 'Have a little more ghee. Eat well, my girl, and grow fat. Don't fear that you will make me a bankrupt by eating.'" (*Ibid.*, 1938: 208) Pathetically, this happy Ramani is totally unaware of the great change in Savitri who now has a feeling of emptiness – she will never be able to reciprocate his amorous addresses. Trying to smile at his jokes she inwardly reflects: "A part of me is dead ..." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 208)

While Ramani fails to understand the depths of Savitri's suffering in the darkroom, Savitri too fails to understand her husband's character. Like a spoilt child Ramani loves to be pampered. When Savitri leaves him Ramani is thoroughly shaken and he opens up to the reader: "he expected to be coaxed and requested; he told himself that people could get anything from him if only they knew the proper way of approaching him." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 139) Ramani's overbearing attitude is not only directed towards a wife: "He had never tolerated any advice from anyone – not even from his father ...." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 140)

Ramani remains the same till the end and there is no indication of any change in the future. Though a bit mellowed at the unexpected turn of events when Savitri leaves him, it is quite probable that he will bloat up into the same Ramani the moment he gets habituated and feels secured in Savitri's presence. His affection for his wife is as egocentric as ever and he will remain forever naïve to the change in his wife who will never be the same person again. The following interaction between husband and wife reveal a great gap of understanding that is truly tragic:

> He said, "I come home early entirely for year sake, and now you won't talk to me properly. What is the matter with you?"
> "I don't know. I am all right. I am tired and want to sleep."
> He pleaded with her, later: "Just a pretty half an hour. You can go to bed at ten-thirty. Just a little talk. I came home early for your sake."
> "I can't even stand. I am very tired. I must sleep."
> "Please yourself," he said, and went away to his room.
> (*Ibid.*, 1938: 208)

Savitri's change is the result of a deep psychological schism. When she learns about her husband's affair she enters the darkroom of her psyche, where she finds herself alone. Her previous retreat to the darkroom of her home was a physical segregation for the moment, but she carried on with the wife's and the mother's role. Thus a little logic on her social responsibilities brings her out of her private recluse. But now it is different, for here, alone in the darkroom of her mind she sees herself denuded of her social appendages, as the lonely woman who is out of the reach of any social buffer. Here she faces the stark reality and is thoroughly shaken when she faces the eternal questions that has haunted women throughout the history of human civilization: "What possession can a woman call her own except her body? Everything else that she has is her father's, her husband's or her son's." (*Ibid.*, 1938:

113) It is a carnivalesque question that haunts the subjugated, as it interrogates the examples of womanhood upheld by epics and myths. Her question counters her husband's ideas: "He remembered all the heroines of the epics whose one dominant quality was a blind stubborn following of their husbands, like the shadow following the substance." (*Ibid.*, 1938: 141) The difference in perspective underlines that the heroines have glorified the 'shadow' which Savitri finds hollow and dead.

Savitri's darkrooms are attempts at individualization and segregation that suck away her jolly vitality which society had gifted her. On the verge of a tragedy, Savitri is however deprived of the tragic glory. Savitri's darkrooms prove null and void and ineffective before the staring questions that society enforces a middleclass woman to face. Savitri's is the mind with wings, struggling to be free, but as a caged bird, does not have the capacity to fly. Savitri has to return to her cage because she cannot provide for herself and protect herself from the cruel world. She remembers with longing the security of her home and the duties towards her children and finally chooses it as a better option. The most pathetic part of her return is that during her days in

introspection she has experienced a revelation that has left her hollow. It is her deep realization of her own weakness and ineptitude that is axiomatic, and her inability to accept the materiality that she discovers at the base of human bondage. She will never be the same again and from now onwards her compromises will stare at her with reinforced meaning.

III

One of the important points that should be considered in the understanding of carnival is its location. Goethe realized while witnessing a New Year Carnival in Rome, that it is not an occasion of the state, but is something the people 'give themselves'. For this reason the carnival is held in the public square. Goethe's eye-witness account inspired Bakhtin when he wrote *Rabelais and His World* where he underlines the significance of the thousand-year-old development of popular culture that, according to Bakhtin not only energized literature and culture in the past but continues to be a potent force even today. Gardiner writes: "'Carnival' is Bakhtin's term for a bewildering constellation of rituals, games, symbols, and various carnal excesses

which together constitute an alternative 'social space' of freedom, abundance and equality." (Gardiner, 1992: 45) Ken Hirsckop uses 'democracy' as the key term to his understanding of Bakhtin's theories of dialogism, heteroglossia and carnival. Undoubtedly the expanse of the public square where people feel, speak and behave freely inspires the idea of a democratic culture. It is that space which, when entered into, transforms the egocentric into the historical being – the one among many. It is idealistic in the sense that it emanates from a spirit of sharing, understanding and participation. Gardiner further writes: "In one of the fragments dedicated to Goethe and the Bildungsroman Bakhtin wrote eloquently of the moment when 'the image of the becoming person begins to overcome its private character (of course, within certain limits) and to enter a completely different spacious sphere of historical being'." (*Ibid.*, 1992: 45) The public square is a place where people feel free to express themselves and the collective existence frees people from fear and turns them bold.

Therefore, the public square tends to create characters who are rogues, and those who exist on the borders of social boundaries to defy the establishment or laugh at its serious strictures. The public square

swarms with fools, clowns, rogues who are free from inhibition, shame, and responsibility. However, these characters survive not as individuals but as part of the mass, for their personalities merge with the mass and are tossed and turned according to the tide of the mass consciousness. Bakhtin in his thesis on carnival elaborates how participants in a carnival are crowned and decrowned showing mankind in the ambiguous light of the king and the clown. Since these participants survive on the public square, they are rendered as superficial beings and there is no attempt to explore the depths and privacies of their personalities. For this reason these characters do not develop but evolve being caught up in the tide of the public life and metamorphose from one state to another.

R.K. Narayan's polyphonic world is carnivalesque that brims with characters without identity who are always on the borderlines. Countering the usual trend of the 19th century Eropean Fiction of using private closeted space and epical time-scheme that was adopted by many Indian writers, Narayan uses the public square as the location where time is not sequential but metamorphic. In Narayan's novels the openness of the narrative space embraces courtyards, stations, taxi

stands where numerous faces appear and disappear, giving the overall impression of life as a generative process. It is not the world of the individual but of the nameless and faceless crowd, the surging humanity. This crowded existence coheres as the principle of sensual bodily unity. Consequently, this continuity underpins a much larger vision of continuity of life through mutations and its regeneration. This is a world-view rooted in all folk cultures. Narayan is inspired by this world-view full of births, marriages and deaths, without any attempt to sentimentalize them and segregate them as self-enclosed units. Here, whatever happens to the individual is not created by the individual's own psychological complexities but by society and its governing principle of the 'right' and the 'wrong'. However, the characters hold dear their secret desires and on the very first opportunity they subvert the societal norms. The role of the crowd or mass is important as it has the power to crown the clown as the king and again decrown him. This spirit invades the whole space and for good or bad, power is constantly relativized.

In *The Guide* the carnival crowd turns into an overwhelming agent. Though all of Narayan's novels swarm with both familiar and

strange faces, creating the atmosphere that we find in market places or community-halls, it would not be wrong to single out *The Guide*, where the role of the crowd is quite significant. In *The Guide* Narayan presents Raju and his world in the form of grotesque realism where the human body acquires the value of an open signifier. In this world, Raju as the hero is not an autonomous self-sufficient object, but rather a part of a collective, indivisible unity where the temporal drives supersede other boundaries and merge with the external world. The result is ambivalent, for though Raju is an active agent who interacts with the world around him, the external world too influences Raju's life by its inexorable agency. This life of the 'lower bodily stratum' as Bakhtin puts it, is constituted of symbolic oppositions like praise/abuse, crowning/decrowning etc. as if in rhythm with the earth that is at once the creator and the destroyer, the womb and the grave. Unlike the image of the individual body which is closed, private, psychologized and torn away from social and cosmic life, all events that occur to the grotesque agent happens on the boundary of society. While anything that happens to the individual concerns the individual alone and takes on a single meaning, the grotesque agent is hyperbolized and his

meaning becomes transgressive. What ever happens to Raju is not autonomous, rational and self-directed, nor is it the outcome of the deep unconscious, the *a-priori* inner-structure of his psychology. Rather, Raju is a reflexive agent whose life is grounded in the collective body of the mass which retains a distinctive relation to society that is reflexive, subversive, unpredictable and heterodox. So, instead of a dialectical growth, Raju's life unpredictably metamorphoses.

