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R.K. Narayan: A Study in Transendence

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R. K. NARAYAN: A STUDY IN TRANSCENDENCE

by

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VITA

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Sr. Beatina is an active member of associations and professional societies in South India concerned with teaching and scholarship. She will resume her teaching career at St. Mary's College, Tuticorin, when she returns to India after her studies in the U. S. A.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: R. K. NARAYAN IN THE TRADITION OF INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Karl Marx once remarked about Easterners: "They cannot represent themselves; they have to be represented" (Said 1978, 21). In the past, India let Westerners represent her wisdom and riches through translations and trade. But once the Indians became familiar with English, they began writing in that language though they did not call themselves "Indian English Writers" or describe their work as "Indian English Literature."

Of the various names given to this body of literature, such as "Indo-Anglian Literature," "Indian Writing in English," and "Indo-English Literature," the term "Indian English Literature" is preferred in this dissertation for two reasons: the first is its simplicity, and the second is its emphasis on the status of Indian English Literature as "one of the many streams that join the great ocean called Indian Literature, which though written in different languages has an unmistakable unity" (Naik 1982, 5). Indian English Literature simply means the literature produced in English by Indians. This definition excludes the literature produced by Englishmen in India or "works by 'Brahmanised Britons' who translated or adapted Indian source material" (Alphonso-Karkala 1964, 7).
There are many Indian English writers today, trying to express themselves in all genres. Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayanasiwami (1906 -), or R. K. Narayan as he is popularly known, is from Madras, South India.\textsuperscript{1} English is a second language for Narayan, as it is for almost all Indian English writers, with the exceptions of Ananda Coomarasamy\textsuperscript{2} (1877-1947) and Ruth Prawar Jhabvala* (1927 - ). Narayan has always used English, the Western medium for the Eastern message, and his form is mostly fiction. Today, Narayan is one of the top ranking Indian English novelists who has been successfully representing the East through his thirteen novels since the start of his career as an Indian English writer in 1935. What he represents with exceptional clarity and sensitivity is the interactions between mundane and transcendent aspects of everyday Indian life. The integration of the spiritual and the practical is not a discovery of Narayan, but is the very culture and tradition of this nation. Contrary to many Western notions about the Indian experience, it is only through this interaction that the full range and depth of Indian spiritual life can be represented.

\textsuperscript{1} "Rasipuram" is the name of his family's ancestral village, and "Krishnaswami" is the name of his father. "Narayanasiwami" was shortened to "Narayan" in 1935 when his first novel, \textit{Swami and Friends}, came out and the publisher did not want it to sound autobiographical.

\textsuperscript{2} This term and all subsequent terms marked with an asterisk are explained in the glossary.
The "mundane" in this dissertation acquires a more complex meaning than the ordinary one, for example, "earthly" or "worldly." The mundane here refers to simple, ordinary, sometimes raw or frail human nature of immense potential to be fully alive and dynamic, which is not to be abhorred or destroyed but to be led and moved towards the transcendent.

Regarding the discussion here of the "transcendent," what we find in Narayan's fiction is a form of spiritual experience usually accompanied by religious elements, which most novelists in the realist tradition do not attempt to portray. Hence, the "transcendent" in Narayan implies not necessarily any visionary experience or nirvana*, but a getting beyond the expected, a spiritual discovery. A sense of dissatisfaction and restlessness with a mundane life—often egoistic—initiates a step into a radically different world, a world that stuns the character and seems in many cases to be beyond the character's limits. The character does or experiences something that is "out of character" and, in a realistic novel, may verge upon the unconvincing—the typically Narayan risk. This step into another world always involves a spiritual experience—the kind of experience that would normally be called "transcendent," and yet the experience that follows the transcendent experience often seems more genuinely spiritual than the conventionally religious or conventionally "other worldly" experience.
itself. This wider and richer form of transcendence occurs when the character brings the transcendent experience to bear upon the mundane world. At this point it is difficult to say precisely where the larger transcendence begins and the mundane leaves off, because the two are inseparably mixed. Although there are no clear boundaries, the transcendence is identifiable. The result is, however, that our concept of the spiritual and the transcendent is enlarged and enriched.

To do justice to a Narayan novel, one must therefore acknowledge two kinds of transcendence, which commonly appear together. The first is easily recognizable—an encounter with the gods, the donning of holy garb, the telling of religious fables, or an experience with automatic writing. However, few readers are likely to finish a Narayan novel with the idea that these are the most important or the most transcendent events. For, flowing out of these events are the larger, richer, and more "realistic" events that nonetheless place the character in a world beyond that which the novel has led us to expect that such a character could enter. The study here undertaken is necessary precisely because this larger mode of transcendence, this larger sense of what counts as spiritual, needs careful explanation. At one end it is anchored in a conventionally spiritual experience; at the other it is anchored in the mundane. The multiple interactions between the transcendent
(in both senses) and the mundane deserve our closest attention.

The term liberation refers to an aspect of transcendence—the spiritual experience which liberates the self of its pettiness, allowing it to move toward a richer and wider horizon. Hence, any so-called freedom, which is not accompanied by spiritual experience and does not liberate the self is here regarded as mundane, and Narayan commonly makes it clear that such "freedom" is a kind of licence. Likewise, any discipline (exterior or interior) that does not lead the self to some spiritual experience or to liberation is mundane.

The process of movement with and from the mundane to the transcendent involves struggle and pain in every individual. Narayan's extraordinary skill in revealing the complex relationships between the mundane and the transcendent, and depicting the movement from and with the mundane to the transcendent, elevates him not only to the level of a great novelist in the world of Indian English Literature but also qualifies him to rank high in World Literature in English itself.

Narayan was introduced to the world of literature through Indian English Literature. It is important to understand how Narayan and the whole clan of Indian English writers entered this tradition. In a paper read at the First Conference on Commonwealth Literature (organized by
the School of English at the University of Leeds), Narayan recalls his first contact with English:

When I was five years old I was initiated into the mysteries of the letters with the appropriate religious ceremonial. After being made to repeat the name of God, I was taught to write the first two letters of the alphabet on corn spread out in a tray, with a forefinger of my right hand held and propelled by the priest. I was made to shape the letters of both Sanskrit and Tamil alphabets. Sanskrit, because it was the classical language of India, Tamil because it was the language of the province in which I was born, and my mother tongue. But in the classroom, neither of these two languages was given any importance; they were assigned to the poorest and the most helpless among the teachers, the "pundit" who was treated as a joke among the boys, since they taught only the "second language," the first being English as ordained by Lord Macaulay when he introduced English education in India. (qtd. in Pontes 1983, 8)

The historical birth of English as "the first language" in Indian schools, depriving the natives of their traditional exposure to Sanskrit and the mother tongues, is a very long episode in itself. The political importance of Indian English writing, and its connection with literary values is suggested by Babu Sambhunath Mukherji, in a letter to Meredith Townshend:

We might have created one of the finest literatures in the world without making any impression in the camp of our British rulers and, of course without advancing our political or even social status. . . . Hence we are compelled to journalism and authorship in a foreign tongue, to make English a kind of second vernacular to us if possible. You have no idea of the enormous sacrifice involved in this. . . . But we who write in English, have to make this sacrifice for the fatherland. (qtd. in Iyengar 1943, 26)

But one of the blessings of this sacrifice is its offshoot, "Indian English Literature."
Unlike many other national literatures born of British imperialism—such as Australian, Canadian, and American literatures—Indian English Literature is a brief and recent chapter in the literary history of this ancient land. Sanskrit and Tamil\(^3\) had a written literature long before the Christian era, and an oral tradition predating the written by thousands of years. As we see in most of the novels to be discussed in the succeeding chapters, this oral tradition still exists alongside the written tradition and plays a crucial role in the lives of ordinary Indians. Against this Classical tradition, Indian English Literature may appear immature but is nonetheless worth critical study because it has produced writers of high calibre. To make mention of Sanskrit and Tamil alone: the \textit{Vedic Literature*} (1400 B.C.) is the earliest source of Hindu mythology; Kautilya's* \textit{Arthasastra}, a Sanskrit treatise on political economy, dates back to 300 B.C.; the popular \textit{Mahabharata*} (Great Epic of the Bharata Dynasty), \textit{Bhagavad Gita*} (Song of

\(^3\) Tamil, a language of the Dravidian family, is spoken in southern India; it is the official language of the state of Tamilnadu (Madras). Other Tamil speakers live in Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, East Africa, South Africa, Guyana, and islands in the Indian Ocean, the South Pacific, and the Caribbean. Apart from literature written in classical Sanskrit, Tamil literature is the oldest literature written in India. Some inscriptions on stone have been dated to the 3rd century B. C., but Tamil literature proper begins around the 1st century A.D.
the Lord), the Upanishads,* Kalidasa's* Sakuntala and Valmiki's* Ramayana (Romance of Rama) are a few of the literary masterpieces already recognized by many Western readers. Tamil Literature spans nearly thirty centuries, beginning with the poems of the "Sangam"* (literary academy) period. About the fourth century A.D., Tiruvalluvar* wrote his Tirukkural*, a collection of aphorisms resembling the Japanese haiku in its terseness of expression. Of the twin epics Silappadikaram* (The Lay of the Anklet) and Manimekhalai* (The Girdle of Gems) 4th-6th centuries, Silappadikaram is considered one of the great achievements of Tamil genius, giving a detailed poetic witness to Tamil culture, its varied religions, town plans and city types, the commingling of Greek, Arab, and Tamil peoples, and the arts of dance and music. Bhakti (devotion) literature is a treasure of religious and personal devotion in poetry that emerged during the 6th-9th centuries. One of the remarkable features of all Indian Literature and fine arts is the depiction of the inner urge in human nature which impels men to seek in endless ways for something they do not fully comprehend, and religion is the discipline that helps to articulate and achieve the spiritual ascent.

4 Kalidasa (5th century A. D.), Sanskrit poet and dramatist, is probably the greatest Indian writer of any epoch. Sakuntala is the most famous and is usually judged the best of Indian drama of any period. It is said that Kalidasa, as in all his works, depicts the beauty of nature in Sakuntala with a precise elegance of metaphor that would be difficult to match in any of the world's literature.
A distinguishing feature of most Indian English writers, though brought up in the British system of education, is their sense of Indian tradition. Their creative work is inseparably bound with it since they live in this tradition and culture. The ancient epics, both in their original Sanskrit and in translations, are still read and treasured in many Indian homes. This influence is especially obvious when the Indian author, especially Narayan, presents domestic scenes and social milieu in his compositions as Narayan repeatedly does. Narayan's strong faith in India's endurance amidst "whatever happens" is rooted in his sacred culture: hence he favors, "not political or economic unity which the National Integration people want, but a cultural unity . . . through our sacred books. The anti-Hindi people will have nothing against Tulsidas" (Panduranga Rao 1971, 82). The Indian scriptures deeply influence the national, cultural, and also the religious sensibilities of any Indian writer, as Narayan observes: "For the writer in India, the ancient classics, and legends, are an indispensable background to his own writing. They are not merely historical curios but form the very stuff of his cultural outlook" (1975, 108). With full conviction Narayan tells Croft during an interview that "India's ancient literary heritage

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5 Tulsidas (1543?-1623). Indian sacred poet whose principal work, the Ramacaritmanas ("Sacred Lake of the Acts of Rama"), is said to be the greatest achievement of medieval Hindi literature. This Hindi version of the Ramayana is the "bible" of North Indian homes.
was basic study for any [Indian] writer" (1983, 27). Narayan's compositions re-create the essence of epics in modern versions since he feels that "the characters in the epics are prototypes and moulds in which humanity is cast, and remain valid for all time" (1975, 107). His attempts to portray the embodiment of evil, symbolic of Bhasmasura (the mythical monster), in the person of Vasu in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, and to translate Kamban's spirit in his *Ramayana*, bear ample testimony to his Indianness. It is Narayan's very own humorous and religious sensibility that makes little Swami in *Swami and Friends*, whom Joseph Hitrec calls "Hindu Huckleberry" (qtd. in Balarama Gupta 1983, 12), invoke the god Rama in the family prayer room to work a miracle and convert pebbles into copper coins: "Oh Sri Rama! Thou hast slain Ravana* though he had ten heads, can't you give me six pice?" (69). Here, as so often in Narayan's work, religion and daily life are integrated even in trivial events. V. S. Naipaul, after a slow rereading of Narayan, feels that his novels are "at times religious fables" (qtd. in Sundaram 1977b, 131). Narayan's works are religious fables in the sense that he is ever bent to trace the mundane-transcendent interactions in man, and the journey toward transcendence within man, rather than isolating or compartmentalizing any event as solely secular or mundane.

But unlike Raja Rao* who discusses the Advaita Philosophy* with outbursts of Sanskrit slokas*, Narayan trans-
lates the spirit of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita into his novels and short stories without ever entering into any kind of religious disquisition. His characters move through their various life-journeys till they emerge with new dimensions to reach deliverance in the spirit of the Upanishads—from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, and from mortality to immortality.

Although various Indian languages flourished in the country before the eighteenth century, they were rarely used for higher intellectual purposes. Although there are hundreds of dialects, the Indian Government recognizes fifteen regional languages. They are: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

Despite the existence of proverbs, gnomic sayings, epics, folksongs, ballads, and religious musings in these various languages, when it came to writing a treatise on philosophy or ethics or science, Sanskrit was the medium. While Moslems wrote in Persian or Arabic, Hindus such as Sankara,* Ramanuja,* and other philosophers wrote in Sanskrit, not in their respective mother tongues. Scholars thought that Sanskrit or Persian writings would reach out to a wider and more intellectual audience than Tamil or Urdu writings. English is used today for similar purposes.

In modern India the state languages are not only currently spoken and used in practical life but are also used for rich literary expression. Yet Narayan and other
Indian English writers elected to write in English. In the endless disputations over their choice of English as a medium, financial incentive and world audience are said to be the chief motivations for any Indian English writer. Sundaram quotes a Kannada* admirer of Narayan who comments: "Mysore* can well be proud of its major foreign-exchange earner" (1977a, 2). Tyrner-Stastny also discusses these issues in detail in her chapter on "Literature in Colonial Society" (1969, 227-242).

Narayan has always used English though he can write well in Tamil. During an informal chat with scholars of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi, Narayan explained, "I can write in Tamil but there is not enough time to write in two languages" (1979b, 36). With Mulk Raj Anand,* Narayan shares the distinction of having a considerable foreign audience. His sales figures, till about the end of 1970, as reported by Panduranga Rao, bear testimony to his recognition outside South India:

Polish: five hundred thousand; middling in Italian, French, and Dutch; Hebrew; twenty thousand an edition; U.S. Paperbacks: one hundred thousand each. Indian: an average two thousand a month; one edition of Lawley Road sold thirteen thousand; his own (Indian Thought) edition of The Guide sold five thousand; and the Hindi translation of The Guide sold over thirty thousand. (1971, 79)

Today, after much recognition abroad and at home, his novels are prescribed for students in Indian universities.

One of the accusations leveled at Narayan is his tendency to please a foreign audience. When Croft asked
Narayan if he meant his writings, especially his mythologies, for a foreign readership, Narayan replied:

I don't have any audience in mind at all, any time. I don't make much distinction between public here [India] and abroad. I don't want to make any distinction. Readers' reactions in Russia and Poland or anywhere are all similar. They are all the same to me. (1983, 27)

Although one cannot be sure of the total truth about Narayan's reply, one can accept that he makes no compromises for either the Indian or non-Indian readers. This is obvious in all his novels, especially when he has to describe some events in the novel which may sound very irrational to a non-Indian reader: for instance the protagonist's communication with the spirits in *The English Teacher*.