While reading the story of Raju in *The Guide*, the reader is made uncannily aware of the overwhelming presence of the mass of people as the most powerful representative. It will tolerate no individualistic existence, no romantic privacy of soul-searching. Raju's skill of mesmerizing others with falsehood is evoked only by the audience itself, it is inspired by the presence of the faceless crowd.

It may be noticed that from his boyhood Raju is surrounded by such faceless multitudes who come to his village, stop at his father's shop for a chat. He does not remember their faces or bother to look at them — they are the vague figures existing in the light and shade of the oil lamp. Their constant shoptalk is like a meaningless hum that he listens without understanding. Somehow they influence him and form

an important part of his boyhood consciousness. They emanate a sense of life outside Raju's individualistic existence and forecast Raju's future that gradually gets entangled in the consciousness of society.

When the great structure of the railway station is built the hint of another set of people, different from the rustics, pervades the scene. Although there is hardly any mention of the workers who built the railway, their existence is felt in Raju's existence. His life changes a bit, taking on a shade slightly different from the previous one. The privacy of the tamarind-tree-shade where Raju played by himself is gone. The topography of the place changes with stranded lorries and piles of red earth creating fantastic mountains. This attracts a cowherd boy and his intrusion irritates Raju. Apart from losing his private existence Raju displays great receptivity by appropriating the vulgar slang from the faceless railway workers. It is a taste of freedom from the barriers of propriety in language, a subversion of the official world that spreads its tentacles through parental grooming. Through his transformation, in the disclosing of his rhetorical skill, Raju enters the consciousness of the subordinate mass who have their own habitual social practices that are oppositional and resistant to dominant

discourses. According to Gardiner the French social theorist Michel de Certeau (1984), considers it as the 'oppositional practices of everyday life'.

As a punishment for his waywardness, Raju is sent to school. But the school is also chaotic, being full of indisciplined boys and an abusive teacher. Along with being disciplined, Raju tastes the thrill of breaking rules. Whenever the master's back is turned, the children tear pages from their notebooks, and float their boats in the drain water that flows beneath the *pyol*. Raju's short stay in the *pyol* school is spent in reflexive interaction with indistinct faces, as the writer never bothers to draw the boys out in clear outlines. It is a mass existence where no friendship is mentioned that would have given a personal touch to the scene.

The life's journey of Raju from boyhood to youth is not shown as stages of growing up but as metamorphosed into different roles like the Railway Raju and the eloquent guide. The passage of time is indicated through the crowd that now surrounds Raju. These are the tourists curious of the little known place named Malgudi which now has its name in the map of Indian Railways. Interestingly, instead of

providing a picturesque detail of the tide of people that now populate the newly built station of Malgudi, Narayan, is abrupt and plain in conveying their influence on Raju's life. It is a very successful method of fusing Raju's destiny to the whims of the faceless mass and depicting their overwhelming power. Sitting in his shop it is through conversation that Raju enters the consciousness of his customers: "I liked to talk to people. I liked to hear people talk. I liked customers who would not open their mouths merely to put a plantain in, and would say something, on any subject except the state of crops, price of commodities, and litigation." (Narayan, 1958:43) Thus Raju exchanges his father's world for a new emerging world. He adopts the language of the new set of people and his career takes different turns. It is the dazzling art of exhibitionism that touches Raju and he in the process projects a fantastic myth about Malgudi. This myth draws more and more tourists towards Malgudi. "Malgudi and its surroundings were my special show. I could let a man have a peep at it or a whole panorama. It was adjustable. I could give them a glimpse of a few hours or soak them in mountain and river scenery or archeology for a whole week. I could not really decide how much to give or withhold until I knew how

much cash the man carried or, if he carried a cheque-book, how good it was." (*Ibid.*, 1958: 54) Raju's power over his customers is quite apparent, but it is simultaneously perceptible how the influence of the mass drags Raju's life towards unforeseen dangers. Raju soon lives on lies and deception.

When Rosie's success on the stage brings name and prosperity, Raju is puffed up with self-importance and indulges in self-congratulation: "When I watched her in a large hall with a thousand eyes focused on her, I had no doubt that people were telling themselves and each other, 'There he is, the man but for whom —' and I imagined all this adulation lapping around my ears like wavelets." (*Ibid.*, 1958: 162) Raju now wears a false mantle and disguises his own identity with his artful pretentions and hoodwinks the crowd. Yet the unpredictable potential of the crowd ultimately overwhelms Raju. It is the faceless crowd that is always there pushing and prodding with garlands and money. Beside its looming power Raju's self-importance turns comic and pathetic. He is the clown in the garb of a king and carries the false impression that this state is eternal, until the crowd decrowns him. The power of the mass becomes clear when Raju, who had previously

moved about proudly through the crowd slips away from them into the safer custody of the police-car. Though it is Marco who sends Raju to jail for forgery, Raju has to maintain his status in front of the crowd, to save himself from a volte-face. He pleadingly whispers to the Police Superintendent: "Please don't create a scene now. Wait until the end of the show, and till we are back home." (*Ibid.*, 1958: 191)

The most compelling potency of the mass consciousness is evident in the scene where Raju turns into a Swami on the banks of Sarayu. Velan, followed by the faceless villagers and later on crowds from all over the country turn him into a saint. Paradoxically, his enforced sainthood with all accompanying adulations is a sort of decrowning, for he loses his individual will power. His attempts to regain his own private life fail. Desperately he wants to reveal his tainted past to Velan, but fails. He would rather shoulder all of Velan's hatred to regain a normal ordinary existence, but Velan remains unperturbed. Velan is merely the personification of blind faith that has infected the mass and endowed them with a strange power. Raju had once gloated in his skill of hoodwinking the mass but the mass

consciousness subverts his superego. At the brink of his life's end Raju's consciousness gets merged with the will of the people.

The final scene of Raju's life is a veritable carnival. Raju's penance and fasting is to bring rain that in turn will bring the promise of abundant harvest for the people. This is the principle of the earth and the lower bodily life of man – for life to continue sacrifice and death are required. This theme runs in all the rituals and myths of the folk culture. It is a culture that would never allow any solipsism, nor individualism. The folk consciousness is always plural, communal; it is a life-force that must continue ruthlessly on its own dead remains, for death is not an end but it is the beginning of life and hence regenerative. So, death is not an occasion for regret or melancholy; the seed of life that death promises evokes festivity. We perceive this festivity around Raju, while he lies dying. We see children playing happily or gaping at free film shows, women wearing their best sarees and jewels adding a touch of colour and life to the scene, cooking festive dishes that spread aroma all over the place, men sipping tea, watching body-builders flaunting their muscles, or gambling, and peddlers selling balloons, reed whistles and sweets. The total

incongruity of the scene subverts the heavy authoritarian impression of death. The fear of death evaporates. It is the life of the human body, vibrant, carnal and ruthlessly happy that pervades. In this world, Raju does not get the chance to enclose his life into a single unity of meaning; it remains open, unfinished, and disappears into the continuity of a communal life.

Critics have often complained that Narayan uses a language that is bland and lacking in richness and depth. They even go to the extent of questioning his versatility as an author. However, if his language sounds too plain and frugal, it has succeeded in achieving the effect of impressing upon us the temporal and temperamental nature of human life. The story of Raju has all the aspects to entice the audience of a film, but the cinematized version of the novel has individualized Raju with its monologic focus, and the looming crowd that creates a different ambience in the novel is forgotten. It is Narayan's language that saves the novel from turning into a scandalous love-story. Narayan checks any emotive tendency of a writer to explore the feelings and emotions of his characters. Instead, we hear the voices of Raju and Rosie, distinct but casual, as we hear the multitudinous sounds of daily

life. Some are less distinct, and still others are silent. But their presence is felt through certain abrupt hints made by the author. For example, the husband of Rosie is done in simple sketch. He is a lonely figure absorbed in his lonely passion for cave-paintings. It is not known why he marries Rosie. It is undecipherable why he marries at all. It is also not known why he hates the idea of Rosie dancing. Is it male chauvinism or is it the traditional prejudice against this art? It is not known what goes on in his heart when he hears about Rosie's affair with Raju. He is like a solitary stranger amidst a crowd.

Another sketch in Raju's mother — the typical middle class woman who cannot pull herself away from the pressures of society and become an individual. She sees Rosie as a guest and cannot bring herself to be rude to her and tell her on her face that she is not wanted. Rosie's pleasing nature draws her to Rosie in spite of herself. But again her traditional prejudices make it hard for her to live under the same roof with a dancing girl who is a social outcast and looked down upon.

Guffur, the porter's son, Joseph, Velan, the American journalist, the schoolmaster and the Police Superintendent are part of the hazy crowd drawn a little more distinctly than the rest to give the faceless

crowd a little more realism — as often done in a painting where crowds drawn are often combinations of some distinct and some hazy figures. The overall feeling captured is that of life in its dailiness, life torn with hunger, passion, awe or celebration. While Raju is dying, the crowd is celebrating around him, having picnics and film shows. It is an unsentimental, non-idealistic physical existence, callous yet forceful. The ironic mode helps the writer to achieve this end. It is downright unromantic, unlike its filmed version; it is the overturning of all ideologies we tend to weave around human existence.

IV

"Carnival is a gap in the fabric of society. And since the dominant ideology seeks to author the social order as a unified text, fixed, complete, and forever, carnival is a threat." (Clark & Holquist, 1984: 301) Carnival promises freedom from gloomy eternal categories — it promises change and renewal in the future and in that sense it is utopian. Such utopian dreams lurk in Bakhtin's concept of the carnival in literature. In Narayan's autobiographical novel *The English Teacher* this dream for man's return to the bare basics of existence is possible

only when man's communal empathy subverts his ego. It is the plurality of folk consciousness that Narayan exemplifies in Susila's heavenly existence or in the little unknown school for children headed by a teacher who seems slightly odd when placed against what the 'official world' considers as normal. Though against any idealization, the concept of carnival has ironically – "a strong element of idealization, even utopian visionariness ..." (*Ibid.*, 1984: 310)

Bakhtin's concept of the 'official world' emanates, according to Clarke and Holquist, from his Russian experience of forced collectivization to homogenize the rural economy and ethnic diversity as well. He also saw the formation of the Writers' Union in 1932 which succeeded in centralizing Soviet literature only at the institutional level. Thus terms like 'unified language', 'centralization', 'official genres' 'canonized ideology' are the markers of what Bakhtin meant by the 'official'. For his sensitive soul, this totalitarian experience was suffocating, and he sought relief in the heteroglossia which work at the levels of religion, politics, society and language. Bakhtin realized that the 'official world' depended for its survival on the human fear of segregation and extinction. The official world projected God as totally

unsympathetic to human desires or to the language of the human body; it believed politics to be dictatorial and society authoritarian that dictated language to be prim and proper. Bakhtin, to his utter relief, finds in the folk culture a total subversion of the official fear. Bakhtin welcomes the carnival world-view that demystifies death and makes it an ordinary and natural phenomenon; it is only the other face of life.

Bakhtin is influenced and inspired by the thoughts of his teacher in the Classics Department of Petrograd University – Faddei F. Zelinsky. Zelinsky makes distinction between the official culture of a society and its more vital unofficial culture and draws Bakhtin's appreciation. Both men believe in the potential of the folk for undermining the heaviness and dogmatism of the high culture; they also believed, say Clark and Holquist, that there should not be an absolute break between the world of the gods and that of human desires, between the divine and the human, the high and the low.

In the colonized India the intelligentia were obsessed with the search for an Indian identity, and in the process attempted to centralize Indian ethos. There was the Brahmo movement that was totally an elite endeavour to uphold the theory of the single God that hardly

synchronized with the common man's imagination. Tagore's romantic epiphanic religion and Gandhi's humanitarian missionary zeal were beyond the common man's comprehension. So they continued to live with their gods who blessed their household or intermingled with the cycles of reaping and sowing. The common people domesticated religion by depicting gods as quarrelling, loving, politicizing and behaving like themselves. Narayan as a writer is totally soaked in this sub-culture that happens at the grass-root level and chooses to write in the humorous form because it is non other than this form that can truly capture this reality. It is truly an ambivalent experience because the spirit is seen as enfleshed with all the associated symptoms of the flesh.

The English Teacher is a novel that is informed by the problematics of knowing oneself as a human being and as an author. In spite of Bakhtin's propagation of Socratic dialogue, ironically Bakhtin too had no other way but to express his views in the form of linguistic philosophies and literacy theories. Theorizing is unavoidable, and the exceptionality of the homo sapiens in the animal world is his constant turning round at himself and trying to measure, evaluate and find a name for his own inspirations and endeavours. In Narayan's case, the

shock of his wife's death turns his lighter days into a more somber mood of instrospection. According to Tagore, when death strikes, it turns into a moment of our awakening to the presence of God. Death turns Narayan's thoughts to the problems of human bonding, the longing of the soul to communicate, to build bridges between islands of isolation.

It has already been shown how, like the rest of Narayan's works, *The English Teacher* too uses the polyphonic technique. In fact, Narayan cannot express otherwise, but the paradox is that, he has to reveal himself as an author. The carnival spirit of challenging the sanctified official world is there, which comes out through the use of polyphony, yet one distinct voice of the author may be located, and this is what makes *The English Teacher* an exception. It is, what Bakhtin might have called the monologic authorial voice, though it may also be shown that this single distinct voice does not channelize the whole novel towards a single monologic goal. This distinct voice argues in favour of a greater freedom of expression and learning, in favour of embracing the heterogeneities of the world and criticizes the 'official world's careful elimination, categorization and promotion of solipsism.

In short — to speak for a heteroglotic truth in a democratized polyphonic world, Narayan has to use a monologic voice in an otherwise polyphonic structure.

It has already been shown how in *The English Teacher* the protagonist slips away from all the bondages of stipulated roles that tend to limit and entrap social man. It has also been analysed how polyphony in the novel prevents any sentimentalization of death and instead brings out surprising and unexpected reactions among its observers.

In Narayan's work, death is not a phenomenon that individuates or segregates, but in spite of the shock and pain, it turns out to be a part of life. When Krishna's wife dies, the concerned people, with their sympathies and suggestions do not leave him alone, and Krishna's social responsibility as a father doubles, leaving very little time for him to cocoon himself into his suffering self. His tryst with death and afterlife is never always alone, because while communicating with his dead wife, he is assisted by a friend. And the most surprising part of it is that his dead wife's soul is not alone, for she is surrounded by a community of dead souls who help her in every way. Instead of the

mysterious individual 'I' she has turned into a happy 'we'. This rendering of death and afterlife is totally 'unofficial'; it does not tally with the bulk of serious writing that always project death as an isolated phenomenon, a mystery. Susila's happy soul is a stark contrast to the Gothic spirits who are lonely and haunted by darkness.

Working in this world, Narayan's personal tragedy turns into an unsceptic dialogue with death and afterlife, as we see in *The English Teacher*, and there is no hesitation on the part of Narayan, even as an intellectual, to depict it in very ordinary terms.

Many readers, so Narayan writes, find the earlier part of *The English Teacher* interesting, and the later part displeasing or disgusting — "feeling that they have been baited with the domestic picture into tragedy, death and nebulous, impossible speculations." (Narayan, 1974: 135)

Critics have been put off by the parapsychology and many have deplored Narayan's taking resort in occultism. However, P.S. Sundaram, quite reasonably, finds coherence between Krishna's character who sees the burning *ghat* as a 'cloakroom' and his

willingness to listen to the voices of the dead. Other critics rely on his autobiography *My Days* where Narayan writes: "More than any other book *The English Teacher* is autobiographical in content ..." (*Ibid.*, 1974: 134) or his interview with Ved Mehta where he says that everything he has set down in *The English Teacher* actually happened to him. K.K. Sharma writes: "However, I feel that it is not improbable because it is the actual record of the novelist's own life ...". (Ram, 1981: 100)

Instead of getting stuck on the question of its improbability why not treat it as another double-voiced mode of literary expression? Krishna's communion with his wife not only coheres with his character, it also reveals the attitude of the genre to death which is rendered in the novel in earthly terms, with the dead mingling in the daily chores of Krishna's life. If Krishna conceives his wife's after-life in the light of romantic Platonism it is but natural, for he is a scholar well acquainted with Plato's ideas. Susila's description of her state is the ideal which the mortal strives to achieve, and the divine light is not alien or unearthly but a state of joy and fulfillment, that, as a desire, nestles close to our heart. Susila describes: "Our life is one of thought

and experience. Thought is something which has solidity and power, and as in all existence ours is also a life of aspiration, striving, and joy. A considerable portion of our state is taken up in meditation, and our greatest ecstacy is in feeling the Divine Light flooding us." (Narayan, 1946: 130) Interestingly, this state of joy and fulfillment sometimes visits the earthly mortal. Tagore, in a poem expresses a similar state of the mind — the sudden realization of divine light and music, when one morning he feels the rays of the rising sun penetrating his soul. The description of Susila about the effects of after-life reminds us of this earth, its green pastures, and the ideal combination of leisure and music that rejoice us in our wish-fulfilment dreams: "We've ample leisure. We are not constrained to spend it in any particular manner. We have no need for exercise as we have no physical bodies. Music is ever with us here, and it transports us to higher planes ...". (*Ibid.*, 1946: 130) Yet all these do not sum up Krishna's tryst with Death and afterlife or his "attempt to turn the other side of the medal of existence, which is called Death ...". (*Ibid.*, 1946: 114) Like all the paradoxes of the common man's religious experience, which is a confusion of the spiritual and the material Krishna's experience too is paradoxical. There are certain lines