When Thomas Babington Macaulay imposed English Education on the natives of India in 1835, he little realized that "English education might also create an ambitious 'literati'" among this "new class" (Moraes 1976, 144). The "new class" of Indians, whom Macaulay meant to be interpreters between the British rulers and the millions of native Indians they ruled, gave rise to the "new class" of Indian English Writers who are today interpreting India to the entire world. In response to Graham Greene's appreciation ("It was Mr. Narayan ... who first brought India ... alive to me") Shiv K. Kumar, the Indian critic, comments:

Graham Greene, in his introduction to Narayan's first novel, *The Bachelor of Arts*, expresses the eagerness of Westerners to read about the Real India (with a capital "R"), and not the India which has been a mere literary region of mystery, of strange spiritual quests, of
superstitions, of jungle adventures — a Kim here or
Fielding there, an anglicized Sri Ganesha in Maugham's
novel The Razor's Edge, or John Masters' latest liter­
ary effusion Bhowani Junction. Such fiction only
evokes in the minds of Western readers vague scenes. . 
. . But Indian writers have done a great deal in lift­
ing the veil of this mysterious India. . . . The Indian
novelist using the medium of English has much commen­
dable writing to his credit. To him must be given the
credit for counteracting the false picture of India
painted by Kipling and his disciples. (qtd. in
Kalinnikova 1983, 49)

Kumar's view is affirmed by M. M. Hota when the latter says:
"A handful of Indian novels . . . have given the West more
understanding of Indians as a people than a hundred years of
Western writing could have done" (qtd. in Derrett 1966, 13).

Narayan came to novel-writing from journalism. Be­
sides thirteen novels, he has also published travelogues,
autobiographical books, religious works, several short story
collections, and miscellaneous writings. It was Graham
Greene who first recognized in Narayan the marks of a great
writer, and his universal appeal as a novelist, on reading
the manuscript of Swami and Friends. With fine introduc­
tions, Greene helped in the publication of Narayan's works.
In his introduction to Narayan's second novel, The Bachelor
of Arts, Greene says:

It was Mr. Narayan with his Swami and Friends who first
brought India, in the sense of the Indian population
and the Indian way of life, alive to me. His novels
increase our knowledge of the Indian character certain­
ly, but I prefer to think of them as contributions to
English Literature, contributions of remarkable matu­
rity. (1937, Introduction)

Today, Narayan is the most successful and widely read writer
among the Indians. Narayan was introduced to American readers in 1952 by the Michigan State University Press which published his earlier books. India has recognized Narayan as a creative writer by honoring him with the "Sahitya Akademi Award"* in 1961 for his novel, *The Guide* (1958), and by conferring on him the coveted title "Padma Bhushan"* in 1967. Besides many other recognitions, the number of languages into which his novels are translated also confirms Narayan's position as a novelist for the world.

Although Narayan grew up in the eras of "Political Awakening" (1900-1920) and "Gandhian Revolution" (1920-1947), he stands away from politics. Narayan's reply to Panduranga Rao's enquiry on this issue bears ample testimony:

> Considering your *Waiting for the Mahatma*, were you greatly influenced by Gandhi?

> No. He was a rare man. But I don't agree with his political or economic thinking. But -- *Truth* . . . and he was absolutely transparent. (1971, 81)

Even in his *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), it is the impact of the human and humane Gandhi on the people that Narayan tries to convey. He avoids politics of any kind: "Narayan seems to fear politics as a western nemesis and avoids it with a passion" (Hemenway 1975 Vol.II, 30). Gajapathy, a character in *The English Teacher*, seems to articulate Narayan's views on politics:

> There are times when I wish there were no politics in the world and no one knew who was ruling and how. . . . The whole of the West is in a muddle owing to its
political consciousness, and what a pity that the East should also follow its suit. (14)

Narayan's fiction is thus, in some respects, a reaction against the politicizing of Indian life that occurred in the period from 1900 to 1947. At the same time, his writing shares the deep centrality of personal relationships that epitomized "The Gandhian Revolution." What is unique in Narayan, which differentiates him from other Indian English Writers, even Tagore*, is that his works very uniquely appeal directly to the heart of the readers, since he mirrors ordinary men and women in ordinary daily events, and presents the ordinariness and tangibility of transcendence. Narayan's philosophy of life, grounded in compassionate human relationships and the celebration of everyday life, stems from his religious faith and response to the spirit of the Upanishads. So even without a Gandhi, Narayan's own philosophy might have led him to proclaim the good news of salvation or transcendence in his writings. Narayan and Gandhi, Rameshwar Gupta states,

are one in their basic humanity, in their faith that there is a saving grace in compassion, that there is a cosmic Law and a divine surveillance: and in their profound wisdom of our ancients -- in the basic sanity of Indian culture. Both are rooted in Hindu theism and Hindu sense of the family. . . . the land's devotional air. (1981, 56)

Narayan's faith in humanity is seen in the compassion and sympathy with which he treats all his characters. While speaking on "The Immortality of Socio-Literature," he divulges his credo:
Whatever the theme, it is compassion that first moves the writer; and remains the most noticeable part of his writing. Compassion, rather than anger, imparts an immortal quality to a work. If we grant that social fallacies, stupidity, cruelty, injustice, in short, evil in any form is bound to exist in a complex society, then it is inevitable that it should have its impact on a writer; through a poem, play or novel he gives vent to his feelings. If he thinks first of the perpetrator of the wrongs he is filled with righteous indignation; on the other hand, if he sees it from the point of view of the sufferer, his starting point is really compassion. (Narayan 1975, 106)

One senses in this statement a certain kinship not merely with Gandhi but even with E. M. Forster, who saw the political failure of the English in India as essentially apolitical: "The decent Anglo-Indian of today realizes that the great blunder of the past is neither political nor economic nor educational, but social; that he was associated with a system that supported rudeness" (Forster 1922, 614).

Of the top-ranking Indian English novelists living today—Mulk Raj Anand (1905 - ), R. K. Narayan (1906 - ), and Raja Rao (1908 - )—Narayan occupies an individual and remarkable position. Narayan's ways are strikingly different from those of Anand and Raja Rao. Anand is passionately committed to social and economic causes from a Marxist standpoint, "excluding religion and Indian Philosophy as irrelevant to the struggle for economic and political power by the underprivileged" (Williams 1976, 45). Though rooted in the Punjabi-speaking northwest India, he has lived in England for a long time. Raja Rao, "the French Brahmin," complex in thought and style, has lived most of his life as
an expatriate. He still lives abroad (in the U.S.A.). His fiction tends to depict the "mysterious" Oriental. Narayan feels that while Raja Rao has "too much philosophy and theory," Mulk Raj Anand is full of "social awareness" and confrontation (Croft 1983, 32). But Narayan, considered the "South Indian E. M. Forster" (Sampson 1970, 743), has never strayed from the Tamil and Kannada speaking South India, though he has travelled a lot since the 1950s. Without any apparent political bias or cynicism, Narayan creates huge events through small ones. Instead of dwelling upon such ideological concerns as Marxism or the metaphysical concerns of brahminical life, Narayan stresses the daily mundane concerns of middle-class Indians, and the way in which mundane concerns lead to transcendent experience. Thus, while Anand discusses the "economic hero," Raja Rao, the "metaphysical hero," and Tagore, the "mystical hero," Narayan observes and accepts ordinary men and women in their totality and discusses the "eternal" in every man.

In Narayan's novels, India is seen through Indian eyes, and the universal is given through daily events and experience in the fictional town of Malgudi. But one should bear in mind that India for Narayan, or for other Indian English writers, is not a "backcloth for a tale of love or adventure" (Derrett 1966, 136). Moreover, "the possible exotic appeal of material unfamiliar to the Western reader (which a lesser writer could well exploit for superficial
Kaul further comments upon...

...the many Indian names, festivals, objects such as other novelists scatter liberally through their pages in order presumably to furnish touches of local color, and also at times, a glossary at the end. Narayan hardly needs a gloss of this obvious kind. Where he writes of specifically Indian customs or objects, as he often does, no Western or for that matter non-South Indian reader need be non-plussed. The literal significance is relatively unimportant while the human meaning, which is what interests Narayan as opposed to the local colourists, is invariably manifest from the narrative and dramatic context. (Kaul 1977, 46)

The second part of *The English Teacher* best shows how experience new or strange to any reader, such as the automatic writing through which the spirits communicate, can be narrated without elaboration or mystification or pomposity or glossary.

Both the cosmic vision of Narayan and his concern for the ordinary appear in his affection for the fictional town "Malgudi." The spirit of place greatly affects the mundane and the transcendent activities of any human being. The make-up and behavior of fictional characters, especially, depend much on the environment in which the author places them, and "fiction depends for its life on place" (Welty 1968, 251). Moreover, "Place in fiction is the named, identified, concrete, exact and exacting, and therefore credible, gathering spot of all that has been felt, is about to be experienced, in the novel's progress" (Welty 1968, 254). Hardy's Wessex, Scott's "Waverley" novels evoking the
romantic Scotland, Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County are a few names that stand for concrete locales and a concrete past. Besides the real life locale, literary artists pride themselves in creating fictional settings.

Although Malgudi resembles many Indian towns, Mysore of South India in particular, it is fictional. Malgudi, "so supremely and exclusively and majestically and totally itself, is an everywhere in India" (Varma 1985b, 148): it is, moreover, a global village because of the "unique balance between the local and the universal: its deeply Indian and local flavour, and its rich variety which simultaneously create the sense of a wider human relevance" (Varma 1985b, 155).

Today, Malgudi occupies a permanent place in the world's literary landscape. Narayan's Malgudi, almost a synonym for Narayan, provides his men and women, and even for the tiger in A Tiger for Malgudi (1983), a milieu conducive to living and growing through their daily ordinary affairs from mundane to transcendent.

Along the banks of the river "Sarayu," near the base of "Mempi Hills," Malgudi accommodates all his characters from Swami and Friends (1935) to his latest Talkative Man: A Novel of Malgudi (1986). While Sarayu serves Malgudi as its sacred Ganges, Mempi hills are its Himalayas. The rivers are considered sacred in India. Daily ablution in a river or pool, particularly in the early morning, is for the Hindu
a spiritual as well as a physical necessity. Ever since the time of the Vedas, every village has had a temple in which to pray, a river or pool in which to bathe, and, only third in priority, a house to live in and other necessities. While "Srinivasa temple" fulfills Malgudians' need for a common place to pray, the "Albert Mission College," the temple of learning, serves as their "Cambridge." The new extensions in housing and restaurants speak of Malgudi's growth with the times. We seem almost to enter the different streets with Krishna when he is looking for a house:

I inspected the vacant houses in the east, west and south of the town. I scoured South Extension, Fort area, Race-course Road, and Vinayak Mudali Street. I omitted Lawley Extension because it was expensive, and also the New Extension beyond it, because it was too far out of the way. (The English Teacher 22)

Besides these, and the unhealthy and unclean Anderson street, the medical shop, the grocery store, the restaurant "Bombay Anandha Bhavan," and the "Bombay Cloth Emporium," of Malgudi also play a large part in the lives of the characters. Krishna's little family, his neighbors, his colleagues, the college peon Singaram, his Principal Mr. Brown, little Mani, the waiter at the hotel, the doctor and the "Krishna Medical Hall" people, have their part in making Malgudi vital with their daily lives and activities.

Neither completely traditional nor exceptionally modern, Malgudi stands timeless, displaying the old and the new, tradition and modernity. Walsh commends the portrayal of Malgudi:
Malgudi is a metaphor of India. . . . Whatever happens there happens everywhere. Against the background of a single place and amid the utter variety of humankind, the single individual engages with the one universal problem: the effort not just to be, but to become, human. (1971, 6)

The kaleidoscopic variety of characters in Malgudi makes an impressive range—"ordinary, stupid, vain"—retaining "a peculiar nuclear innocence." As Kantak puts it:

crooks and saints, business adventurers, the ardent young and the earnest old, serious minded professors . . . wayside pop-sellers, the nondescript boys, the strays and waifs, little rascals and bigger, guides who misguide, children who are just children, ordinary men and extra-ordinary lively women. (1970, 137)

Because of Narayan's focus on the everyday lives of middle-class people in an ordinary town, one of the principal difficulties facing a non-Indian reader of Narayan's fiction is to see the connection between the mundane lives of the characters and their spiritual journeys. The Indian family and the small town provide the immediate context in which Narayan operates. But the primary aim of all his characters is to achieve liberation—from ignorance to knowledge, from darkness to light, and from mortality to immortality. Hardin comments:

Narayan's characters share, if not a philosophy, then a basic attitude toward life. In every instance his protagonists are participants in the everyday world and masters of a skill, yet they have a curious ability to detach themselves from the patterns of their life and move on to yet another level of self-understanding. (1983, 131)

The novels trace the growth of the characters from innocence to experience through interactions between the mundane and
the transcendent—a project that necessarily involves certain acute difficulties for the writer in portraying such interactions.

Narayan's novel *The English Teacher* very clearly demonstrates the problem. The novel appropriately divides itself into two halves of equal length. The first half is a charming account of the domestic life of Krishna and his wife Susila. The apparently insignificant and minute details of their lives bring the mundane quality of Malgudi alive: the occasional bickering over the purchase of groceries, the disposal of an old alarm clock, and the headmaster's untidy house in Anderson Street are a few examples. The problem here is to give interest and significance even to the utterly banal, and to show how it plays a role in the process of transcendence.

The main difficulty arises, however, in the second half, where Krishna encounters the presence of his deceased wife Susila through automatic writing. The exercise in spiritualism may be hardly convincing to most readers. It is uncertain how Narayan himself feels about automatic writing. Nonetheless, Krishna goes through a significant spiritual development. In one sense automatic writing makes this development possible. In another sense we can see that Krishna places excessive reliance upon the merely physical (mundane) presence of Susila. The final breakthrough occurs when Krishna transcends the need for automatic writing and
physical presence.

Actually, the mundane details of the first half provide much of the material for the second half. For many readers, especially Western readers, the details and the many descriptions of the first half may not be easily appreciated, and the spiritual practices in the second half may seem curious. Yet Krishna’s efforts to become fully human throughout both parts give him a universality characteristic of great fiction. Similar problems arise in Narayan’s other works, where the distinctively Indian eye for the muddy, dusty, or sometimes illusory nature of mundane reality sees also the way to a transcendent reality that most writers in the realist tradition avoid.

Narayan has often been highly commended for his realistic portrayal of his characters’ "joys and sorrows, aspirations and achievement, feelings and failures and above all their human foibles" (Ranganath 1977, 62). But his realism far surpasses mere detailed presentation of the concrete and the material. Realism has found varied expressions in literature. Social realism intends the visible and the concrete to function as incitements to social change. Realism is pushed further into the psychological realm by attempting to reproduce the underlying process of thought. Narayan’s realism, however, leads to something beyond--the mundane-transcendent interactions which liberate man from fear and grant him freedom of spirit. Thus, Narayan’s
realism differs from that of the Western tradition which sometimes swings to the extreme of unrelenting pessimism in viewing man as totally impotent in a hostile universe. Narayan's realism portrays the reality of the inner vision which transcends and transforms the mundane to realize the sacramentality of life.

More critical work has been done on Narayan than on any of the other Indian English novelists. Many have worked on Narayan's relationship to his audience, his language and style, his theme and technique, his achievement as a novelist, his mind and art, his humor and pathos, and his treatment of India; some have made a comparative study of the works of Graham Greene, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Naipaul, and Narayan.

There are a number of articles by eminent authors in recent years on Narayan and his fiction, but none of them question the mundane and the transcendent. Kaul discusses the "East-West" theme and concludes that there is only the East in Narayan; Bruce King tries to speak of "Narayan and Tradition," but falls short of an understanding of the depth of Indian tradition; Sundaram, Atma Ram, Naik, Indian English writers and critics of good standing, and others have studied all the novels, but no one has considered the question of mundane-transcendent interactions.

Several book-length studies have been published, but most of these are, as Parameswaran states, "introductory in
the sense that they are chronological surveys" and "plot summaries" or "commentaries" of Narayan's novels and short stories (1976, 44). Here again, no one discusses the theme of the mundane and the transcendent.