in the communication which, in spite of Susila's claim of being transported to a higher plane, express her in petty material terms and show her still enveloped in earthly senses and desires. By depicting her so, Narayan very successfully demystifies death. It is a carnivalesque conception of death that does not tolerate anything mystic and vague. So there is no attempt on the part of Narayan to keep it screened behind a fog of mystery. It is an unflinching eye-to-eye contact and the conversation is as homely as any other conversation in life. Susila, like any other woman is still fond of beautiful sarees and flowers to decorate her tresses. She always takes care to describe her sarees: "I am wearing a pale orange dress with a clasp of brilliants to hold it in position." (*Ibid.*, 1946: 132) And again: "My dress tonight is shimmering blue interwoven with light and stars. I have done my hair parted on the left (And what a load of jasmine and other rare flowers I've in my hair for your sake!)." (*Ibid.*, 1946: 132) It may be observed that the colour of her sarees change according to the light, orange in the morning and blue at night. This gives an impression of translucence. P.S. Sundaram has rightly compared her to the sylphs and gnomes of Pope's poetry: "Those who have passed over are like Pope's sylphs and

gnomes not very different from what they were on earth: they certainly are not omniscient or infallible." (Sundaram, 1973: 54) Susila's existence in the after-life is enfolded by the sensuous — the sight, the smell and the sound. Unlike the other two senses — touch and taste, these three senses are paradoxical, for they express at the same time the material as well as the spiritual. But Susila is further brought down to earth by her fallibility; she is not above material desire. We find that she is still fond of perfumes, "Do you know what a wonderful perfume I have put on!" (Narayan, 1946: 130) All these desires are materially expressed in the trunks of sarees and the loads of toilet boxes she used to cherish in her life. While rummaging through her possessions Krishna remembers her in her collection of empty scent bottles, dozens of sarees and hundreds of jackets in all shades; they reveal her feminine weakness for them. Again, her love for music in the afterlife is not any divine transition; she used to be secretly fond of it: "You might have thought I did not very much care for music when on earth, but as a matter of fact I was really intensely interested in it ...". (*Ibid.*, 1946: 131). Even after death, Susila is still sentimental about her letters: "'And yet you have destroyed every one of them!' She said. 'You

found it possible to destroy every one of them!'" (*Ibid.*, 1946: 117) She has carried away with her the longing for the beautiful ivory casket and wants her husband to find it. She claims it to be her own, gifted to her by her mother-in-law. However, her mother-in-law's version is a bit different: "Susila used to be fond of it and had once or twice even made bold to ask for it. But somehow I didn't give it to her ...". (*Ibid.*, 1946: 173) Even in life desiring is possessing and therefore Susila is not above such earthly longings. In the question of death and life there is a reversal of perception. Narayan in this novel describes death in ordinary terms and instead gifts life with a spiritual intensity. While Susila's spirit is enfolded in her own earthly desires and is not above folly and mistake, Krishna's daily ordinary chores are punctuated by moments of intense spiritual reawakening: "On my way home, through the dark night, across Nallapa's Grove my feet felt lighter, because I knew she was accompanying me." (*Ibid.*, 1946: 135) Again, the aroma of jasmine turns a certain night intensely meaningful: "Their essences came forth into the dark night as I lay in bed, bringing new vigour with them. The atmosphere became surcharged with strange spiritual forces." (*Ibid.*, 1946: 183)

While depicting Krishna's interactions with the dead wife, the problem that comes out foremost and assumes significance is the problem of depiction and communication. Krishna's first session with his friend who acts as a medium to the spirit reveals this message: "Here we are, a band of spirits who've been working to bridge the gulf between life and after-life. We have been looking about for a medium through whom we could communicate." (*Ibid.*, 1946: 112)

The conviction that is underpinned is communication. To the spirits it is an effort to communicate with the mortal world and the reverse is also true in case of Krishna. However, the idea of the communication can be extended to other spheres — the author trying to communicate with his readers, the teachers with his students. Communication is the key. Communication helps s to negotiate between people and worlds. This very idea precisely hinges upon dialogism. The dialogic imagination bridges the gaps, concretizes communication and brings to focus the ontological boundaries — life and death — through which a fictional narrative evolves. Krishna's own reflections as an English teacher bear out the argument: "What tie was there between me and them? Did I absorb their personalities as did

the old masters and merge them in mine?" (*Ibid.*, 1946: 12) He is quite conscious of the fact that each human being lives in different worlds of time and space and is nurtured in a different ambience, and the attempt to forcefully homogenize them through any system (here he points out at the education system) is atrocious: "Born in different households, perhaps petted, pampered, and bullied, by parents, uncles, brothers — all persons known to them and responsible for their growth and welfare. Who was I that they should obey my command?" (*Ibid.*, 1946: 12) While trying to discipline his students he mentally names it — "The lion tamer's touch!" (*Ibid.*, 1946: 12)

At first Krishna's communication with his wife's spirit is filled with anticipated excitement yet troubled with obstacles. According to the helping soul, who initiates the conversation Susila is eager and excited and is not able to collect her thoughts easily. She gives a wrong name of her daughter when asked. This disappoints Krishna but the helping soul explains: "... but since we use the mechanism of your friend's writing, more often than not his mind interferes, bringing up its own selections." (*Ibid.*, 1946: 115-16) One cannot help finding similarities in the obstacles of communication in other fields too. Later,

in a different sitting, Susila describes the ideal condition of her new world which sounds platonic: "Between thought and fulfillment there is no interval. Thought is fulfillment, motion and everything. That is the main difference between our physical state and yours. In your state a thought to be realized must always be followed by effort directed towards conquering obstructions and inertia — that is the nature of the material world." (*Ibid.*, 1946: 131-32) To communicate with this material world the spirits need the medium of a human being. It is similar to the author's problem, who needs the medium of language to express the abstract thought.

Language too has a life of its own, its own systems of connotations which mar and mediate in the author's way of expression. This problem troubles the author who finds that the process of expression cannot avoid or bypass the problematics of this material world.

In *The English Teacher*, for the first time, Narayan is not polemical; he foregrounds the problematics toward a certain theory of creation. He shows, through Krishna's intense struggle against his own ego how to reach that state of mind which is ideal for the realization of

another consciousness — i.e., his wife's spirit. Thus it is not only the obstruction created by the medium's mind but also Krishna's own self that has to be free from his own impressions about Susila, and open it to receive Susila's personality. Susila asks her husband:

> Why don't you allow yourself to move round about me? Now you just picture me in your mind and do not allow your thoughts to move an inch this side or that. This rigid exercise does not help our contact. By your intense and severe thought you make almost a stone image of me in your brain. Your thoughts must give me greater scope for movement within an orbit of feelings. Your mind may now be compared to the body of a yogi who sits motionless. This is not what you seek to achieve, do you? I want you to keep your mind at these times open for my impression. What happens now is that your mind is full of your thoughts of me, which are unrelaxed, and I find it difficult to move about in your head and heart. (*Ibid.*, 1946: 160)

She further explains: "What is still required is that you should be able to receive my thoughts. It can be done only if you do not make a stone image of me. I want you to behave just as you would if I were conversing with you. You would pay attention. Now it borders on worship." (*Ibid.*, 1946: 160) To worship someone is an egocentric activity as the self indulges in creating its own idealistic impression, which he or she endows on the object of worship. The worshipper

creates the stone image to materialize his or her feelings and give it permanency. Narayan, as we have already discussed, is against the finalization of the characters that he has created in his novels. Like Bakhtin he votes for the open and participating author who would not be absorbed in his own egocentric impressions but pay attention to the character as Susila has aptly put it – like a conversation where one listens to the other. There is a beautiful passage where Susila is telling her husband that as she is constantly feeling his thoughts there is also the need "for the reverse process to take place that is, for you to feel my thoughts." (*Ibid.*, 1946: 158) This reminds us of Bakhtin's describing of Christ as a symbol of the 'self for the other', a kind of religiosity that should permeate the author's world of creation. Narayan creates a beautiful passage to express how this selfless reception of the other's consciousness often eludes us. Susila asks her husband to think of her when he sees the moonlight shining upon the water surface. Suddenly, in a passive and peaceful state of mind the meaning of her statement dawns on him:

> "Weeks ago, in my period of desolation, as I sat on the sands of Sarayu, a late moon rose in the East, and the flowing water shimmered with it. It only added to my desolation. Again, it reminded me of my wife. How often

> had she expressed a wish to walk along the river in moonlight, and for all the years of married life I had not been able to give her that fulfillment even once; some pointless thing postponed it every time; we never went out in moonlight at all. And this regret tormented me when I saw moonlight on water, that night ...". (*Ibid.*, 1946: 158)

Susila is not complete in the divination that haloes her now but in Krishna's realizing of her petty desires for an ivory casket, flowers and perfumes, her concern for her daughter or her unquenched wish to walk on the banks of Sarayu. In her life she was not part of Krishna's consciousness because as she was always there, there was no attempt on the part of Krishna to enlarge his mind to comprehend her. After her death, Krishna's yearning to commune with her and realize her leads him to shed the barriers of his own ego and merge with her; this personality of Susila is not an ideal whole, but an amalgamation of little nondescript likes and dislikes, aspirations and desires. In Narayan's world, as in Bakhtin's, the ideal is not the truth; meaning and truth lie in every nondescript bits and pieces of life.