Iyengar traces the general pattern of all Narayan's novels: "There is generally a flight, an uprooting, a disturbance of order followed by a return, a renewal, a restoration to normalcy" (1985, 385). However, the phrase "restoration to normalcy" is passive, and does not denote the dynamism achieved through liberation. Narayan's characters transcend the mundane not by passive submission to traditional codes or observances; rather, they attain a new vitality which provides the characters with a new interpretation of ordinary situations. For example, Chandran in The Bachelor of Arts, once he transcends the mundane, is able to evaluate for himself his immaturity and foolishness, and to relish his profession and a life of love in the family. Chandran's transcendence is not a blind surrender to custom and tradition. On the contrary it is a growth with conviction to reality and values.

This "order-disorder pattern" in Narayan's fiction, Satyanarain Singh states, "could be understood better in terms of the Hegelian dialectic--where order attained at the end is qualitatively different from the initial 'order' which generates discontent in the protagonist . . . " (1981, 105). Yet bringing Hegel to bear on the child Swami or the
adolescent Chandran seems contrary to the spirit of Narayan's fiction. Moreover, the standard European and American sense of India derives too largely from the nineteenth century, when such writers as Schopenhauer, Goethe, Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Yeats, and even Mark Twain became interested in Indian thought. In the twentieth century, however, Narayan observes that "he felt trapped by the 'average American notion that every Indian was a mystic'" (Rothfork 1983, 31). What he says about his novel *The Guide* is applicable to all his other novels: "My novel is not about saints or pseudo-saints of India, but about a particular person" (qtd. in Rothfork 1983, 31).

All the characters in all his novels who receive sympathetic treatment from the author demonstrate the growing pains arising from a dissatisfaction with their mundane lives. Nonetheless, achieving liberation in and through their everyday life and its activities always turns out not as an escape from the mundane, but a rise above the mundane, a realization of the human potential and the ability to live in harmony with the mundane by incorporating it into a larger reality. These Malgudi men and women "within their circumscribed lives . . . yet manage to express, the irrepressible *joie de vivre* which distinguishes them. . . ." (Kantak 1970, 41). They think and live differently, once they attain the synthesis of "flesh and spirit." Still, they do not think like a German philosopher or an American
transcendentalist. In brief, Narayan's characters attain through the process of transcendence

freedom and fearlessness of spirit, an immensity of courage, which no defeat or obstacle can touch, a faith in the power that works in the universe, a love that lavishes itself without demand of return and makes life a free servitude to the universal spirit . . . the signs of a perfected man. (Radhakrishnan 1959, 380-381)

and this dissertation attempts to study how Narayan's characters achieve these outcomes.

The forthcoming chapters discuss four of Narayan's novels--Swami and Friends (1935), The Bachelor of Arts (1937), The English Teacher (1945), and The Guide (1958)--analyzing Narayan's portrayal of the mundane-transcendent interactions and the characters' movement from and with the mundane to the transcendent. The first three novels form a unique trilogy, and the last one is the most disputed but also the most acclaimed of Narayan's novels. Swami, the child and boy of Swami and Friends, grows into Chandran, the teenager, of The Bachelor of Arts. Krishna, of The English Teacher, in many aspects is none other than Chandran. Moreover, these three novels, written before Indian independence, lend themselves better than other novels to a discussion of Narayan's view and portrayal of British characters as well as British systems. They consequently raise the question of whether liberation and transcendence are helped or hindered by westernization of Indian culture. The fourth novel, The Guide, is more complex than the others, in both
technique and content; it thus raises complex questions about all the features of transcendence that commonly appear in Narayan's fiction.

Quite a few remarkable features commonly recur in the portrayal of the mundane and the transcendent, and their interactions, in all the novels of Narayan, especially in the four considered here. Generally, religion and life are integrated in genuine Indian culture. Narayan does not shy away from this sacred tradition of India. Although Swami's piety is often questionable, his earnestness in invoking the sacred presence and powers of the gods, whenever he is in need or in difficulty, is undeniably a habit he acquires from the sacred tradition at home. It is quite obvious in The Guide that the simple villagers take Raju for a guru, as do the people of Koopal village in The Bachelor of Arts, and pay their homage to these sanyasis*. The simple villagers believe according to the sacred tradition of India that the sanyasis, with their high degree of transcendence, will assist ordinary people with and in the process of transcendence. In these two novels, the sanyasis may be fake ones, but the faith of the villagers is quite genuine. Narayan's candid and realistic portrayal includes all levels of piety and devotion. Some of these portrayals may appear totally trivial and irrational to a foreign reader, but this sacred cultural reality is never dismissed by this Indian English novelist.
The mundane-transcendent interactions are inevitable, irrespective of age or status or maturity. Whether it be for a boy of Swami's age or for the adolescent Chandran or a well settled householder like Krishna or a rogue-like character such as Raju—the mundane-transcendent interactions are a part of life. The question may arise regarding what counts as transcendence in little Swami. How, after all, can a little boy achieve transcendence? Transcendence, one should bear in mind, is always relative, that is, always relative to whatever mundane entrapments exist at any stage of life, from childhood on. Krishna's transcendence cannot be on a par with Raju's or vice versa; for that matter, no strict, inflexible comparison can hold good for one individual's passage through these mundane-transcendent interactions with that of another individual.

However, for all the characters of Narayan, it is certain that transcending the mundane is not an escape from the mundane reality, but realizing the immense inner strength that springs from true liberation, and incorporating the mundane without leaving it behind. Even little Swami realizes towards the end of the novel that he has to go back to the same Board School, and has to make an accommodation with his Malgudi companions. His transcendence equips him with greater strength and freedom. Chandran has the same romantic emotions and feelings towards his would-be-bride Susila that he had for Malathi, his dream girl; but
now the important difference is that his emotions and dreams are not nurtured on illusions or one-sided love. The same environment of home and the small school for Krishna brings harmony and a transcendent home in this world itself. To the very end, Raju retains his natural ability to attract crowds and advise people.

Often the mundane causes dissatisfaction and restlessness in the characters, which initiate the mundane-transcendent interactions. In fact, the opening paragraph of Swami and Friends, and the first few pages of The Bachelor of Arts and The English Teacher display the restless moods of the characters. Swami hates "Monday morning," (Swami and Friends, 1); Chandran has dreams one night "of picking up a hatchet and attacking his history professor, Raghavachar" (The Bachelor of Arts, 1). Chandran's and Krishna's dissatisfaction with the system of education and educational milieu are quite obvious.

Almost all the principal characters experience loneliness and alienation, during which period the mundane-transcendent interaction is intense, and during the same time the characters contemplate and evaluate their past. The long weary and scary night which Swami spends in the forest has its good outcome; Swami is able to realize in the loneliness of the night and his heart the love and security of his home which, till then, he took for granted. Chandran voluntarily distances himself from Malgudi and his family after the
"Malathi" episode. His self-imposed exile in the guise of a mute sanyasi gives him ample time to evaluate his past haughty behavior to his parents, and also his illusions. The untimely death of young Susila leaves Krishna in loneliness and despair. Raju starts narrating his true story when he is released from prison. He is not only lonely, but is totally alienated from Malgudi and other familiar company. He shuns society, since he wishes that his past be not remembered or referred to in any way. Raju differs from other protagonists. He is never left alone; yet amidst company he has no true companionship, and hence, he is lonely.

Transcendence is never seen as a purely solitary or internal affair. The process affects the entire society as well as the individual. In *Swami and Friends*, the Malgudi Cricket Club is not a mere group of youngsters playing a western game on Eastern soil; rather, it is a collective endeavor to transcend pettiness, and to work and contribute toward a common cause. *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The Guide* show us how even a fake guru can effect the transcendence of believing crowds. Chandran's silent presence liberates the villagers of Koopal; whereas, Raju's wisdom and eloquence work out to bring literacy, tolerance, peace, and serenity to the village, Mangala, and its vicinity--thereby liberating the villagers from ignorance and petty bickerings. Thus, transcendence stems from and affects inter-personal
relationships. The solitary and exotic mystic living apart from the world has no place in Narayan's fiction.

Moreover, the characters neither premeditate nor foresee transcendence or liberation, and the earlier parts of the novels do not indicate in any way the transcendence achieved at the end. It is not always the case that the characters accept or welcome the mundane-transcendent interactions or transcend quite willingly with pure intentions. Swami hates any discipline or sacrifice; yet he endures the sacrifices involved in working towards founding the Malgudi Cricket Club. Krishna little foresees the immense freedom and strength which transcendence bestows on him in the end. In the initial stages of communication with his deceased wife Susila, he is, rather, obsessed with the medium. Raju little dreams of any genuine sacrifice on his part for the sake of the village or liberation of any kind when he takes refuge in the ruined temple in the outskirts of Mangala. However, the protagonists move forward as if propelled by some central urge in human nature older than the Bhagavad Gita yet forever surprising.

Transcendence is also a perennial process, not a final outcome, hence the inconclusive endings of all the novels discussed here. Narayan traces the journey of his protagonists during the process of transcendence, and the mundane-transcendent interactions as a compassionate observer—thus accepting them in their totality. The immense freedom which
Narayan permits his characters helps the characters to work out their own transcendence in a realistic, convincing way.

In all the novels, the process of transcendence raises East-West issues but only to demonstrate that East-West issues recede when transcendence is achieved. Cricket, a Western game, unites the eastern boys in this small south Indian Malgudi. Chandran feels that all his disappointments are caused by the Eastern tradition of marriage customs. In the end, he realizes that the fault lies neither with the Eastern tradition nor with the Western modernity, but in his mistaking licentiousness for liberation.

Chapter II discusses the simple or naive transcendence achieved by the youngsters in *Swami and Friends* and *The Bachelor of Arts*. The main preoccupations of the chief characters of these two novels are education and family life. Education, both in the narrow sense of formal education and knowledge, and in the broader sense of self-realization and wisdom, is central to any discussion of the mundane and the transcendent. Moreover, an analysis of the system of education imposed on Indians by the British is vital to an understanding of the East-West encounter and its impacts as portrayed in Narayan's novels, as Kaul says: "The mention of schoolboys should remind us how much the emphasis in Narayan falls on education—which, after all, was the chief means and point of contact of Western impingement on traditional Indian life" (1977, 52). Education and family
life are closely interrelated, and in the novels discussed here the two cannot be separated. Narayan portrays life in an Indian family, and the warmth and security provided by most of the Indian families which sustain the characters in all situations. Yet the characters struggle to integrate tradition and modernity. Narayan is neither a fanatic defender of the old customs nor an ardent admirer of everything new.

Chapters III and IV treat the complex factors of the mundane-transcendent interactions in the family life and profession of the protagonists in *The English Teacher* and *The Guide*. The adult protagonists of these two novels, Krishna and Raju, have different preoccupations in life. Krishna, the professional teacher and family man, and Raju, with multiple roles of vendor, railway guide, manager of Rosie's cultural programs, and finally the spiritual guide of Mangala village have to respond to the mundane-transcendent interactions in totally different patterns. As adults they face heavier problems than those of Swami and Chandran, and their processes of transcendence too are more complex.

Besides his remarkable position in Indian English fiction, Narayan's excellence can be established by devoting a chapter to comparing this "Indian Forster's" skill and realism in tracing the inner journey of man in the novel, *The English Teacher*, with those of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. Forster's comment that *A Passage to India* is
about the "search of the human race for a more lasting home, about the universe as embodied in the Indian earth and the Indian sky . . . " affirms the perennial quest of the human agenda (qtd. in Stallybrass 1978, xxv). But how this search is articulated in the Indian setting by Forster needs to be analyzed especially in light of the work done by Indians themselves in responding to this inner urge. A Passage to India was the standard for books about India in English, but Narayan's achievement overturns this standard through his own work by reversing some of the dominant Anglo-Indian ideas about India as represented by influential writers like Forster, and thus sets a new standard for cross-cultural fiction. Hence, Chapter V studies Narayan, Forster and "the lasting home," in the context of the two novels The English Teacher and A Passage to India.

The concluding chapter summarizes the principal arguments of the dissertation and the principal forms of interactions between the mundane and the transcendent in Narayan's work. With these central issues in mind it poses two questions about World Literature in English: 1) Should we not take World Literature in English more seriously as a way of articulating and reinforcing the transnational character of human nature, and 2) specifically what kind of

7 Stallybrass, in his introduction to the Abinger edition of E. M. Forster's A Passage to India, quotes from the still unpublished essay, "Three Countries." The ms-cum-typescript of the 1950s is at King's College, Cambridge.
World Literature in English can best promote a better understanding of the various possibilities for the fulfillment of human potential—a range wider than is often acknowledged by even the best educated among us?
CHAPTER II

NAIVE TRANSCENDENCE

The novels under discussion in this chapter, *Swami and Friends* (1935) and *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), are the earliest compositions of Narayan. In a study of Narayan's thought in this early stage, one can give only a preliminary understanding of what constitutes Narayan's fiction, because he is in the initial stages of introducing in his realistic novels the elements of transcendence in a broader and richer sense. Nonetheless, the dissatisfaction that initiates the transcendence, the interactions between the mundane and the transcendent, and the spiritual discoveries in the worlds of the naive protagonists are identifiable. It is not hard, too, to notice the "out of character" situations and radically different worlds, to trace the broader and richer meaning of transcendence, and to observe how the spiritual triggers in daily life enlarge the horizon and outlook of the characters, but one should always bear in mind that the process of transcendence is a slow unfolding, and there is no leap into perfection at all. The spiritual discovery in their experiences equips the characters with new energy to face life, but does not necessarily qualify them for canonization. Narayan ventures to portray the process of naive transcendence in Swami, a school boy (*Swami and Friends*), and Chandran, an adolescent (*The Bachelor of Arts*).
School and home are the hinges around which Swami's and Chandran's lives turn. Besides forming the major sectors of their physical and psychic lives, school and home also enlighten the reader on the worlds of these youngsters, and the impact of the West on the East. Narayan's "homely and intimate registrations," possible only to an Indian novelist talking of Indian schools and households, add charm to these characters in the two novels, *Swami and Friends* and *The Bachelor of Arts*.

The school for Swami gains its importance from his friends, and not from any of his school masters or the education he gets there. Swami's aversion to Monday mornings demonstrates his hatred for school, authority and discipline:

> It was Monday morning. Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes. He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar. After the delicious freedom of Saturday and Sunday, it was difficult to get into the Monday mood of work and discipline. He shuddered at the very thought of school: that dismal yellow building; the fire-eyed Vadanayagam, his class teacher; and the head-master with his thin long cane . . . *(Swami and Friends, 3)*

In the case of Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts*, education is seen not only as drudgery; the current British system and British authority are abhorred as well. There seems to be a general lack of self discipline, hard work, and daily study amongst these college students:

Day after day was squandered thus till one fine morning the younger men opened their eyes and found themselves face to face with November. The first of November was to a young man of normal indifference the first remind-
er of the final trial—the examination. He [Chandran] now realized that half the college year was already spent. What one ought to do in a full year must now be done in just half the time. (The Bachelor of Arts, 17-18)

According to the British system, the students face the half-yearly exams in December, and the annual exams between April and May. Narayan recalls in Swami and Friends and The Bachelor of Arts his own elementary school days, passages from childhood to boyhood, and eventually to adolescence, and also the external factors that enormously intensify the pain during this stage. "The fire-eyed Vedanayagam" of Swami and Friends, the difficulty in working out the arithmetic problems, and discipline at home have their equivalents in Narayan's life too.

The students' resentment and struggle also reveal their dislike for the system of education. Since the dawn of civilization, "the aim of education in India has been," as Radhakrishnan, one of the greatest Indian philosophers and teachers of this century, observes,

initiation into the higher life of spirit. The student is a wayfarer in spirit (brahmachari) and the period of studentship is life in spirit (brahmacharya). Education should be an abiding witness to the things of the spirit... The supreme wisdom (jana) is the result of learning (vidya), reflection (cinta), and austerity (tapas)... True knowledge is not information which can be conveyed from mind to mind, but a state of personality to be created by oneself. (1969, 504-505)

In the cases of little Swami and his companions and young Chandran and his companions, learning, reflection, and austerity or self-discipline seem to be the hardest of
virtues to acquire. Malgudi youngsters are specimens of most modern brahmacharis with their illusions of freedom and hatred for discipline.

The portals of education in Malgudi, The Board School, Albert Mission School and Albert Mission College, where Swami and Chandran learn, portray many mundane and transcendent elements in the processes of learning and teaching. Judging from the way the subjects are taught to these youngsters, education doesn't seem like an "abiding witness to the things of the spirit." Rather, it is mere technical information "conveyed from mind to mind." The teachers concentrate on passing information to, and not formation of, these boys. The matter as well as the manner of such education is mundane. Vedanayagam teaches arithmetic and English in Albert Mission School, during which hours "existence in the class room was possible [for Swami] only because he could watch [through the window] the toddlers of the Infant Standards falling over one another . . ." (Swami and Friends, 4). Mr. Ebenezar handles the Scripture classes, in which the super-human and divine aspects of the subject attract Swami, because he is already instilled with reverence for and knowledge of gods by the religious atmosphere at home. But the trouble here rests on the teacher. Ultimately it rests on the Westernization of India, both religiously and educationally:

The Scripture period was the last in the morning. It was not such a dull hour after all. There were moments
in it that brought stirring pictures before one: the Red sea cleaving and making way for the Israelites; the physical feats of Samson; Jesus rising from the grave and so on. The only trouble was that the Scripture master, Mr. Ebenezer, was a fanatic. (Swami and Friends, 5)

Although Mr. Ebenezer handles a divine subject, his teaching, instead of elevating the minds of the students, activates their hatred and religious intolerance, because in "Ebenezar’s hand it [the Bhagavad Gita] served as a weapon against Hinduism" (Swami and Friends, 10). He made fun of the Hindu gods. In caricaturing other religious beliefs, Ebenezer exposes his profound ignorance. In brief, Ebenezer is unliberated. His mundane form of teaching, which nurtures hostile feelings towards other religions, can never give his students the transcendent experience in learning—the discovery of their human potential. Narayan does not stop with the portrayal of Ebenezer’s fanaticism and Christian intolerance. He also indicates little Swami’s "caste snobbery" when he replies to Mr. Ebenezer that Jesus could not have been a god since he "was not even a Brahmin."

Swami doesn't learn, and Mr. Ebenezer doesn't teach. Here, neither the teacher nor the pupil transcend the mundane levels.

By contrast, the non-professional teacher at home, Swami's grandmother, familiarizes him with the mythologies and Hindu religious fables when he snuggles close to her every night for the bed-time stories. They are from the Bhagavad Gita and other mythologies. Her stories of
Harischandra and others create in him a great sense of reverence for and faith in gods and their power, and leave an indelible impression upon his mind. With such faith, he prays to the gods in the puja* room to work out a miracle when he is in need of money to buy a hoop. No miracle is worked out for the hoop, yet Swami's frustration does not diminish his reverence for the divine figures, embedded deeply in him by his grandmother's bed-time stories. Swami quite naturally turns to the gods whenever the situation is hopeless, as when he loses his way on the Trunk Road: "Now he prayed to all the gods that he knew to take him out of that place. He promised them offerings: two coco-nuts every Saturday to the elephant-faced Ganapathi . . . " (Swami and Friends, 160). Although Swami may not be aware of the implications in these promises and offerings—-that the breaking of the coco-nuts symbolizes the breaking of the ego, the hard shell, and attaining liberation, the kernel, yet the religious tradition finds expression through these little incidents. And eventually we see that the education Swami and his friends receive at home leads to a profound liberation, and a nobler transcendence, than these boyish prayers.

This contrast between the educational system and the education received outside the system arises in all the novels under consideration here. The system may lead to honors and emoluments but never to transcendence. Swami
learns and discovers much from his friends and their cricket game outside the classroom. Early in the novel, a new boy named Rajam appears in Malgudi and enrolls in Albert Mission school. Prior to the acquaintance of Rajam, Swami "honored only four persons with his confidence." They are Somu, "the Monitor," Mani, "the mighty Good-For-Nothing" yet "the overlord of the class," Sankar, "the most brilliant boy of the class," and Samuel, nick-named "Pea" for his size, who has "no outstanding virtue of muscle or intellect" (Swami and Friends, 7-9). Rajam impresses Swami's whole class on the very first day, and instantly becomes the center of attention through his academic excellence and other fine accomplishments. Westernized, he dresses elegantly: "he was the only boy in the class who wore socks and shoes [quite unnecessary for the South Indian climate], fur cap and tie, and a wonderful coat and knickers. . . . He spoke very good English, 'Exactly like a "European"'. . . " (Swami and Friends, 14). Moreover his father's position as Malgudi's new Police Superintendent affords him additional power. In the beginning Swami and his companions have mixed feelings about this new boy: "There were sure indications that Rajam was a new power in the class. Day by day as Mani looked on, it was becoming increasingly clear that a new menace had appeared in his life" (Swami and Friends, 14).

Thus begins a naive childhood dispute and a servitude to childhood hostilities that become a central motif of the
novel, leading to a naive but nonetheless genuine interactive transcendence. Between Mani and Rajam, Swami acts as go-between, passing on their threats and challenges. Finally Mani and Rajam challenge one another to a fight on the banks of Sarayu. On the appointed evening, Swami and Mani are squatting on the sands of Sarayu waiting for Rajam. Mani has a small wooden club under his arm. His dreams are about breaking the head of Rajam in a short while and throwing his body in the river. He also fears that Rajam's ghost should come and frighten him at nights; hence he feels that it would be better not to kill Rajam, but just to break his limbs. As Mani is thus musing, the sound of "the creaking of boots" announces the arrival of Rajam. With his khaki uniform and air-gun under his arm Rajam appears as a small soldier. Now they are ready to start. Shouldering his gun majestically, Rajam fires a shot in the air which startles Mani. Mani, in his fear, is quite unable to lift his club.

"You heard the shot?" asked Rajam. The next is going to be into your body, if you are keen upon a fight."

"But this is unfair. I have no gun while you have . . . It was to be a hand-to-hand fight."

"Then, why have you brought your club? You never said anything about it yesterday."

Mani hung down his head.

"What have I done to offend you?" asked Rajam.

"You have called me a sneak before someone."

"That is a lie."

There was an awkward pause. "If this is all the cause
of your anger, forget it. I won't mind being friends."

"Nor I," said Mani.

Swaminathan gasped with astonishment. Inspite of his posing before Mani, he admired Rajam intensely, and longed to be his friend. Now this was the happiest conclusion to all the unwanted trouble. He danced with joy. Rajam lowered his gun, and Mani dropped his club. To show his good will, Rajam pulled out of his pocket half a dozen biscuits.

The river's mild rumble, the rustling of the peepul leaves, the half-light of the late evening, and the three friends eating, and glowing with new friendship -- Swaminathan felt at perfect peace with the world. (Swami and Friends, 19-20)

Swami and his friends are purified of their pettiness and unclean hatred near Sarayu, the river. The "late evening," --the close of day--denotes here the termination of their anger and enmity, and the commencement of a new friendship. The river Sarayu helps the inhabitants of Malgudi in their physical as well as spiritual purifications. In the East water, especially the water of a river, is considered sacred: "Water is sacred and no religious Hindu will take a bath without invoking the sacred power of the water, which descends from heaven and, caught on the head of Siva [one of the Hindu trinity], is distributed in the fertilizing streams of the Ganges and other rivers" (Griffiths 1982, 15).

Here is an example of liberation worked out collectively by these little boys, and their entrance into a new covenant by eating a little meal, a communion, with a few biscuits which Rajam pulls out of his trouser pocket. Rajam
is ever willing to share. This incident, besides highlighting and affirming Rajam's might and leadership, also brings out the joy the boys relish in friendship, rather than in hatred, and in transcending the mundane. The might and status of Rajam are the mundane that disturbed Mani to a great extent. Now, Rajam employs the very same mundane characteristics, and his generosity in sharing his snacks, to bring the boys together, and start a new life of friendship. In fact, the mundane gets incorporated into the transcendent. The boys' transcendence stems from and influences their inter-personal ties. They become good friends.

This incident near Sarayu demonstrates certain aspects of transcendence. The whole issue about the challenge and fight near the river commences with Mani's restlessness and dissatisfaction over the new arrival, Rajam. To their great surprise, Swami and Mani experience something slightly out of character, as those characters have been revealed so far: Mani, who wished "to break Rajam's head in a short while and throw his body in the river," and Swami, who waited to witness the fight, now enter into a different world of friendship with Rajam--a world that Swami finds momentarily stunning. This is a spiritual experience without any explicitly religious element attached to it, though it is important to notice, as already indicated, that the sacred quality of the Sarayu is an important part of the experi-
ence. Swami and Mani feel the liberation from their pettiness. The days that follow bear ample testimony to the genuinely spiritual experience—a richer and wider form of transcendence—when the boys come out of their narrow egotistic shell to accept Rajam, more as a friend than a mere class-mate. It should be noted, however, that the mundane has played a role. Rajam helps the boys to transcend through Rajam's might; and his cookies, shared in a spirit of generosity, facilitate the process.

But, after this incident Swami and Mani are separated from their former group of friends—Sankar, Somu, and Pea. Their friendship with Rajam earns them the nick-name "tail," meaning sycophant. When one ordeal ends, another commences. It is obvious that the process of transcendence is never ending. Here, as in all the novels, Narayan's concentration is always on the process. When Mani and Swami transcend one stage of the mundane, other difficulties arise—the peace and friendship with Rajam alienate them from their former friends. Now they have to transcend this barrier to bring a greater union; this union of the two camps and the peace-treaty occur in Rajam's house.

On their way to Rajam's house one day, speculating what surprise Rajam has for them, Swami's and Mani's thoughts turn to their enemies. The bitterness with which Mani tells Swami of his intention to "break Somu's waist," "to press him [Pea] to the earth," and to hang Sankar "by
his tuft over Sarayu" indicates the small boy's big enmity. To their utter dismay, Swami and Mani find "the other three" in Rajam's house:

Mani remained stunned for a moment, and then scrambled to his feet. He looked around, his face twitching with shame and rage. He saw the Pea sitting in a corner, his eyes twinkling with mischief, and felt impelled to take him by the throat. He turned round and saw Rajam regarding him steadily, his mouth quivering with a smothered grin.

As for Swaminathan he felt that the best place for himself would be the darkness and obscurity under a table or a chair.

"What do you mean by this Rajam?" Mani asked.

"Why are you so wild?"

"It was your fault," said Mani vehemently, "I didn't know -- " He looked around.

....

Somu and company laughed. Mani glared round, "I am going away, Rajam. This is not the place for me."

Rajam replied, "You may go away, if you don't want me to see you or speak to you any more." (Swami and Friends, 45)

While Rajam establishes himself as an undaunted leader and mediator, the others are unaware of the process of transcendence. Rajam again employs his own leadership, might, and affluence as the mundane instruments to bring about the unity. He takes the initiative, but gives the boys a choice. The company and friendship of Rajam is undeniably attractive, and the presence of the other party, the former friends, is certainly disturbing--yet all the boys decide to remain at Rajam's house:
And after the usual round of eating that followed, they [Swami and Mani] were perfectly happy, except when they thought of the other three in the room.

They were in this state of mind when Rajam began a lecture on friendship. He said impressive things about friendship, quoting from his book the story of the dying man and the faggots, which proved that union was strength. . . . According to Rajam, it was written in the Vedas that a person who fostered enmity should be locked up in a small room, after his death. He would be made to stand, stark naked, on a pedestal of red-hot iron. . . .

(A shudder went through the company.)

The company was greatly impressed. Rajam then invited everyone to come forward and say that they would have no more enemies. If Sankar said it, he would get a bound note-book; if Swaminathan said it, he would get a clock-work engine; if Somu said it, he would get a belt; and if Mani said it, he would get a nice pocket knife; and the Pea would get a marvelous little pen.

He threw open the cupboard and displayed the prizes. There was silence for some time as each sat gnawing his nails. Rajam was sweating with his peace-making efforts." (Swami and Friends, 45-47)

The mundane gifts, as well as the transcendent message, appeal to them; hence, starting with Pea, every one in the company rises to pick up a gift, thereby revealing his willingness to make peace. The material generosity of Rajam coupled with his good will arouse enthusiasm in these curious little boys as a result of which they transcend: friendship is restored: there is liberation from pettiness and egocentricity into love and teamwork. Without any metaphysical enquiry into the existence of heaven and hell, they accept the message of the fable that goodness is to be nurtured and not wickedness. Rajam's earlier generosity and
good will, noticeable on the banks of Sarayu when Mani challenges him, are enlarged upon in this episode.

This simple, mundane incident unfolds many features of naive transcendence. Had Rajam relied solely on his lectures on peace and friendship, it is doubtful the boys would have come together at all. Had the prizes alone been the bait, without any attempt to work on their sentiments--fear of punishment through Rajam's narrations--again the end would have been brittle. In the world of childhood, the attractive mundane gifts are essential. Equally essential are the impressive things said on good friendship, and the shudder caused in the boys by Rajam's "hair-raising" narrations on hell, crime, and punishment, to raise them from the mundane to the transcendent. While the professional teachers have failed to educate the boys beyond filling their heads with information, Rajam is able to achieve unity and friendship among his companions by his informal teaching with story-book tales of the transcendent that could touch his companions' psyche. Teaching and learning are done here in a transcendent form that affects and enlarges their young personalities.

Narayan narrates here a small miracle of transcendence and "the renewal of life" which brings love, joy, and peace in Swami's little world. The ego is not something bad or abnormal, it is mundane; but transcending the pettiness in the ego is the liberation. Swami and his companions enter a
larger world of companionship and cooperation once they are liberated from their egocentricity. This incident is one of the remarkable illustrations of the phases of transcendence. Starting with enmity between the two groups and their egocentricities, Narayan lets Rajam, the boyish guru, open a new and totally different world to his friends. They have literally entered a strange realm—Rajam's house. And they are stunned to find that realm occupied by their "enemies." Moreover, through the religious fables Rajam brings an explicitly religious experience into this realm, naive though it may be. As a result of all these events, the boys do eventually achieve a state of mind that is "out of character" for them—they make peace.

This naive transcendence of Swami and companions reveals their potential for betterment, and how they attempt to live it. Yet this does not mean that the boys (including Rajam who plays the role of a guru) reach perfection or their boyish or childish bickerings end now as they are introduced to a larger world of love and companionship. Transcendence is never complete as a process, but is perennial, and hence needs constant effort. Rajam proves himself a boyish guru, and a mediator among the boys. Moreover he mediates between the mundane and the transcendent, in his boyish way, with the aid of stories from the Indian classics learnt at home. This is the simple way in which the spirit of the scriptures is lived, and also how life and religion
are integrated. This is what the novel does--it mediates. This is what Narayan seems to do--to mediate between the public and the world of liberation, transcendence--which he does without moralizing. Through the ordinary, normal events and incidents of childhood, Narayan portrays the extraordinary potential of being human. And what is extraordinary, especially in this instance, is not so much the outcome, so touched by naivete, but rather the process, which is touched by the sacred and the near-miraculous despite its ordinariness. Thus, Narayan assumes the role of a guru, by his informal and unassuming way of teaching and mediation, and his readers are the learners.