Krishna's experience simulates the author's, who, after days of intense struggle in vague confusion suddenly sees the light that could lead him to creative fulfillment. To reach this state, the author has to

readjust himself, controlling the blind rush of diverse emotions. Krishna, near the end of the novel describes this calm after a storm, which anticipates fulfillment: "It was a perpetual excitement, over promising some new riches in the realm of experience and understanding. I sat up at nights faithfully following the instructions she had given, keeping my mind open, and I was beginning to be aware of a slight improvement in my sensibilities. There was a real cheerfulness growing within me, memory hurt less, and I was more and more aware of vague perceptions, like a three-quarter deaf man catching the rustle of a dress of someone he loves ...". (*Ibid.*, 1946: 168)

The constant harping on the idea that sorrow hinders true understanding and that the 'necessary mental atmosphere' is the 'calm' 'unruffled' self that helps it to be 'passive' and 'receptive' is perhaps realized from the writer's real life experience, when, after a long interval of literary stasis he attempted to express a certain part of his life in *The English Teacher*. Krishna's experience had been Narayan's, and his happy marital life was cut-short by his young wife's sudden demise. This shock had left him dry, and for many years his sorrow and

emotional turbulence crippled his creative life. *The English Teacher* was written seven years after his last novel *The Darkroom*. So, after this long interval when he attempted to recreate the most sensitive period of his personal life, it must have been a true struggle between Narayan the husband and father and Narayan the writer. Thus the problem of unbiased rendition and the problem of human understanding and bondage haunted him more than anything else. Through his intense labour to write, Narayan for the first time consciously attempts to trace the architectonics of his works. Here Narayan talks loudly to himself and thus experiences the formation of a philosophy that he has till now inadvertently used. What he speaks about in *The English Teacher*, we have found in the novels he had written previously. However, this self-analysis was necessary for we find that after *The English Teacher* Narayan is able to explore, perhaps more consciously, diverse other worlds of human consciousnesses that are a shade different from the worlds of Swami and Chandran. Though very successfully depicted in a polyphonic technique, Swami and Chandran are shadows of Narayan's own past and do not reach the perfection of roguery that we find in the Rajus and Vasus of the later novels. Only Ramani of *The Darkroom*

anticipates them. Narayan's exploration of these rogue characters reveals more truly the ambivalence and double-voicedness that is carnivalesque, and truly describes Narayan's worldview as an author.

Narayan's self-exploration does not end with a particular view on unbiased authorization. He is also aware of his own perspective on truth and the depiction of it. For Narayan, like Bakhtin, truth is not something unique and homogeneous. The attempt to select and eliminate in order to create the illusion of unity does not find favour with both of them. For Narayan, as he expresses through Krishna, it is a disease imported from the West. Krishna, with some irritation describes Mr. Brown thus: "I looked at him in despair; his western mind, classifying, labelling, departmentalizing ...". (*Ibid.*, 1946: 179) Narayan conceives of truth in all its ambivalences and the world in all its homogeneity. There is hardly any novel where Narayan has not happily brought together all the incongruous images that one sees in life. It is a sort of realism that is caught in an active camera if it is left to itself in a bazaar, or a tape recorder that goes on recording all the disjuncted sounds we produce when we gather somewhere and are oblivious of the live recording. In *The Darkroom*, the children of

Savitri innocently create such a world when they decorate their toys on the eve of the 'Navaratri'. While the children unpack the dolls, hundreds of them, the jumble looks "like the creation of an eccentric god who had not yet created a world." (Narayan, 1938: 37) It is this chaotic state, which constantly initiates a process of becoming that fascinates Narayan's imagination. It is a state that is still outside the strict boundaries of definitions, and children, fresh and free from any compulsion towards creating unitary meanings, create them. The 'Navaratri' platform decorated by the children is truly illuminating:

> In an hour a fantastic world was raised: a world inhabited by all God's creations that the human mind had counted; creatures in all gay colours and absurd proportions and grotesque companies. There were green parrots which stood taller than the elephants beside them; there were horses of yellow and white and green colours dwarfed beside painted brinjals; there was a finger-sized Turkish soldier with not a bit of equipment missing; the fat, round-bellied merchant, wearing a coat on his bare body, squatted there, a picture of contentment, gazing at his cereals before him, unmindful of the company of a curly-tailed dog of porcelain on one side and a grimacing tiger on the other ... . (*Ibid.*, 1938: 39-40)

Ignoring any classification, labelling, difference of stature and status, it is in fact, a confusion that defies and subverts the strictly organized 'official world' and looks like the ambience of a carnival where every

participant is relativized. Here Lord Krishna's divinity is relativized by the fat bear at his side and the green parrot's stature, which is higher than the elephant's questions the stateliness of the elephant that we tend to endow it with.

The English Teacher depicts this world of incongruous objects gathered together which can be perceived in the cardboard box where Leela keeps her toys, and her rag book that illustrates incongruous objects like a tiger, an apple, a lion and Sam which the child accepts unquestioningly as the normal protagonists of an imaginative story. Leela's intense interest in the catalogue of miscellaneous articles is shared only by the headmaster whose school is shown as the paradigm of this world, to which Narayan, through Krishna, finally falls back on. Before discussing the significance of the children's school in the novel it should first be noted that most of the images and scenes of heterogeneity are connected with children and so we realize that what the headmaster speaks about children is also what Narayan believes and aspires for. Here, the headmaster becomes the author's mouthpiece and his school is the materialization of Krishna's aspiration for a greater freedom. The schoolmaster sees in the children a sense of freedom, the

elasticity to accommodate more and a greater clear-sightedness: "It is wonderful how much they can see and do!" (Narayan, 1946: 124) They are his inspiration and undoubtedly the principles that govern the children's world were seen by Narayan as the conditions of creativity. The headmaster exclaims: "When I watch them, I get a glimpse of some purpose in existence and creation." (*Ibid.*, 1946: 125) The purpose of existence that the headmaster is pointing out is definitely different from the artificial purposiveness that society creates and which is exemplified in *The English Teacher* by the self-inflated college teachers who fall under Krishna's constant criticism. The students in the college are methodically pruned to fit into categories. Krishna sees through the artificiality of the system and so his classes and lectures ring hollow to his own ears. In contrast the school creates a more simple, uncomplicated and natural atmosphere: "The floor was uneven and cool, and the whole place smelt of Mother Earth. It was a pleasing smell, and seemed to take us back to some primeval simplicity, intimately bound up with earth and mud and dust." (*Ibid.*, 1946: 134) The headmaster's view is that this is the simplicity to which all human conduct must be reduced. He is against all formalities that

often, in extreme forms extend to hypocrisy and self-deception. The headmaster's 'Leave Alone System' which he believes would make more 'wholesome human beings' is a faith that Narayan has persistently shown in his autobiography and other writings. The elasticity of the children's mind refuses to follow any defined path and therefore they retain the power of imagination enabling them to see through more shades and nuances. This comes out when the headmaster tells them the story of the tiger, the bison and the bear. The story could have taken the usual format of any children's story where the orphan tiger cub is befriended and protected by a good bison and thus creating the happy pair who would naturally attract all the sympathies because of the sentimentality that went into their creation. There is also the evil who constantly threatens this good and happy world in the form of a nasty bear. The bison, true to his heroic stature in the story kills the bear. But this format is not taken for granted by the children, and a group, led by a girl suddenly discovers that the bear too is a poor creature, thus dividing the surge of sympathy. However, these children are also aware that the official adult world follows a certain moral code and breaking that code is a sacrilege. "'You should not like the bear,'

said another girl. 'The teacher will be angry if you like the bear ...'". (*Ibid.*, 1946: 137) The codes and laws of the adult world that condition the children's mind are laid bare and look meaningless and funny in the eyes of the children.

Narayan, at the end of the novel makes Krishna resign finally from his college and join the children's school. It is no co-incident that this is synchronized with his realization of his wife's spirit. These incidents together contribute to Narayan's theory on human understanding and depiction of truth. It is the monologic part of the novel that ends here and the message rings out clear and bold. Krishna's realization of his wife's spirit is achieved only when he sets himself free from his egoistic misprision. It is his active receptivity of his wife's consciousness and not his own monologic depiction of her that brings him to the truth named Susila. The mind should be pliant and receptive; it should be accommodating and empathetic. The ideal may be found in the children, who could easily understand the naughty bear's point of view too. Perhaps this is one reason why in the beginning of his career, after many unsuccessful attempts when Narayan wrote *Swami*, a novel on children, it brought him success.

Narayan's world-view bears upon the world inhabited by Swami and his friends.

The English Teacher is unique in the sense that the work combines two different structures — the monologic as well as the polyphonic. In the polyphonic structure, Krishna is elusive, who defies all categories of society, thus slipping into different roles of a teacher, a poet, a son, a husband and a father. Krishna as a teacher has always felt uncomfortable as if he had slipped into some unknown person's apparel. Krishna's poetic life is also not taken very seriously, as he is a harsh critic of himself and does not leave a single opportunity to make fun of the poet in him. Hardly has Krishna begun to adjust himself into the role of a husband when suddenly his wife passes away, and Krishna finds himself burdened with the role of a father and mother. Near the end of the story when Leela happily goes to stay with her grandparents Krishna feels satisfied that he has efficiently played the double-role. However, it is an illusion he has made up for himself. He has never been able to replace Leela's mother.

The world of births, marriages and deaths that surround Krishna is also as confusing as Krishna's own identity. The novel defies the

expected chronology or historicity in order to place the narrative in a perspective that is both stable and unstable. Krishna's is a broken journey from one place to another. This journey is not engendered with any sense of quest yet it just happens that in it Krishna moves from one role to another, one identity to another. The method of displacement and reversals constitute Krishna's world. The novel ends in a placid note when Leela is happily settled in the loving community of her grandparents. Krishna feels free and finds the mental strength to resign from his college and join the children's school.

Looked at from the perspective of the whole novel in its polyphonic form — the ending of the monologic theme does not signify finality. Krishna's ecstatic state of mind when he sees his wife's form hangs on the moment and has the illusion of a dream that might vanish at a single inadvertent move or sound. The use of the word 'moment' twice and the oxymoronic combination of the words 'moment' and 'immutable' in the end is significant: "It was a moment of rare, immutable joy — a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death." (*Ibid.*, 1946: 184) This 'moment' is as ephemeral as the image of the spirit or the light of the dawn. Soon the humdrum routine

life will envelop Krishna as it happened before. The novel has already depicted in its episodic nature the constant rise and fall, a rise onto a state of spirituality followed by a fall into the realities of life. But this is what Narayan sees life to be — not a development towards a goal but a chaotic amalgamation of the high and the low, the spiritual and the material, that continue to create the never ending dialogue on human life.

Yet there is also the word 'immutable' that indicates an urge for the permanent. In the polyphonic world the word 'moment' is important because this world believes in the flux of time and realizes truth in time's ever-changing varieties. But it aspires for the 'immutable' that comes from a broader view of this flux of life, that is, life seen as a constant flow, which carries along with it all the individual lives and deaths to give it a collective meaningfulness. It welcomes the immutability of life force and criticizes the human tendency to seek permanency in stasis that ultimately mutilates and stagnates meaning. However, it comes out as an impossible task for although polyphony or the carnival subvert any monologic theorization, speaking about them itself is theorizing. The paradox is worth noting.

The vision of Susila's spirit is momentary and ephemeral, and in the polyphonic world this unusual vision of the dawn will soon disappear into the dazzling daylight and the humdrum demands of yet another day. It is the truth of the moment which will never return, yet there is a paradox — it is the culminating scene of the monologic part of the novel where the author is trying to give permanence to his beliefs as an author through the materializing of the apparition of Susila. Ironically, the attempt to express one's stance against the monologic tendency itself is monologic. So, apart from Krishna who acts as one of the participants in time, there is another Krishna who is haunted and invaded by the author's own spirit. He stands apart from the involuntary corporeal life. He materializes the author's longing to give shape to the author's belief and imperceptively enters the work with a monologic intention of promulgating a theory. This monologic part comes in when Krishna criticizes the education system when he listens to the headmaster's dreams and aspirations, when he describes the school in a tone of approval and admiration, and also when he, like a student to his wife's spirit learns earnestly about the perfect 'mental

atmosphere', the 'desire to commune' — the way out of solipsism to a greater and freer understanding of truth.

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Chapter-VI

CONCLUSION

"Perhaps what is most striking about the work of Mikhail Bakhtin is the diversity of areas and range of disciplines across which it is invoked" (Morris, 1994: 1). Bakhtin indeed was fascinated by plentitude of differences and plurality, the mystery of the one and the many. "However, Bakhtin's texts are far from mere exercises in accommodation. They may be read at many levels ... In his writings he was simultaneously an impassioned ideologue for his own outlook and an impressive ventriloquist for politically acceptable locutions" (Clark and Holquist, 1984: 2). One could simply say, as many have done, that Bakhtin's work is social criticism because where others saw expressions, statements, or signs, Bakhtin looked for, and inevitably found 'dialogues', precise acts of communication, with multiple participants.

Bakhtin's concept of the carnival as a communication model has much to recommend it. Though rooted in the folk-culture, its potency for subversion may be located everywhere in the impulse of the people or mass to gain freedom from the stasis imposed by the official world.

The ideal of the carnival is the grotesque body that is open-ended and irregular, which has no need of symmetrical beauty, feats of self-discipline etc. Its processes and appetites constitute a common 'language' native to all humans; it is identical, involuntary and non-negotiable. Whereas the high official language is learned, intellectual, internalized and self-conscious, the language of the grotesque is associated to the body and therefore involuntary and unselfconscious. The energy and material structure of this grotesque realism is turned towards the outside world in a frank friendly way. The communal baseness or the vigour of the earthly existence is the foundation of Bakhtin's carnival logic. Its laughter is in part defiant and rejuvenating. Always in the act of becoming, it is a triumph over classical form, institutional oppression and individual death.

This spirit of the carnival is deeply imbued in Bakhtin's theory of the novel that he conceives of in a very broad framework. According to Clark and Holquist, the novel is for him not just another literary genre but a special kind of force, which he calls 'novelness'. He assigns the term 'novel' to "whatever form of expression within a given literary system reveals the limits of that system as inadequate, imposed or

arbitrary. Literary systems are composed of canons, and the novel is fundamentally anticanonical. It does not permit generic monologue. It insists on a dialogue between texts that a given system admits as literature and those texts that are excluded from such a definition. The novel is a kind of epistemological outlaw, a Robin Hood of texts." (1984: 276)

Thus 'novelness' can work to undermine the official or high culture of any society — a spirit that is imbued in the carnival tradition. Bakhtin traces this tendency in times when the novel as a special form was non-existent. He charts its history as a critique of a given culture's higher literary forms by its lower forms, as in Cervante's parody of knightly romances, or Sterne and Fielding's sentimental fiction. But according to Clark and Holquist, these are merely late examples of a tendency that Bakhtin found in the Socratic dialogue. The Socratic belief in the importance of self-consciousness is played out in the drama of a dialogue that corresponds closely to the role of the novel. This role has later assumed unexpected forms as the confession, the Utopia or the Menippean satire. Bakhtin attaches great significance to the Menippean satire in the evolution of the novel as it uses the language of irreverent

laughter. As a discursive practice, the novel has its origin in the discourse of the comic. Laughter, according to Bakhtin, is the key to freedom. Freeing language from the authoritarian monologism of myths, laughter destroys the epic or any canonized form. Laughter undermines the epic through the parodic travestying forms it assumes in literature, and these forms prepare the ground for the novel. It is a ground for contest between the word and the 'inappropriate word' that is either cynically frank, profane, or devoid of any etiquette and is characteristic of the menippea. The novel is a game of ultimate questions because it calls into question the readymade truths of official monologism.