Yet this incident may pose a few problems for readers, particularly Western readers, regarding Rajam's methodology, maturity, hospitality, generosity, and leadership. Western boys may not act this way, and the incident may seem too nearly miraculous to be convincing. But one of the ways by which ancient wisdom and religious principles reach every Indian generation is through the oral tradition, through narration and story-telling. Stories and "story-telling" are as old as Indian civilization. Even Narayan is called "The Storyteller of Malgudi" (Mukherjee 1972). Oral storytelling is one of the performing arts in South Indian villages. Even illiterates in India have intimacy with the Indian epics and verses from Classical texts through this oral tradition: "I don't think that there is any other place
on earth where literature forms the basis, the very lifestyle, of a people. This intimacy with our cultural lore has ably withstood the turmoil of India’s history through the ages” (Pillai 1986, 68). Most of the mythological stories are based on the concepts and qualities of good and evil. The stories on Harischandra, the name which is almost a synonym for truth, greatly influenced Gandhi’s childhood, vividly recalled in his autobiography, _The Story of My Experiments with Truth_ (1940). The vast corridors and halls of Indian temples are meant for seating the audience who listen for long hours to the katha kalachebam (narrations of the epics, parts of which are sung): "The narrator will know by heart the twenty four thousand stanzas of the _Ramayana_ and most of the one hundred thousand of the _Mahabharata_ and explain them with his own commentaries, often touching upon contemporary life and personalities" (Narayan 1974, 107). This is Indianness, and Narayan does not shy away from it, however incredible it may sound to a foreign ear, nor does he try to compromise it. In imitation of his elders, Rajam employs this oral tradition to create peace and succeeds. Rajam needs this very peace to carry out his own project in the future--the formation of a cricket club.

Moreover, Rajam’s maturity stems from the wider world he is exposed to. His father has recently been transferred to Malgudi from Madras, hence it is obvious that Rajam has already the experiences of city life and city school.
Moreover, his father, as Superintendent of Police, would have been experienced in mollifying crowds and suppressing violence, rendering justice and uniting parties by threats, compromises, punishment, cajoling, rewards, etc., and these experiences would have been a normal part of the "oral tradition" in Rajam's household. In Rajam, tradition and modernity, East and West, co-exist.

Rajam is now the leader of the boys of Malgudi, and Rajam's leadership in this situation clearly qualifies him (in the eyes of the boys) to undertake the next great initiative--a cricket club. Apart from his status as the son of a big government official, and his academic excellence, he is good at organizing his companions and maintaining harmony. The boys seek his company not merely for his material superiority, but for his warmth, his leadership, and his imagination. Rajam dreams of a cricket club and, ironically, this Western institution unites here an eastern group of youngsters in a boyish transcendence of egocentricities and naive rivalries.

Rajam takes the initiative in forming the cricket club, and he goes to Swami's house to discuss the project. Swami's knowledge is not that good, except for the fact that he is familiar with the names of famous cricketers like Hobbs, Bradman, Duleep, etc. He gains this familiarity when he is infected with Rajam's habit of collecting pictures of these famous cricketers. Swami candidly acknowledges his
ignorance of the game when Rajam asks:

"What would you say to a cricket team?" . . .

"No Rajam, I don't think I can play. I don't know how to play."

"That is what everybody thinks," said Rajam, "I don't know how myself, though I collect pictures and scores."

This was very pleasing to hear. Probably Hobbs too was shy and sceptical before he took the bat and swung it. (Swami and Friends, 109-110)

With such confidence, they set about finding an attractive name for the club. After shuffling through a number of names such as "Jumping Stars," "Victory Union Eleven," and "Stars Eleven," they decide upon "M. C. C."--"Malgudi Cricket Club." Their captain, of course, is Rajam, and their opponents are the "School Eleven" team of the Board School of Malgudi. Next, they think of ordering goods for the cricket game:

Rajam's enthusiasm was great. He left his chair and sat on the arm of Mani's chair, gloating over the pictures of the cricket goods in the catalogue. Swaminathan, though he was considered to be bit of a heretic, caught the enthusiasm and perched on the other arm of the chair. All the three devoured with their eyes the glossy pictures of cricket balls, bats, and nets. (Swami and Friends, 114)

Their mail order in the name of "M. C. C." to "Messrs Binns" in Madras, and the reply from such a "magnificent firm as Binns of Madras" addressed to the "Captain, M. C. C.," fill them with joy and confidence--now "the M. C. C. and its organizers had solid proof that they were persons of count" (Swami and Friends, 117). Owing to their ignorance and incompetence in dealing with such business correspondence,
they could hear no more from the Binns, but "The M. C. C. were an optimistic lot" (Swami and Friends, 119). They are content with whatever is available to start the practice; with "the bottom of a dealwood case [which] provided them with three good bats," and the three used tennis balls which Rajam manages to bring from his father's club, the Pea offers four real stumps that he believes he has somewhere in his house, and the neat slip of ground adjoining Rajam's bungalow is to be the pitch. After this preparation, Rajam selects "from his class a few who, he thought, deserved to become members of the M. C. C." (Swami and Friends, 119).

When Pea fails to bring the real stumps, the compound wall of Rajam's bungalow serves as the temporary wicket, and they start the game:

A portion of the wall was marked off with a piece of charcoal, and the captain arranged the field and opened the batting himself. Swaminathan took up the bowling. He held a tennis ball in his hand, took a few paces, and threw it over. Rajam swung the bat but missed it. The ball hit the wall right under the charcoal mark. Rajam was bowled out with the very first ball! There was a great shout of joy. The players pressed round Swaminathan to shake him and pat him on the back, he was given on the very spot the title, "Tate." (Swami and Friends, 121)

So, Swaminathan establishes himself as the best bowler of the company on the first day itself. After that day, the team plans to practice every evening. Rajam doesn't seem to understand the difficulties of Swami, who reports to the cricket field late for every practice. However, with their multiple roles of captain, bowler, etc., they are close-knit
through their sharing and caring. They forego their personal pettiness for the sake of the team. The mundane game, a Western one, helps these boys to transcend their egocentricity and strengthen their inter-personal relationships. M. C. C. has opened a new horizon in their world. Swami, the "Tate," and other members of the team are obsessed with the game and the club: "At the end of this [school hours in the evening] you ran home to drink coffee, throw down the books, and rush off to the cricket field, which was a long way off. . . . What music there was in the thud of the bat hitting the ball!" (Swami and Friends, 123). This new project, M. C. C., knit them closer together than ever before.

Although life with his friends is sweet and fulfilling, and life at home is secure, Swami's life at school is intolerably tedious. One day, on hearing the news about the arrest of Gouri Sankar, a prominent political worker of Bombay, all the citizens of the town assemble on the banks of Sarayu. Gouri Sankar has been arrested by the British Government for his participation in the freedom struggle. The purpose of the meeting is to condemn the arrest of this Indian politician, and to arouse the patriotic feelings of the Malgudians. Swami and Mani too attend the meeting, and join the crowd in shouting the slogan, "Gandhi ki Jai!" Although they are too small to comprehend the entire message, they do understand that Indians are living under
slavery in their own land. Next day when Swami marches towards his school, he learns that it is a day of **hartal** (strike) to express the Indians' anger over the arrest of Gouri Sankar, though Albert Mission School makes no such official announcement. On the contrary, Albert Mission's headmaster and teachers try to keep the boys in school. Swami joins the group of strikers, and sheepishly follows their actions, throwing stones at the ventilators of his school. He spends the whole day in such riots until he is stopped and hit by a policeman's rod. On the following day, unable to withstand the rudeness and the cane of his headmaster, Swami runs away from his school. So his father has to seek admission for Swami in Malgudi's other school--The Board School. Ironically the **hartal**, a demonstration against Western Imperialism, doesn't seem to achieve in this book what the Western game cricket achieves through Rajam's "political" savvy. Here, as so often in Narayan's work, macro-politics take a back seat to micro-politics.

Swami, now a pupil of the Board School, tries to join his close companions every evening during the cricket practice. Daily practice in the cricket field is so essential as the team has agreed to play a friendly match with the Young Men's Union of Malgudi, and there are hardly two weeks left for the match. But the headmaster of the Board School is unwilling to exempt Swami from the evening classes of gymnastics in his school. Swami plays truant and gets
caught when he tries to keep away from the evening drill classes. Hence, one evening, just two days before the match, Swami runs away from the Board school, too, during the evening class hours in order to be on time for the cricket practice. Since he is too early, and none of his companions are out of their school, Swami, with no courage to go home or back to his school, manages to get Rajam out of his class room for a while and asks:

"Rajam, do you think that I am so necessary for the match?"

Rajam regarded him suspiciously and said: "Don't ask such questions." He added presently: "We can't do without you, Swami. No. We depend upon you. You are the best bowler we have. . . . I shall commit suicide if we lose. Oh, Swami, what a mess you have made of things! What are you going to do without a school?" (Swami and Friends, 150)

After this conversation, Rajam runs back to his class room. Swami walks to while away his time, but loses his way on the Trunk Road:

He was on an unknown distant road at a ghostly hour. Till now the hope that he was moving towards the familiar Trunk Road sustained him. But now even the false hope being gone, he became faint with fear. When he understood that the Trunk Road was an unreal distant dream, his legs refused to support him. All the same he kept tottering onwards, knowing well that it was a meaningless, aimless, march. He walked like one half stunned. The strangeness of the hour, so silent indeed that even a drop of a leaf resounded through the place, oppressed him with a sense of inhumanity. Its remoteness gave him a feeling that he was walking into a world of horrors, subhuman and supernatural.

He collapsed like an empty bag, and wept bitterly. He called to his father, mother, granny, Rajam, and Mani. His shrill loud cry went through the night past those half-distinct black shapes looming far ahead, which might be trees or gate-posts of inferno. Now he
prayed to all the gods he knew . . . (Swami and Friends, 160)

Swami does not intend to run away from home or Malgudi. Yet it happens.

This is bitter loneliness and alienation for a little child like Swami. Fear, weariness, darkness, the wild surroundings in this dangerous situation bring out the core of the being in Swami. Swami undergoes such an experience for the first time in his life and goes through it all alone. Hermits and sanyasis usually retreat voluntarily into solitude in deserts or caves to contemplate their mundane and transcendent values. But Swami is a small boy in a fearful situation that forces him to evaluate his life. He recalls the love and security he enjoyed from his dear ones at home and school which he took for granted till then. Now neither his parents nor friends can come to his rescue. During moments of despair, when things go beyond human comprehension, Swami, like anyone else in a truly dangerous situation, turns to the mercy of the divine. So he prays and vows to the gods: "a vow to roll bare-bodied in the dust, beg, and take the alms to the Lord of Thirupathi. He paused as if to give the gods time to consider his offer and descend from their heights to rescue him" (Swami and Friends, 160). But the gods do not descend. Swami is a boy from a typical traditional, Indian, Hindu home. The knowledge gathered through the mythological stories from granny and his faith in gods instilled by the household piety now
begin to work in him and he prays. In his exhaustion he falls asleep on the road. Ranga, the village cartman, who is returning to the village from the Mempi forests, finds and takes Swami to the nearest Travellers' Bungalow by the Forest Office.

On waking up the next morning in a strange place, Swami feels as though he has been years away from his parents and dear ones. The Forest Officer, Mr. Nair, arranges to send Swami to his parents after learning his identity. On his return home, the little prodigal realizes in greater depths the warmth and love that surround him:

Swaminathan had a sense of supreme well-being and security. He was flattered by the number of visitors that were coming to see him. His granny and mother were hovering around him ceaselessly . . . Many of his father’s friends came to see him and behaved more or less alike. They stared at him with amusement and said how relieved they were to have him back . . . a widow . . . said that He [God] alone had saved the boy . . . Granny said that she would have to set about fulfilling the great promises of offerings to be made to the Lord of the Seven Hills to whom alone she owed the safe return of the child. (Swami and Friends, 169-170)

This incident highlights the social and religious dispositions of the entire group. Swami is rescued by Ranga, the villager, and the gods don’t come directly to the spot. Yet the pious Indians always attribute everything to the Primary cause, and seldom anything to the secondary ones.

Swami is overwhelmed by the affectionate greetings. Ever since he joined Rajam's company, and the cricket club, his sensitivity towards people has grown. Now after this forest experience, it is sharpened all the more. For ex-
ample, while he recalls gratefully the Forest Officer's kindness, he is vexed at not saying "good-bye" to him before leaving the Travellers' Bungalow.

Here is another instance to indicate the phases of transcendence—Swami runs out of his school owing to his restlessness, but he never foresees the bewildering situation he is led to. This is a totally strange, scary world for Swami. The experience of the dark night and his wild dreams stun the character. Although frightful, the situation propels his religious invocations, and leads into a spiritual discovery. What is even more remarkable about his transcendence is its continuity after the incident and spiritual discovery, which expresses itself through his sensitivity to others. Hence, transcendence, in its richer and broader meaning, is an ongoing and collective process.

Swami learns through Mani about M. C. C.'s encounter with Y. M. U. and the depressing results. Only just now Swami realizes that the match is already over. Hence he asks Mani:

"What does Rajam say about me?"

"Rajam says a lot, which I don't wish to repeat. But I will tell you one thing. Never appear before him. He will never speak to you. He may even shoot you on sight."

"What have I done?" asked Swaminathan.

"You have ruined the M. C. C. You need not have promised us, if you had wanted to funk. . . ."

(Swami and Friends, 173)
Swami weeps on hearing Rajam's anger, and pleads with Mani to pacify Rajam and convey to him Swami's love and explanations. Within ten days Swami learns, again through Mani, that Rajam's father has been transferred to another city, and so he and his family are to leave Malgudi in a few days. The sense of separation almost kills Swami:

A great sense of desolation seized Swaminathan at once. The world seemed to have become blank all of a sudden. The thought of Lawley Extension without Rajam appalled him with its emptiness. He swore that he would never go there again. He raved at Mani. Mani bore it patiently. Swaminathan could not think of a world without Rajam. (Swami and Friends, 174)

Although Swami's sense of loss and separation cannot be compared with Chandran's grief over the loss of Malathi (The Bachelor of Arts), or Krishna's loss of Susila (The English Teacher), this little heart is filled with grief and guilt, and is unable to bear the separation. Swami wants to express his love and appreciation to Rajam with the best that he possesses. He rummages through his "dealwood box" for a long time, "but there seemed to be nothing in it worth taking to Rajam. The only decent object in it was a green engine given to him over a year ago by Rajam. The sight of it ... stirred in him vivid memories" (Swami and Friends, 175). Swami decides to give Rajam a book, as Rajam is a good reader: "He took out the only book that he respected. ... It was a neat tiny volume of Anderson's Fairy Tales that his father had bought years ago for him" (Swami and Friends, 176). With the inscription "To my dearest friend
Rajam" on the fly-leaf of the book, Swami prepares this "Parting Present." Here too, more than the gift, it is Swami's sense of sharing that indicates his growth. Rajam has been a catalyst in liberating the Malgudi boys from egocentricity in ways that the local schools and school masters are unable to do. He has educated them by his generosity, leadership, goodwill, and team spirit which leave an indelible impression on their personalities. So on the day of Rajam's departure, Swami rises early and rushes to Malgudi railway station. Mani assists Swami in handing over his parting gift, the book, to Rajam as the train starts moving: "Swaminathan and Mani stood as if glued, where they were, and watched the train" (Swami and Friends, 178). The Sun is rising on the Eastern horizon.

With the passing of the train and the rising of the sun, Swami weans himself from dependence on Rajam to enter into the next stage in life. The affection from his family has led to affection for a peer—a Westernized peer at that. Yet one sees neither East nor West in Swami's act; neither does one see merely a "return to normalcy." Finally, one does not see anything conclusive. The reader cannot suppose that Swami will live happily ever after, yet the process is sacred and his.

The phases of transcendence are quite obvious in the above incidents. Swami, who is already in a dissatisfied state for failing to play in the cricket match, is all the
more pained to know of Rajam's anger and contempt—a negative experience like the one in the Forest. It is intensified on hearing about Rajam's departure. Yet Swami goes beyond himself: though stunned and bewildered, he does something out of character. Heretofore we have seen Swami as mainly passive, swayed by his friends, by Rajam, and even the revolution. Now, however, despite every reason for absolute discouragement, he takes the initiative. Filled with a sense of "desolation," Swami tries to express his love by sharing the best of his possessions as a parting gift at the station.