Placing R.K. Narayan's novels in the carnival tradition has yielded unexpected results of 'novelness'. The supposedly tame and homely world of Narayan (so different from the zealous attempts of his contemporaries to capture the spirit of a so-called crisis of history) within the Bakhtinian framework reveals an antithetical or reverse form of the ideal. History is not a linear journey. It is a form of energy that follows its own instinctive or non-idealistic impulses. While British imperialism in India instigated the idealistic revolutions for freedom and self-governance, the common mass, isolated from the strategies of

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

Narayan's polyphonic style of presenting the world of Malgudi creates a dialogic truth that renders the average Indian, not into any preconceived stereotype, but as part of an unending discourse. The impossibility of any single character to hold the stage is substantiated by a democratic and unbiased treatment of all characters. Thus Gandhi's humanitarian doctrine is posited on equal standing with grandma's niche of gods and goddesses, the vigour and energy of Vasu's capitalist enterprise equally vies with Nataraj's smooth artistry of an elegant lifestyle. Even in an atmosphere charged with feminist disapprobation

and revolt, where wives are betrayed (as in the cases of Savitri and Sampath's wife) or the beloveds are exploited (as Raju exploits Rosie's talent to mint money, or Raman attempts to violate Daisy's honour) the men too have their own stories. Instead of following a monologic intention or goal, the novels turn out to be the ground for incessant debate. The democratization of language results in the creation of the ambience that promotes intertextual ideals. The characters may seem average and common, but they are not vulgarized. Even in their carnal weaknesses, the Rajus, Vasus and Jagans create their own unique ideals to bless their erratic lives with a touch of a human and pathetic beauty. In this world if the birth of a superhuman is not predictable similarly a villain's perversion is not going to shake the earthly ambience. This is a world of joyful relativity that is almost utopian.

This non-idealistic amoral world is not ashamed of its petty squabbles, tricks and exploitations. The unsentimental rendering of the victims has the effect of stark inevitability; on the one hand the victors too are not left to remain smugly self-satisfied, on the other the seeds of bohemian restlessness in their nature turn their lives unpredictable and irredeemable. The episodic history of Raju's life from the Railway

guide to the Swami on the bank of Sarayu launches him finally at the door of death; he leaves behind him an unfulfilled history of cherished dreams woven around Rosie's love, an elevated aristocratic life and also a weak secret corner for his estranged mother — never to be recovered or retrieved. Thus thrown from one episode to another, swung in the dilemma of unheroic triumph and glory the characters of Narayan with their human fallibility remain indefinable forever.

The rogue characters of Narayan wear the carnival mask that defies all expectancy for symmetry and beauty by highlighting the orifices, while glorifying the carnal appetites. This frees them from the binding strictures of social norms and turns their lives into an unrestrained celebration. While the serious modes of literature depict time as being gradually wasted at the cost of growth and maturation, here time is conceived as of profound experience. The characters violate all natural boundaries and instead of suffering the tedious process of maturation and growth they choose the shortest route — they metamorphose.

Narayan's characters are gifted with an overdose of wit and practical intelligence; however, this bounty of nature is balanced by a

lack of the other mental faculties leading to the depth in character. So, very often, they display much shortsightedness on their part when faced with problems requiring a depth and richness of understanding. Thus Raju loses Rosie forever as he proves insensitive to her mental requirements, Jagan's escape in the name of *banaprastha* is the proof of his inability to solve the puzzle of his son who has all the maladies of a new generation, and the otherwise clever Margayya inadvertently misappropriates his wealth to buy his son's affection while spoiling him in the process. These characters are irreverent to all social codes and possess their own unique worldviews that launch them in precarious positions in society. This happens in the case of Sampath. That Shanti and his wife would live in blissful harmony sharing him under one roof is Sampath's ardent dream – a dream which could only be actualized in the fantasy world of imagination. For Margayya the value of money outgrows all its material boundaries into the realm of everything noble and elegant, i.e. for him, a noble and respectable life entails a history of selfish acquisition. This is in utter contradiction to the official value-system, and the prudence of the idealists against the material. This contradiction with social ideologies turns Narayan's characters

ambivalent. Their story is forever double-voiced, emanating a sense of both praise and abuse, crowning and decrowning, ridicule and celebration. These stories are anticanonical, as they cannot be categorized as completely happy and harmonious or tragically sad, in the process exposing the limitedness and inadequacy of a given system to depict truth. Because of such duality and ambiguity in the structure, these stories turn into travesties of the given canonical genres.

The story of Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts* has the potency of a passionate love-story. Chandran is a youth fresh out of college who falls in love with the vague image of a tall girl clad in a green saree. Chandran in his shyness had hardly looked into the girl's face, but his passion creates a Platonic ideal that he starts worshipping day and night. Yet the inbuilt irony in the novel turns the story into a parody of romance, for after suffering innumerable sleepless nights, incessant day dreams, desperate window-gazing and the ultimate *sanyashood* when the girl's parents do not relent to their marriage, Chandran immediately starts cherishing the next girl that his parents wish him to marry. This fickleness on Chandran's part fractures the myth of love as ideal, an ideal that is immortalized by the world-famous romances of Romeo and

Juliet or Laila and Majnu. Narayan's use of irony awakens the readers to the everyday realities of life where fickleness of youth in love continues to create paradoxes.

Savitri's story too has all the anxieties of a feminist text, and along with Savitri's pathetic attempt of committing suicide the message against male dominance could hit real hard. Yet the dialogic nature of the work along with Savitri's own submission to the more practical requirements of life like the duty for one's own children and the economic security renders a different dimension to her story, It is a story from the heart of middle-class life and it requires no banner to convey the truth.

Materialization and debasement are characteristics that constitute the basic tenets and also the logistics of Narayan's novels. This carnival tendency fortifies the stories with an earthy solidity, thereby preventing any highflying abstraction to mystify the material truths of human life. Thus Raju remains the fallible human being beneath his ascetic garb, solidly feeling the crunches of hunger along with a fear of losing his face to the worshipping crowd. The Swami in *A Tiger* performs the impossible task when he befriends the awesome tiger, but Narayan

brings him down to earth by supplying a very human story of his past. For Narayan, the solid materiality of human life should provide the ground for all truths; the tendency to legitimize abstract thoughts or ideas by compromising or adjusting human life to fit into them results in confusion. In an interview Narayan had stated:

> I'd be quite happy if no more is claimed from me than being just a story-teller. Only the story matters, that is all. If readers read more significance into my stories than was meant originally, then that's the reader's understanding of things. But if a story is in tune completely with the truth of life, truth as I perceive it, then it will be automatically significant. (quoted in Benson & Conolly, 1994: 1082)

Narayan's statement implies a rejection of the grand canonized past that is usually held as the measuring ground for the present reality. Similar views may be heard in Arnold Benett's private notes:

> Every scene, even the commonest, is wonderful, if only one can detach oneself, casting off all memory of use and custom, and behold it (as it were) for the first time; in its right, authentic colours; without making comparisons. The novelist should cherish and burnish this faculty of seeing crudely, simply, artlessly, ignorantly; of seeing like a baby or a lunatic, who lives each moment of itself and tarnishes the present by no remembrances of the past. (quoted in Allen, Walter, 1949: 24)

Narayan, like many humanists, takes recourse to the actual, lived experiences as referential operations of the human mind as a basis for

literary theory. Sir Joshua Reynolds, the Augustan humanist recommended an honest and compulsively dualistic look at human realities because:

> Man is both a consistent and an inconsistent being, a lover of art when it imitates nature and of nature when it imitates art, of uniformity and variety, a creature of habit that loves novelty. The principles of art must conform to this capacious being ..." (quoted in Fussell, P., 1969: 123)

This capaciousness of human reality is played upon by a novelist's dialogic and polyphonic technique. In Bakhtin's view, the primary dialogic dimension of the novel is rooted in its concern for truth; truth is the stake in the novel's interaction with life. The novel does not pretend to possess a ready-made truth, but as in Socratic dialogue it is born between people collectively searching for truth.

It often happens that in order to foreground a favourite idea writers and critics tend to use rhetoric with subtle maneuver that submerge all other dissenting voices or ideas. In her work *Practising Postmodernism Reading Modernism* (1992), Patricia Waugh has criticized the reductionist and totalizing tendency of both the defenders and detractors of postmodernism. She has shown how, for polemical purposes (to highlight Postmodernism as a refutation of the

epistemological ground of Realism) the defenders have generalized Realism as the expression of a belief in a commonly experienced phenomenological world where language functions simply as a medium through which the reality is re-presented. Waugh points out that this is a purposive or strategic ignorance of the use of irony and linguistic playfulness in many realistic works. Similarly, she points out that the detractors like Eagleton ignore the specific strategies of postmodern artefacts in order to proclaim a generalized condemnation of postmodernism as the logic of commodification. According to Waugh, the only escape from such generalizations of theorists is a close engagement with actual works of art because "literature can only examine an ideology by embodying it (even if in an ironic mode), so that if theorists can operate through reductive totalisations, fictional texts by their very nature have an inbuilt resistance to this." (1992: 59)

While Bakhtin's long term legacy is perhaps yet to be assessed, he has atleast drawn aesthetics out of the realm of passive appreciation and academic curiosity. Under his influence, the aesthetics of verbal art is joined with the ethical and spiritual dimensions of human life. If, as

Bakhtin claims, the novel carries on an uninterrupted dialogue with life, then any theory of the novel must do the same.