*Swami and Friends* portrays in many ways the "naive" transcendence of a little Indian school boy. Swami is not an ideal boy, and he is not a bad sort either. He has in him the traits of an energetic, mischievous school boy anywhere. With a good home providing love and security, besides the sacred tradition, he still has to work out his inevitable mundane-transcendent interactions. The first pages of the novel do not indicate the liberation of Swami. He and his friends view Rajam's arrival in Malgudi as hostile, one which might deprive them of their status. The naive way in which they fight out their pettiness and establish a firm friendship with Rajam and discover a guru in Rajam are the processes of the naive transcendence. Rajam's mundane superiority and leadership, and his project of M. C. C. portray the incorporation of the mundane into their naive
transcendence. It is important to notice that alongside the Western and modern features of Swami's life, there is an acceptance of tradition not often found in the Western realistic novel. What brings about the transcendence in Swami's life is a traditional and sacred kind of education, received in the home of his parents and friends, a traditional and sacred family life, a traditional and pervasive religious life which is hardly distinguishable from his secular life. Neither Swami's transcendence nor that of other chief characters in Narayan's fiction consists in purely private or solitary achievements. Transcendence is both sacred and social, both modern and traditional. Besides being liberated of their egocentricities, Swami's friends acquire traditional virtues in the context of their everyday Indian lives, where the sacred and secular mix easily and naturally. Yet Swami and his companions still have to continue wrestling with their boyish frailties--thus the process of transcendence will continue on a larger and more sophisticated scale with their growth and exposure to a larger life.

Narayan's second novel, *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), is the story of young Chandran, who in many ways appears to be an extension of Swami. However, the conditions of struggle for Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts* differ from those of Swami, since Chandran has entered the next stage, adolescence, and has started attending Albert Mission College,
"the Cambridge of Malgudi." However, like Swami, Chandran forces the tension between "freedom" and "discipline," overlooking the possibility and necessity of transcending this opposition. Moreover, an equally important issue, in this novel as in *Swami and Friends*, is the educational milieu, which, despite its liberal pretensions, does not liberate.

Although he was himself not educated in any of the schools in England, Narayan speaks authentically of the Indian schools and colleges of his time during the pre-independence era. The British system of education laid emphasis on the crucial importance of examinations which test the memory rather than the originality of the students. Also, these exams decided the future of the students. Narayan himself denounces the Western educational process:

I am opposed to the system of cramming and examinations and all the grading. I think it's a waste of energy. It doesn't affect anyone in depth. It's simply competitive -- First Class, Second Class -- there's no feeling involved. (qtd. in Croft, 1983: 28)

Thus, education is seen only as a means to the acquisition of a degree, and a mere decoration after one's name, but never as an adventure or anything of value in itself. It contributes little to the things of the spirit. The conversation between Chandran, secretary of the English Literary Association in the college, and his class-mate Mohan, bears ample testimony to the educational milieu in these colleges:
[Chandran] "Why don't you read your poems before the Literary Association?"

[Mohan] "Ah, do you think any such thing is possible with grand-mother Brown as its president? As long as he is in this college no original work will ever be possible. He is very jealous, won't tolerate a pinch of original work. Go and read before the Literary Association, for the two-hundredth time, a rehash of his lecture notes on Wordsworth or Eighteenth Century Prose, and he will permit it. He won't stand anything else." (The Bachelor of Arts, 48)

Moreover, the system familiarized Indian youth with European classics rather than with Indian classics. Chandran's dislike and the other youngsters' irritation are just in many ways. Traditional Indian education was once very different.

The terms "university" or "college" may be modern ones, but institutions of higher learning have been familiar to Indians for ages. Famous seats of learning such as Nalanda* and Takshasila* had aided students all over Eastern Asia as early as the fourth century B. C. It was freedom of mind that gave rise to India's past glory:

The age of the Vedic seers was a period of vigour and vitality when India gave voice to immortal thoughts. The great epic of the Mahabharata gives us a wonderful picture of seething life, full of the freedom of enquiry and experiment. . . . In the age of the Buddha, the country was stirred to its uttermost depths. The freedom of mind which it produced expressed itself in a wealth of creation in all phases of life, overflowing in its richness the continent of Asia. . . . India soon became the spiritual home of China and Japan, Burma and Ceylon. Under the Guptas and the Vardhanas, we had an immense cultural flowering. Those who carved deep out of the solid rock "cells for themselves and cathedrals for their gods" which are even today the admiration of the world must have had sufficient strength of spirit. (Radhakrishnan 1969, 482-483)

But Mr. Brown, the principal of Albert Mission College, has
no regard for India's past contribution or its views on the spiritual aspects of education: rather, he guards English spelling. Chandran's opinion of Brown illustrates this point:

He [Chandran] kept gazing at Professor Brown's pink face. . . . He is here not out of love for us, but merely to keep up appearances. All Europeans are like this. They will take their thousand or more a month, but won't do the slightest service to Indians with a sincere heart. They must be paid this heavy amount for spending their time in the English Club. Why should not these fellows admit Indians to their clubs? Sheer color arrogance. If ever I get into power I shall see that Englishmen attend clubs along with Indians and are not so exclusive. . . . Anyway who invited them here? (The Bachelor of Arts, 5)

Narayan here exposes a problem and its context. He gives the struggle in Chandran and does not concentrate much on Brown, the principal. Riemenschneider observes Chandran's remarks on Mr. Brown:

It is striking that Chandran neither here nor at any time later in his life, especially during the many crises he experiences after he has left his home, is made to reflect on himself as a product of an educational system totally alien to his own cultural background. Thus, he is not aware that his ideas of love or of a career have been implanted by his English teachers. Characteristically, Narayan leaves it to his readers to either judge Chandran on his own merits, that is, as a young, immature and somewhat naive person or, perhaps, as a character whom the author himself fails being uninterested in the social-psychological intricacies of the people he creates. (1979, 144)

It needs to be insisted here that Narayan is not uninterested in the social-psychological life of Chandran. On the contrary, Narayan's interest extends beyond the visible and the exterior. Narayan is aware of Chandran's acculturation
to the Western customs—especially when they serve conveniently to feed his fantasies—as will be seen later in his infatuation with Malathi. Although Narayan never engages in a discussion of ideologies or politics, he portrays here a young man, an adolescent in Malgudi, growing up in a traditional Eastern home, but attending the Westernized "Albert Mission College," with a Western system of education. Here Chandran is exposed not only to Western educational influences but to cultural influences as well.

What the students crave here after seeing the British principal in their social milieu is more romantic freedom to mingle freely with the opposite sex. One day Chandran and his friend, Ramu, go for an evening show to a movie house. There they happen to see their principal, Mr. Brown, with a female companion. The Indian boys' conversation in the theatre clearly indicates the British impact on the Indian youth:

Ramu yawned, stood up, and gazed at the people occupying the more expensive seats behind them.

"Chandar, Brown is here with some girl in the First Class."

"May be his wife," Chandran commented without turning.

"It is not his wife."

"Must be some other girl, then. The white fellows are born to enjoy life. Our people really don't know how to live. . . ."

"This is a wretched country," Ramu said with feeling. (The Bachelor of Arts, 15)

Narayan recognizes the problem of modernization and Western-
nization, after which he leaves to his readers the resolu-
tion of the problem. Without taking sides, he portrays how
the struggle is experienced by Chandran or any other youth.
This refusal to effect a resolution cannot be labelled as
lack of interest or indifference, despite Riemenschneider's
comment. The characters here are adolescents, looking for
every concession to fulfill their mundane fantasies. When
they encounter obstacles, the natural tendency is not to
analyze the mundane but to blame every system in the society
whether it is relevant or otherwise, whether Eastern or
Western. Chandran's emotions are crude both in commenting
on Brown's or a Westerner's freedom in this context, as well
as in condemning Malgudi's traditions which hinder the
immediate gratification of his adolescent fantasies. In
fact, he hates both Malgudi and the West in so far as they
obstruct his fantasies--he stands purely on a mundane level.

The real problem gets solved neither through strictly
modern nor through strictly traditional thinking but in
transcending the mundane. Even if Chandran had not seen
Brown in the theater, he still would be discontented with
Malgudi's tradition and orthodoxy. Having seen him in the
theater, Chandran is prone to see the orthodoxy of Malgudi,
in contrast to the modernity of the West, as an obstacle to
his mundane progress with his adolescent fantasies.

Chandran enters in the second part of the novel a new
phase in his life--adolescent infatuation. Earlier, he saw
Brown and his Western ways in the educational milieu as the problem. Now he sees Brown and his ways as the solution. As it turns out, in Chandran's life they are neither. East-West issues arise in most of Narayan's novels, as does the struggle between modern and traditional ways. But liberation and transcendence lie beyond these distinctions.

After graduation from Albert Mission College, Chandran is "compelled to organize his life." Moreover, "now without college or studies to fetter him," Chandran, who mistakes licentiousness for liberation, enjoys a mundane freedom he has "never experienced in his life before"--a freedom which accompanies no spiritual discovery or experience. The freedom and the adventures that follow do not open any wider vista for positive human endeavor to free him of his ego-centricity or immaturity. He reads "an enormous quantity of fiction" in the town's public library, takes long walks and "rambles by the river," necessarily alone in the evenings, and chats with his parents in the front hall of their home after evening meals.

Malgudi in the 1930s affords the Malgudians no other sophisticated relaxations in the evenings than the sandy beaches along its river, Sarayu. It is during one of his "river ramblings" that he first sees the young girl Malathi, and concludes instantly "that he would not have room for anything else in his mind":

One evening he came to the river, and was loafing along it, when he saw a girl, about fifteen years old, play-
ing with her younger sister on the sands. Chandran had been in the habit of staring at every girl who sat on the sand, but he had never felt before the acute interest he felt in this girl now. He liked the way she sat; he liked the way she played with her sister; he liked the way she dug her hand into the sand and threw it in the air. He paused only for a moment to observe the girl. He would have willingly settled there and spent the rest of his life watching her. But that could not be done. He went on his usual walk down to Nallappa's Grove, but he caught himself more than once thinking of the girl. How old was she? If she was more than fourteen she must be married. There was a touch of despair in this thought. What was the use of thinking of a married girl? Probably she was not married. Her parents were very likely rational and modern. He tried to analyze why he was thinking of her. Why did he think of her so much? Was it her looks? Chandran was puzzled, greatly puzzled by the whole thing. That night he went home very preoccupied. It was at five o'clock that he had met her, and at nine he was still thinking of her.

Suppose though unmarried, she belonged to some other caste? A marriage would not be tolerated even between subsects of the same caste. He felt very indignant. He would set an example himself by marrying this girl whatever her caste or sect might be. (The Bachelor of Arts, 54-56)

He makes it a point to spend his evenings on the banks of Sarayu without his friends, because he realizes that "friends and acquaintances were like to prove a nuisance to him by the river" (The Bachelor of Arts, 63). The young girl appears on the bank almost every evening except Fridays, with a little girl companion. One evening, Chandran has a desire "to go to her and ask her whether her little companion was her sister or cousin. But he abandoned the idea. A man of twenty-two going up and conversing with a grown-up girl, a perfect stranger, would be affording a very uncommon sight to the public" (The Bachelor of Arts,
Yet he continues to stare at her every evening.

After a month of such one-sided romance, he learns her name, Malathi, and about her household through his friend, Mohan, who lives opposite to her house. Chandran is happy, too, to learn that she belongs to the same caste. We see in Chandran the feelings and emotions of an adolescent lad, but the arrogance with which he attempts to satiate his desires unveils his selfishness and mundane freedom. He never spends a moment to consider the interests of Malathi in him. The ensuing conversation with his father proves that without taking any effort, either directly or indirectly, to know Malathi’s mind on this important matter his only aim in life now seems to be to obtain her through marriage. With the identity of "a full grown adult out on a serious business," he approaches his father:

"Father, please don’t mistake me. I want to marry D. W. Krishna Iyer's daughter."

Father put on his spectacles and looked at his son with a frown. He sat up and asked: "Who is he?"

"Head clerk in the Executive Engineer's office."

"Why do you want to marry his daughter?"

"I like her."

"Do you know the girl?"

"Yes. I have seen her often."

"Where?"

Chandran told him.

"Have you spoken to each other?"
"No..."

"Does she know you."

"I don't know."

Father laughed and it cut into Chandran's soul.

Father asked: "In that case why this girl alone and not any other?"

Chandran said: "I like her," and left Father's company abruptly..." (The Bachelor of Arts, 69)

It might appear to a Western reader that the father's question is odd: "Why this girl alone and not any other?" Certainly Chandran, as might be expected, rages at the "intricate formalities of an Indian [particularly Brahmin] marriage system" which lays great emphasis on caste, matching of horoscopes, dowry, age, etc. This section of the novel portraying the arranged marriage system, may both puzzle and amuse a Western reader. But Narayan describes the orthodoxy, without taking sides--he neither condemns nor defends. One can certainly read this convoluted description of marriage customs as an instance of Narayan's subtle irony. However, his mind seems primarily to focus on the passage of his characters through the mundane toward the transcendent.

What does remain clear throughout the episode is Chandran's immature and unrealistic sense of his own liberation and the way to achieve it. He supposes that he can acquire anything in life merely by asserting or wishing it, as we infer from the conversation between Chandran and his mother:
"I don't care. I shall marry this girl and no one else."

"But how are you sure they are prepared to give their daughter to you?"

"They will have to."

"Extraordinary! Do you think marriage is a child's game? We don't know anything about them, who they are, what they are, what they are worth, if the stars and the other things are all right, and above all, whether they are prepared to marry their girl at all. . . ."

"They will have to. I hear that this season she will be married because she is getting on for sixteen." (The Bachelor of Arts, 69)

According to tradition, the bride's party has to take the initiative in any marriage proposal. Yet Chandran's parents, not wishing to see their son unhappy, try to work matters out through Ganapathri Sastrigal, who is the match-maker in general to a few important families in Malgudi. This gentleman, after his retirement, has settled down as a "general adviser, officiating priest at rituals, and a match-maker" (The Bachelor of Arts, 73). Chandran's mother collects some general favorable information on Malathi's family. Soon the match-maker is on a mission to move the bride's family to take the initiative in a proposal for an alliance with Chandran's family. Most of the apprehensions of Chandran's mother vanish on hearing from the match-maker the following day more details about the family:

"She is a smart girl; stands very tall, and has a good figure. . . . has just completed her fourteenth year. . . . He [Malathi's father] is a very good fellow. He showed to me the regard due to my age, and due to me for my friendship with his father and his uncles. . . . He asked me to secure a bridegroom [for his daughter]."
I suggested two or three others and then your son [Chandran]. I may tell you that he thinks that he will be extraordinarily blessed if he can secure an alliance with your family. He feels you may not stoop to his status."

"Status! Status!" Chandran's mother exclaimed. "What I would personally care for most in any alliance would be character and integrity." (The Bachelor of Arts, 76-77)

In any arranged marriage, the parents of the bride, or the bridegroom especially, scrutinize many details about the other party. Chandran's mother is a little disappointed on hearing the amount the bride's parents can afford to spend on their daughter, yet she doesn't make it a big issue. The scrutiny she makes, regarding the dowry or the amount they spend on Malathi or other details, is done for the wellbeing of her son. Apart from fearing remarks which the family may incur from their community, any mother in the genuine Indian tradition pays very serious attention to all the minute details in selecting a girl for her son, because the marriage extends and affects many generations to follow. The selection of a girl counts not only for the material well being but for the spiritual ascent and collective transcendence as well.

Having won the assent of Chandran's parents, the matchmaker must procure Malathi's horoscope in order to compare it with Chandran's, though Chandran's father seems to have no faith in the horoscopes. Yet horoscopes cannot be dispensed with, so the match-maker's mission continues.