Many literary commentators, according to Waugh are drawn to Bakhtin because his concept of dialogism sees knowledge of world, self and other, as always historically situated, relational, open-ended and perspectival, a process shifting through time and space. This frustrates all tendencies of reductionism and totalisation because Bakhtinian insights "show how consideration of the literary text may modify one's reading of theory; just as theoretical awareness may modify one's aesthetic experience." (1992: 60)

Addressing not simply the characteristics but the metaphysics of literature as well, Bakhtin has led literary theory beyond its traditional confines to include such diverse disciplines as epistemology, sociology and linguistics. The term he uses to portray his activity is not 'literary theory' but 'philosophical anthropology'; others describe it as an 'existential philosophy'. The impact of Bakhtin's thought has been felt throughout the human sciences, and his legacy may travel far and wide.

Analysing the novels of Narayan with the help of Bakhtinian insights has rescued his works from the totalitarian academicist view in which Narayan is categorized as a pure humanist, or the defender of Indian values, or simply a caricaturist. When he is pinioned as a humanist, critics categorically ignore the importance of linguistic playfulness like ironies, parodies, travesties and other self-reflexive modes that thwart or subvert the apparent movement of the story towards an idealistic goal. Thus Raju's sainthood is often seen as a journey of a rogue towards a humanistic salvation, or Raja the tiger's tale is unanimously accepted as a fable where the tiger with the help of a guru, emerges from darkness to enlightenment.

Critics often see a pattern of dialectical journey of the imperfect man towards order and unity. In their search for such a definitive pattern they overlook the episodic nature of the novels that forestalls or cancels any unification, but depicts human life as an amalgamation of irrational and multidirectional movements or tendencies.

Again, in assessing Narayan's humour, critics have tended to evaluate it as an irresponsible and lighthearted attempt to caricature the middleclass fun and foible for the sake of pleasure. But when placed in

the carnival tradition, Narayan's world exposes the serious nature of laugher. The language of carnival laughter brings home to the reader a different dimension of truth that is usually submerged under all sorts of tendentious endeavours of the serious official world. Thus the life of the Malgudi people is the history of the subaltern force that exposes life in its basics and continues to question and rectify the workings of the mainstream authoritarian world. One cannot deny the influence of art and literature over human life. Even the most simple-minded observer of art and literature will look back at his/her own life to detect the reassuring forms of the identical that would enable him/her to metaphorically legitimize art and literature. This process may operate vice-versa. After all, man has nothing but his own life to fall back upon to solve each and every problem that invades his intelligence. Even the extreme version of existentialism cannot work otherwise. In fact it is ironical how the futility and meaninglessness of human life often projected through literature has endowed human life with a sad glory, as if the tragedy of human existence is more attractive than any form of positivism. So, while art endows life with meaningfulness, life too legitimizes art with the solidity of its support.

In this sense the serious monologic works that lead the readers to a sense of personal experience proves attractive, for the cathartic effect on the reader results in a sense of finality of meaning. As the scientists are trying to arrive at a final theory of the universe, so does each and every nondescript person, puzzled by the chaotic state of life, hanker for a finalized impression. Thus monologic writings satisfy the reader more than those writings, which render life as chaotic and unfinalizable. Yet a final theory means a dead end. The polyphonic and carnival world of Narayan defers any final conclusion. The open carnival world acts as a gibe against the solipsism created by man's monologic tendencies. Carnival in literature democratizes language by frustrating its tendency to centralize meaning. It relativizes all ideologies by providing a uniform platform for their mutual contestation. Finally, carnival emanates a profound sense of acceptance of man as an imperfect, grotesque and clumsy creation – a fool with noble hopes and beautiful dreams. However, a subtle difference with the humanists may be perceived. Humanists like Samuel Johnson have displayed a protective tenderness towards the idea of man's precarious location between the fact of mortal dissolution and his noble hope for dignity and

redemption, which is touched with pathos because hope deceives. In their conception of human endeavours there is a lingering fear of finding in the end nothing but a "broken promise and an unregarded grave." (Fussel, 1969: 135) But the carnival world, though accepting man's imperfections, is fearless, as its concept of the human kind is rooted in a feeling of community. It is the individual who dies, but man as a part of the greater community is immortal.

The carnival tendency in literature saves it from the possibility of getting stilted. Though the comic genre has never managed to secure the mainstream status, by taunting and teasing the serious modes it has always indicated that the truth of human life is more capacious than it apparently seems. For this reason the great minds like Shakespeare were never satisfied with pure classical forms. Shakespeare's practice of mixing tragedy and comedy is an attempt to underline human desire as multiform and never uniform. Even in the purest of his tragedies the carnival makes an inroad in the form of the clown. In *King Lear* it is only the clown who is beyond class or status, and thus beyond the whipping ego that delimits the human mind. The clown obeys no social boundaries and the conventions of the hierarchical world – from the

king to the beggar are within his casual access. The language of the clown knows no inhibition, and he incessantly knocks at the stark and closed world of the tragedy with his unpopular opinions. All the veiled social criticism of Shakespeare are uttered by the fool alone, and later by Lear when in his madness he leaves the shammed world to enter the openness of the carnival. In the carnival lies the essence of human nature; without the fool's carnivalesque presence or Lear's inclusion in the apparently insane and chaotic world, the requirement of the tragedy to grasp the truth of life in its essence would have remained unrequited. In answer to Jonson's objections against fools A.C. Bradley imagines Shakespeare speaking thus:

> "Come, my friends, I will show you once for all that the mischief is in you, and not in the fool or the audience. I will have a fool in the most tragic of my tragedies. He shall not play a little part. He shall keep from first to last the company in which you most object to see him, the company of a king. Instead of amusing the king's idle hours, he shall stand by him in the very tempest and whirlwind of passion. Before I have done you shall confess, between laughter and tears, that he is of the very essence of life, that you have known him all your days though you never recognized him, ..." (Bradley, 1904: 258).

The fool is traditionally derived from the Morality plays as a means of entertaining the 'groundlings'. It may be conjectured that the

daily engagements of the lower classes with the basics of life render them worldly-wise, and the essences of life are not obstructed from their view by abstract ideologies. King Lear's obsession with rhetorically heightened sycophancy blinds him to the true essence of a daughter's love; it is the fool who sees through Lear's foolishness and impractical project of dividing and distributing his kingdom.

The novel too is a genre that is so structured that unpopular and down-to-earth truths are foregrounded. Bakhtin traces the roots of the novel to the serious-comic and carnivalesque modes of popular culture. He assigns the subversive potentiality of the novel to its association with lower (class) identity and class resistance. The carnivalesque aspect of the novel is an antidote to the abstracted, disembodied concept of meaning that the Platonic philosophical tradition has formed. The novel resists the dominance of a single meaning and instead fosters heterogeneity.

Bakhtin's theories have emerged from his understanding of the world as a place of incessant riot of colours that refuse to mingle and merge into the austere and uniform white. Like the rainbow it is at once diverse and coordinated. The spatial experience, the capacity of the

moment to hold all diversities that counts more than the promise of steady temporal progress, has been important to Bakhtin, and there is no compulsion to capture the moments in universal categories. Time holds immense possibilities; instead of attempting to capture and freeze time into absolute universalities, Bakhtin beholds it as a flowing river that, in its encounters with the resisting earth, creates its unique loops and bends. Bakhtin's thoughts emerge out of the feelings that moved Whitman to write his 'Song of Myself'. The movement of the poem frustrates any progression – it moves erratically in evocation of ecstasy and confession, in identification and recognition, in rapturous union with earth and spirit – it celebrates both personal and universal. To be precise, it is out of the humble sense of being a part of the human history, community and life-force that inspired Bakhtin, Narayan and many others. This recognition comes out tellingly in Whitman's poem — 'Song of Myself':

> I resist anything better than my own diversity,
> Breathe the air but leave plenty after me,
> And am not stuck up, and am in my place.
>
> (Whitman, W. 1973: 45)

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Other interests:	Reading, creative writing, cooking and interior decoration.
Marital status:	Married, having one son. Husband serves in Karimganj College as Senior Lecturer in English.

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