Chandran's disposition during all this procedure is an
anxious one, and he prays to God to bless all the endeavors: "As he sauntered in front of her [Malathi's] house, Chandran would often ask God when His grace would bend low so that Chandran might cease to be a man on the street and stride into the house as a son-in-law" (The Bachelor of Arts, 79). Chandran rages when the other party delays in sending the horoscope of Malathi. His impatience impels him to compromise any custom in order to rush through the marriage. But his mother tells him that "as long as she lived she would insist on respecting old customs," and therefore, she advises him to wait till the bride's party responds. The daily debate between him and his mother does not help his infatuated mind. Hence, he raves: "To the dust-pot with your silly customs..." As typical adolescents, Chandran and his friend Mohan project their irritation and rebellion on tradition and custom: "'Why should we be cud-gelled and nose-led by our elders?' Chandran asked indignantly... 'Why can't we be allowed to arrange our lives as we please? Why can't they leave us to rise or sink in our own ideals?'' (The Bachelor of Arts, 70-71). It might seem odd, at least to a Western reader, to characterize Chandran's language and behavior as mundane. Yet here, as in Albert Mission College, Chandran does nothing initially to transcend his circumstances or bring others to a new understanding of theirs.

Chandran's restlessness in the college as well as home
is aroused by his egocentricity. His anger over the college principal and system of education, and his irritation over the marriage customs and traditions arise mainly because they hinder the immediate satiation of his fantasies.

Chandran is a typical adolescent. Any boy of his age undergoes inevitable struggle and pain before he can be liberated of normal, yet mundane, entrapments and emotional imbalances. In such a situation, authorities, the discipline of school and society, and any advice that tries to liberate him appear as the most unwelcome and hostile factors in his life.

Despite all efforts, the horoscopes fail to match. Since Malathi's father is serious about horoscopes, he expresses his regret to settle the marriage through a polite letter to Chandran's father: "... This is not a matter in which we can take risks. It is a matter of life and death to a girl [Malathi]. Mars has never been known to spare. He [Mars] kills.'" According to the details in Chandran's horoscope, "'the potency of Mars lasts very nearly till the boy's [Chandran's] twenty-fifth year'" (The Bachelor of Arts, 89). Now Chandran tries to suggest to his father: "'I am nearly twenty-three now. I shall be twenty-five very soon. Why don't you tell them that I will wait till my twenty-fifth year; let them also wait for two years. Let us come to an understanding with them" (The Bachelor of Arts, 90). After a few days, when Chandran hears nothing from the
elders, he composes a letter to Malathi:

He guarded against making it a love letter. It was, according to Chandran's belief, a simple, matter-of-fact piece of writing. It only contained an account of his love for her. It explained to her the difficulty in the horoscope, and asked her if she was prepared to wait for him for two years. Let her write a single word "Yes" or "No" on a piece of paper and post it to him. He enclosed a stamped addressed envelope for a reply. (The Bachelor of Arts, 90)

He tries to deliver the letter to Malathi through Mohan. But before the letter reaches Malathi, she is betrothed to another bridegroom. To Chandran's great disappointment and anger, the Eastern custom prevails. Chandran's egocentricity is quite obvious. While appearing to wage a campaign for the Western view, that he ought to be allowed to marry the girl he loves, he never even considers the Western requirement that the girl be interested in him, so self-deluded is he in his rebellion--and consequently ineffectual.

Unable to live with the reality at Malgudi, Chandran escapes into another world--the city of Madras. He imagines that this cosmopolitan city may ease his troubled mind. But the adventures at Madras in part three of the book, instead of providing an escape from reality, serve as an eye opener:

Next morning, as the train steamed into the Madras Egmore Station, Chandran, watching through the window of his compartment, saw in the crowd on the platform his uncle's son. Chandran understood that the other was there to receive him, and quickly withdrew his head into the compartment. The moment the train halted, Chandran pushed aside his bag and hold-all into the hands of a porter, and hurried off the platform. Outside a jutka driver greeted him and invited him to get into his carriage. Chandran got in and said: "Drive to the hotel."
The man at the table pressed a bell; a servant appeared. The man said: "Room Three, upstairs," and he gave him a key. The servant lifted the hold-all and the bag and disappeared. Chandran stood hesitating, not knowing what he was expected to do.

"The advance," said the man at the table.

"How much?" Chandran asked, wishing that the people of Madras were more human; they were so mechanical and impersonal; the porter at the station had behaved as if he were blind, deaf, and mute; now this hotel man would not even look at his guest; these fellows did not simply care what happened to you after they had received your money; the jutka man had departed promptly after he received the rupee, not uttering a single word... Chandran had a feeling of being neglected. (The Bachelor of Arts, 95)

Chandran wants to keep away from his household clan—hence, he avoids his uncle's son at the station. His fear may be that his stay at his uncle's house in that big city can curtail his free movements. But he experiences a mechanical universe in Madras. Here, one may notice the urban-rural contrast. Chandran experiences for the first time such impersonal behavior among people whose fast life minimizes personal care and concern in order to allow more time to make their living. The same Chandran who, while in Malgudi, accused Malgudi of its orthodoxy and backwardness, now finds the impersonal relationships in Madras, a modern city, quite disgusting.

In the same hotel, Kailas, a middle-aged rake, meets Chandran. This new acquaintance, as Chandran learns, is a compound of "whisky and prostitute," who introduces Chandran to the "liberated" (licentious) life style of the city.
Thus, he escapes from Malgudi to Madras, and prefers a hotel to his uncle's house with thoughts of enjoying total freedom and modernity. Yet Chandran is imbued in his subconscious with certain traditional values which guide him tenaciously to stay away from alcohol and brothels in this huge city. The urban environment is somehow always associated with imported Western customs and values, which again mostly appear mundane. Here too, some may be prone to critique Narayan as a conservative, trying to portray Malgudi as a perennial refuge from the evils of the city. It is not that Narayan urges his readers to keep away from the pollution of Westernized cities, just as he makes no argument against arranged marriage. He presents the problems and struggles as they are, whether in the small, provincial town or the metropolis. But whatever the problems be, only transcending the mundane matters, and the other differences such as urban-rural, traditional-modern, and East and West recede to the background. This is Narayan's genius: with a characteristic blend of compassion and detachment he can portray with equal irony and even humor the convoluted marriage customs of Malgudi or the equally complex rites of urban life.

After leaving Kailas at a prostitute's house, thus escaping from Kailas, Chandran sits on a pavement in that big city:

He felt very homesick. He wondered if there was any train which would take him back to Malgudi that very
night. He felt that he had left home years ago, and not on the previous evening. The thought of Malgudi was very sweet. He would walk to Lawley Extension, to his house, to his room, and sleep on his cot snugly. He lulled his mind with this vision for sometime. It was not long before his searching mind put to him the question why he was wandering about the streets of a strange city, leaving his delightful heaven? The answer brought a medley of memories . . .

(The Bachelor of Arts, 101-102)

Chandran's notion of urbanity and modernity changes after a day's experience. Now he remembers his dear ones in the traditional background, Malgudi. The very thought of Malgudi, a "delightful heaven," pleases him. Yet, his anger still lingers when he recalls the last few weeks, and the agony he underwent, which he still attributes to Malgudi's orthodoxy and his parents' lack of sympathy.

Hence, despite the troubles in the new environment, Chandran decides not to return to Malgudi, lest he should be reminded of Malathi and his former infatuations everywhere in that little town. Chandran's loneliness and alienation commence in this phase. He feels he belongs nowhere: "What did it matter where he lived? He was like a sanyasi. Why 'like'? He was a sanyasi, the simplest solution. Shave the head, dye the clothes in ochre, and you were dead for aught the world cared" (The Bachelor of Arts, 102).

Disappointed in everything, and all dreams shattered, Chandran takes the guise of a sanyasi, a sage: "His dress and appearance, the shaven pate and the ochre loin cloth, declared him now and henceforth to be a sanyasi--one who had renounced the world and was untouched by its joys and sor-
rows" (The Bachelor of Arts, 107). But Chandran's inner disposition remains unaltered, since his "renunciation was a revenge on society, circumstances, and perhaps, too, on destiny":

He was different from the usual sanyasi. . . . Others may renounce the world with a spiritual motive or purpose. Renunciation may be to them a means to attain peace or may be peace itself. . . . But Chandran's renunciation was not of that kind. It was an alternative to suicide. Suicide he would have committed but for its social stigma. Perhaps he lacked the barest physical courage that was necessary for it. He was a sanyasi because it pleased him to mortify his flesh. (The Bachelor of Arts, 108)

This "role of a wandering holy-man" Walsh calls "a form of mild and painless suicide fitted to his [Chandran's] anguished, timid spirit" (1982, 40).

After wandering for about eight months, Chandran halts in a village named Koopal in Sainad district in order to rest his tired legs and body. When he wakes up after a short nap, to his great wonder he sees some villagers standing around him. These simple rustics, in contrast to the indifferent city and its dwellers, unfold a new dimension in him: "Chandran's migration from Malgudi to Koopal via Madras is the overt, physical expression of an important inner movement" (Fernando 1986, 83). His pretence as a mute ascetic with a "vow of silence" collects a host of devotees, who come to see and worship Chandran.

The villagers, "innocent and unsophisticated," take Chandran's "ascetic's make-up at its face value" (The Bachelor of Arts, 110), bring gifts and offerings--milk and
fruits and food—with great reverence and love. Chandran attains his high point of awareness when he sees these offerings and gifts:

The sight of the gifts sent a spear through his heart. He felt a cad, a fraud, and a confidence trickster. These were gifts for a counterfeit exchange. He wished that he deserved their faith in him. The sight of the gifts made him unhappy. He ate some fruits and drank a little milk with the greatest self deprecation.

Sitting in the dark, he subjected his soul to a remorseless vivisection. From the moment he had donned the ochre cloth to the present, he had been living on charity, charity given in mistake, given on the face value of a counterfeit. He had been humbugging through life. *(The Bachelor of Arts, 111)*

It is really amazing to observe that despite "vivisection," "self-deprecation," and remorse, the mundane ego is so self-protective as to blame every factor other than self for the disaster:

He sought an answer to the question why he had come to this degradation. He was in no mood for self deception, and so he found the answer in the words "Malathi" and "Love." The former had brought him to this state. He had deserted his parents, who had spent on him all their love, care and savings. . . . The more he reflected on this, the greater became his anger with Malathi. It was a silly infatuation. And for the sake of her memory he had come to this. He railed against that memory, against love. There was no such thing; a foolish literary notion. . . . And driven by a nonexistent thing he had become a deserter and a counterfeit. *(The Bachelor of Arts, 111-112)*

Gnawed at by such thoughts, Chandran leaves the village without anyone's knowledge, and reaches home at Malgudi with the help of the post master. Chandran does not pray to the gods as Swami does. He works out a practical method to get
out of this situation. With great difficulty he reaches a post office and faces humiliation when he presents his problem: "The postmaster looked at Chandran suspiciously. Too many English speaking sanyasis were about the place now, offering to tell the future, and leaving their hosts minus a rupee or two at the end" (The Bachelor of Arts, 113). The whole scene at Koopal is one of awakening and liberation. Adolescent fantasy has led him to illusion, one-sided ecstasy, rebellion against elders and society, and finally an escape into another world.

On reaching home Chandran settles down "to a life of quiet and sobriety. He felt that his greatest striving ought to be for a life freed from distracting illusions and hysterics . . . . He decided not to give his mind a moment of freedom" (The Bachelor of Arts, 123-124). With "a desperate concentration," he endeavors, feverishly and unsparingly, to train his mind. Admiring his father's magnanimity, "for admitting as causes of wasted time late schooling and typhoid, and leaving out of account the vagrant eight months, but for which he would have been in England already," Chandran resolves to compensate for all wasted time "by doing something really great in England" (The Bachelor of Arts, 125). Soon, however, he has second thoughts about his study abroad: "He wondered if his comfort from the thought of going to England soon was not another illusion, and if it would not be super-parasitic of him" (The Bachelor
of Arts, 126). One may wonder whether Chandran is deceiving himself again. Narayan never allows us to know, since Chandran does ultimately decide to find his liberation in the humble life of Malgudi. What we do know is that Chandran has, at this point, decided that liberation is not to be found in running away, whether to Madras or England or a country village.

The entire episode highlights the different phases of transcendence. Chandran’s dissatisfaction and restlessness as an adolescent with a myopic vision, mistaking licentiousness for liberation are quite normal—the mundane. His escape into a city is actually an entry into a totally different world, and the adventures therein stun him. But escape from the city to a village, and the negative ventures as a mute ascetic in saffron robes, though apparently religious, offer no pleasant feelings. While the permissiveness of the city shocks him, the extreme simplicity of the villagers at Koopal increases his sense of guilt. Although negative, the experiences do lead him to a spiritual discovery, which eventually helps him to go beyond his limits—to transcend. It is not hard to see the obvious enrichment of this transcendence in his decision to confess to the postmaster and to accept his help despite humiliations—very uncharacteristic of the adolescent Chandran. On his return home, his transcendence widens, deepens, and extends throughout Malgudi—he awakens and liberates Malgudi to a wider
vision, to the beauty and muddle in life on a global level.

Chandran's mundane entanglements of the past, and his subsequent liberation, now caution him against glamorous visions. Hence, he probes into the depth of reality. On hearing from his friend, Mohan, about the newspaper agency for the Daily Messenger in Malgudi itself, he doesn't accept the idea all at once. He researches the prospects of the job. Undoubtedly, the newspaper agency is less glamorous than a doctorate from England. His father, generous and noble as a father could be, still seeks official information for Chandran's higher studies in England. Yet Chandran considers the two key factors, finance and time, in the project of his higher studies, and prefers to take up the job of a news agent in Malgudi itself. When his father dismisses Chandran's worry about the expenses or the finances, Chandran reasons out: "Getting a distinction and coming back [from England] and securing a suitable appointment, all these seem to be a gamble" (The Bachelor of Arts, 127). Chandran takes life seriously, wishing not to gamble with it any more. Hence, he exquisitely presents facts and figures about the population and literacy of Malgudi, and details about how one can increase the circulation and expand the business by canvassing. His father again doesn't stand in the way of his son's wishes, yet makes inquiries about the Daily Messenger.

Narayan started his career as a journalist. Jour-
nalism and newspapers in the preindependent era had wide scope since they served as vehicles to instil patriotism, and to spread Gandhian ideologies. Himself a journalist, Narayan gives his protagonist, Chandran a less creative job, as manager of a news agency.

While Chandran's father makes many inquiries regarding the newspaper, Chandran waits. The same Chandran who was irritable a few months ago when his propositions were questioned now says to himself: "'I have no business to hustle and harass my father. He has every right to wait and delay . . . '" (The Bachelor of Arts, 129). On hearing many favorable opinions about the newspaper, the Daily Messenger, Chandran's father gives the green light. Chandran proceeds to Madras to obtain the paper agency. His trip there, and his stay in that big city this time with his uncle's family, are quite a contrast with his former adventures.

In Madras, Chandran is engaged in his business—interviews with the top people of the newspaper. His intelligent and dynamic responses during the interview with the top man reveal his responsibility, seriousness, and interest in the job:

"Why do you want to work for our paper?"

"Because I like it, sir."

"Which, the paper or the agency?"

"Both," said Chandran.

"Are you confident of sending up the circulation if you are given a district?"
"Yes, sir."

"By how much?"

Chandran quoted 5,000, and explained the figures with reference to the area of Malgudi, its literate population, and the number of people who could spend an anna a day.

"That's a fair offer," said Murugesam.

The bald man said with a dry smile: "It is good to be optimistic."

"Optimistic or not, you must give him a fair trial," said Murugesam. (The Bachelor of Arts, 136-137)

After obtaining a chance to take up the agency, and to prove his efficiency, Chandran returns to Malgudi, rents a small room and "plunged himself in work."

The whole episode unravels the secret of liberation through a mundane item such as a news agency. Chandran, who had been branding Malgudi for its conservatism and tradition, who left Malgudi in order to see the world, now as an experienced traveller, brings the world to Malgudi through the newspapers. The bulletins in his office reflect his hopes:

"It is auspicious to wake to the thud of a paper dropped on the floor; and we are prepared to give you this auspicious start every morning by bringing the D. M. to your house and pushing it through your front window. It has at its command all the news services in the world, so that you will find in it a Municipal Council resolution in Malgudi as well as a political assassination in Iceland, reported accurately and quickly. The mark of culture is wide information; and the D. M. will give you politics, economics, sports, literature; and its magazine supplement covers all the other branches of human knowledge."

...
"As a son of the Motherland it is your duty to subscribe to the D. M. With every anna that you pay, you support the anaemic child, Indian Industry. You must contribute your mite for the economic and political salvation of our country." (The Bachelor of Arts, 140-141)

Besides propagandizing for a wider and deeper world view among Malgudians, through advertisements and bulletins about the Daily Messenger, Chandran also widens and deepens his interpersonal relationships by meeting in person people such as his former professors and authorities of his alma mater, Albert Mission College, in order to persuade them to buy his paper. Thus, he widens the horizon of Malgudi, attuning it to modernity and global vision. The unsuccessful mundane adventures of Chandran's past now serve as tools for transcendence, and are incorporated in the process. Liberation, never a solitary process, now appears in Malgudi as a collective endeavour through the agency and agent of the Daily Messenger. The town will be led from ignorance to knowledge, from darkness to light, or so Chandran hopes, through the newspaper. The town will soon awaken to realize the conditions of the world, to enjoy brotherhood with a better perspective. Chandran's newspaper, the media of communication available at Malgudi, will bring the West to the East. Malgudi will know from Chandran's Daily Messenger not only about Malgudi events, but about global events as well. Undoubtedly, the newspaper will bring Western ideas and problems too. Yet Malgudians are not to be shut off from problems, but are to be encouraged to assimilate the best of
East and West, and to grow. The most remarkable part about the entire event is the dynamism with which Chandran lives through the process, and persuades others to such a liberation through purely mundane items.

Once Chandran settles in this new job, his parents consider helping him to settle in his life, too. One day his father tells him about many proposals from many brides' parties who wish to have Chandran as their bridegroom. Chandran's dispositions are altered now. The liberated Chandran listens to his parents. This need not be mistaken for blind obedience or surrender, because Chandran now with due maturation is disposed to be well aware of his own potential as well as that of his parents. He respects and values his parents' discretion and wisdom. Yet with full freedom to decide on his own, he consents to accompany his mother by train to Talapur, a nearby place, to see the would-be-bride, Susila. Susila's beauty, modesty and other accomplishments please him. When they return, "For the rest of the journey the music of the word 'Susila' rang in his ears" (The Bachelor of Arts, 162). His mother has to mediate between his over-enthusiasm and his poise. The analysis of Chandran's "struggle to extricate himself from the habitual, dreamy automatism of the past" is portrayed by Narayan with "an affectionately ridiculing eye" (Walsh 1982, 38).

In any case, Chandran's love for his new bride, Susila, is genuine. After the usual formalities, the families of the
bride and groom fix an auspicious day for Chandran's marriage with Susila at Talapur. He feels the dynamism of love and life. Living now in a world in which he has never lived before, Chandran is able to appreciate his family and everything in Malgudi, and to discover and enjoy his strength and freedom.

When Chandran is busy sending wedding invitations to his friends, a train of memories flashes like snapshots before his eyes, and he muses:

Evenings and evenings ago; Chandran, Mohan, and Veeraswami, Malathi evenings; mad days. . . . There was radiance about Susila that was lacking in Malathi. . . . No, no. He checked himself this time; it was very unfair to compare and decry; it was a very vile thing to do. He told himself that he was doing it only out of spite. . . . Poor Malathi! For the first time he was able to view her as a sister in a distant town. Poor girl, she had her points. Of course, Susila was different. (The Bachelor of Arts, 164)

Many readers, especially Western readers, may consider Chandran's change in outlook as a merely psychological passage to maturity. But the distinction between "psychological" and "spiritual" is unwieldy. The interactions between the mundane and the transcendent, if handled well, enhance an integration—a wholeness, which in turn effects liberation. Chandran has achieved an integration, a wholeness, and consequently a liberation through an acceptance of work and love in the context of a Hindu culture that now, despite many misgivings and missteps, finally makes sense to him.

After their marriage, Susila has to stay in her
parents' place for a year in order to complete her studies. Chandran returns to Malgudi a new man, "his mind full of Susila, the fragrance of jasmine and sandal paste . . . " *(The Bachelor of Arts, 164).* Chandran and Susila span the intervening distance by affectionate letters. Now, his friend, Mohan, has to endure monologues from Chandran about her letters. One day, on finding Chandran in a depressed mood, Mohan learns on enquiry that Susila hasn't written to Chandran for six days. He worries about her health and decides to make a trip to Talapur to see her. The novel is inconclusive, since we last see Chandran pedalling away from his office with a worried mind. Whether she is seriously ill, or even ill, we do not know.

Ideologists may brand Chandran or his creator Narayan as "opportunists," succumbing to capitalism and conservatism without proper courage to rise above these issues. What is noteworthy in Chandran is that through mundane items--arranged marriage, traditional formalities, and an ordinary career in a news agency--he transcends to a life of love and poise. This transcendence is not planned in advance, nor is it attained only through rigorous disciplined ways, sometimes very weird ones, as Westerners are prone to think, when they think of India at all. They are not accidental either. Whether it be the Western game of cricket or the Indian traditional arranged marriage, these external agencies have in them the seeds of transcendence. In fact, the
mundane elements get incorporated into the transcendent. The magic moments occur any time, not necessarily always only through rigorous discipline or mysticism. In the case of Chandran, marriage invigorates his life, and his almost-dead romantic life resurrects with full energy.

Swami and Chandran in their academic and domestic circles are realistic portrayals of Indian boy and adolescent in an Indian society. The ideological bent in many readers may cause them to try to dissect these two novels from the socio-cultural point of view according to the realistic patterns in them. They may even try to read the novels as Narayan's way of informing the non-Indian reader on extended families, horoscopes, arranged marriages, and Indian homes. They are there. But Narayan's sense of realism is greater and more interesting than the standard realistic tradition as he unfolds the transcendent and universal layers through the mundane and local lives of his characters. These youngsters' experiences in life, and their achievements at the end lead to something more exciting--call it liberation or transcendence--that elevates them to more than the typical realistic character. In any novel of Narayan, though there are problems presented as arising from modernization and tradition or East and West, yet, these differences recede, since transcendence, the only issue that matters, gains pre-eminence.

Throughout the pages of *The Bachelor of Arts*, Narayan
presents an adolescent who journeys through the inevitable mundane-transcendent interactions. Given a comfortable home, understanding and loving parents, Chandran still feels rebellious, irritable, and restless. He blames tradition as the root of the problem. An escape from tradition into modernity or ascetic renunciation doesn't solve the problem. When he transcends with the help of his parents, relatives, and friends, he experiences a new collective as well as individual strength in liberation—the inter-personal relations are vitalized. Chandran's transcendence at this stage does not assure him of a smooth life hereafter free of struggle and pain. On the contrary, he acquires a new awareness of life and dynamism only to continue working on this process of transcendence.

There is no real need to insist on Chandran's degree of transcendence in this novel. In the light of Chandran's efforts to reject or undermine his culture, which is a religious culture, one cannot deny that he has achieved a fulfillment that could rightly be called liberation or transcendence. Again, Chandran has gone through the stages that any major character in a Narayan novel typically goes through on the way to transcendence, and has made his way—in a pattern typical of Narayan's fiction—through the perennial process of the transcendent. The Bachelor of Arts does fit the recurrent pattern that Narayan takes up again and again, most notably in The English Teacher and The
Guide, where spiritual adventures much more explicit, more
detailed, and more complex than those of Swami and Chandran
come under close scrutiny. Chandran's dissatisfaction and
egocentricity are obvious throughout the novel. He actually
steps into a radically different world through his negative
experiences in Madras and Koopal—a world of urban indif­
ference and licentiousness in Madras, and a world of remorse
under the guise of a fake sanyasi at Koopal. The negative
experiences, in contrast to the happy and thrilling ones in
the case of Swami and companions at Rajam's house, awaken
Chandran to a liberation, a spiritual discovery, which he
courageously externalizes in the events that follow the
Koopal episode. This is also in contrast to the "mundane"
freedom he enjoys after his college days while rambling
along the banks of Sarayu. Without any visionary experience
or attaining the stage of nirvana, Chandran is able to real­
ize his potential to be fully human and fully alive. He
also endeavors to bring his spiritual and transcendent ex­
perience to bear upon the "mundane" world around him through
his family life and profession at Malgudi. Yet Chandran has
to struggle continuously, because, the process of transcen­
dence never terminates in one's life term—it is perennial.
CHAPTER III

MATURE TRANSCENDENCE: THE ENGLISH TEACHER

While the recurrent theme in all of Narayan’s novels is the striving toward liberation or transcendence, The English Teacher (1945) and The Guide (1958) provide the widest scope for analysis, as the processes of liberation are more explicit and complex than in the other novels.

The discussion in this chapter will focus on profession and family life. The English Teacher clearly defines these two divisions, whereas Raju in The Guide calls into question the traditional notions of family life and profession. Yet it is all the more interesting to see how the human potential adjusts to and struggles within different occupations and unexpected human relationships to achieve liberation amidst turmoil.

Swami and Friends and The Bachelor of Arts contain elements of autobiography, but The English Teacher is more than autobiographical—it is the outpouring of Narayan through Krishna. An excerpt from Dr. Paul Brunton’s letter of condolence to Narayan after the demise of his wife amplifies this idea: "You will write a book which is within you, all ready now, and it is bound to come out sooner or later when you give yourself a chance to write" (qtd. in Narayan 1974, 135-136). Narayan says about The English Teacher:

More than any other book, The English Teacher is
autobiographical in content, very little part of it being fiction. The "English Teacher" of the novel, Krishna, is a fictional character in the fictional city of Malgudi; but he goes through the same experience I had gone through, and he calls his wife Susila, and the child is Leela instead of Hema. The toll that typhoid took and all the desolation that followed, with a child to look after, and the psychic adjustments, are based on my own experience. The book falls into two parts—one is domestic life and the other half is "spiritual." (1974, 134-135)

Krishna's life is the growth of a man to maturity amidst diverse trials in life, in the end founding a transcendent home in this life itself. While little Swami and Chandran, unable to face reality, run away from home (and eventually return to it), Krishna transcends the mundane without escaping the milieu.

The first of the two episodes in the novel, narrated by the male protagonist Krishna, deals with Krishna's career as a college teacher in the department of English, the joyful domestic life with his wife Susila and little daughter Leela, and the premature death of Susila from typhoid. The second treats of the despair and spiritual catharsis that Krishna passes through to attain liberation, tranquility, and a sense of direction in a journey through the mundane to the transcendent.

Harrex commends The English Teacher as "an intimately personal account of a man's quest for a positive philosophy of life and his attainment of spiritual maturity" (1968, 53). The novel, amidst all the sympathetic pictures of Indian domestic life, "introduces a mystical element that is
almost unknown in English fiction" (qtd. in Pontes 1983, 82).

The book opens with Krishna's self-analysis and self-criticism: "What was wrong with me? I couldn't say, some sort of vague disaffection, a self rebellion I might call it... a sense of something missing (The English Teacher, 1). However, the disaffection, self rebellion, and the sense of something missing stimulate a move toward liberation.

Krishna, though now a husband, father, and also a teacher, still has some of the qualities of Chandran (The Bachelor of Arts). His immediate boss, Gajapathy, now an English Professor and colleague, has to remind Krishna at times: "You haven't yet dropped the frivolous habits of your college days, Krishna. . . . You must cultivate a little more seriousness of outlook" (The English Teacher, 14).

The picture we get of Krishna in the first part of the novel regarding his profession is that of a dissatisfied teacher, whose stereotyped task is "admonishing, cajoling and brow-beating a few hundred boys of Albert Mission College so that they might mug up Shakespeare and Milton and secure high marks and save me adverse remarks from my chiefs at the end of the year" (The English Teacher, 1). Krishna's relations in the college hostel are formal, and work in the college appears tedious and unfulfilling. On account of his irritation, Krishna at times goes unprepared to his classes:
I had four hours of teaching to do that day. *Lear* for the Junior B.A. Class, a composition for the Senior Arts; detailed prose and poetry for other classes. Four periods of continuous work and I hadn't prepared even a page of lecture. I went five minutes late to the class, and I could dawdle over the attendance for a quarter of an hour. (*The English Teacher*, 8)

Krishna is not better than Swami or Chandran in his aversion to school. Swami hates the home-work and discipline.

Chandran hates the exams and the educational milieu.

Krishna, the teacher, is mature enough to realize the incongruities of the educational system, yet he drags on.

Teachers, especially college teachers, are revered in India, as indicated by the man who rents his house to Krishna: "'College teacher!' He gave a salute with both hands and said, 'I revere college teachers, our Gurus. Meritorious deeds in previous births make them gurus in this life. I'm so happy . . .'" (*The English Teacher*, 25). One of the Tamil lessons and rhymes for infant standards, from the aphorisms of the Tamil poetess Avvaiyar, gives this order of hierarchy for paying respects: matha (mother), pitha (father), guru (teacher) and deivam (God). While matha and pitha cause our physical birth, it is the guru who awakens us to the potentials and marvels within us and outside us--thus initiating us into a higher life of constant discovery: hence, the position of guru precedes that of God. Another Tamil aphorism equates the guru with God: "One who initiates to knowledge is God." The ideals of transcendent learning and teaching are contained in the role
of a guru. The guru is a model to the student: "an abiding witness to the things of the spirit" (Radhakrishnan 1969, 504).

However, few professional teachers in Malgudi institutions fulfill this role. The system of education with its curricula and examinations reduces the academic freedom of the students and inhibits their growth from the mundane to the transcendent. Krishna dislikes the current system of education and feels that it seriously hampers independence of mind and spirit: "This education had reduced us to a nation of morons; we were strangers to our own culture and camp followers of another culture, feeding on leavings and garbage" (The English Teacher, 205).

Before the arrival of the British, the Indian system of education emphasized personal contact between the teacher and taught, training the pupil in obedience, hard work, and reflection, and guiding him "into the higher life of the spirit" (Radhakrishnan 1969, 504). The word upanishad literally means "to sit near to," and it is supposed to indicate the disciple sitting at the feet of the master. The Upanishads are the discourses of the master to the disciple. They are intended to create and develop a mystical experience. Education is thus an interior experience and the discovery of the potential deep within. Education also is thus a liberation from ignorance to knowledge of self, from darkness to illumination.
So Krishna laments: "What tie was there between me [teacher] and them [the taught]? Did I absorb their personalities as did the old masters and merge them in mine?" (The English Teacher, 9). Education in Malgudi academic institutions appears to be the mere passing of information, and studentship doesn't seem to be a "life in spirit."

Moreover, Krishna and his colleagues do not seem to enjoy a very cordial relationship with the administrator. The British principal, Mr. Brown, maintains a safe distance from things native—even languages. Brown is rigorous in protecting the purity of English spelling. One day after meeting with this British principal, the staff members in the English department are outraged over Brown's remarks on the standard of English in the college, especially the students' skill in spelling. On his way back that evening, Krishna drives home the point to Gajapathy: "'Let us be fair. Ask Mr. Brown if he can say in any of the two hundred Indian languages, "The cat chases the rat." He has spent thirty years in India'" (The English Teacher, 3).

The East, Brown seems to believe, should be left alone, lest free movement with the people and things of the East should pollute the West. It appears that owing to his racial snobbery, Brown fails to teach as well as to learn. Brown resembles Ebenezar, the scripture teacher of Swami, in being unliberated from ignorance. Brown cripples his administration and hinders his staff from learning anything of
lasting value from his acquaintance. However, education is a life-long process, and it is not confined to the class room, as we see in Swami and Friends, where little Rajam uses his personal superiority and material assets to educate and liberate Swami and his friends at Malgudi, though his sojourn is short; and again in The Bachelor of Arts, where Chandran's education hardly begins till his college career is ended. Similarly, Krishna's education occurs largely in his relationship with his wife, Susila.

Krishna has been living in the college hostel, because his wife Susila has been living with her parents since her confinement. When their baby girl, Leela, is a few months old, they are ready to join Krishna in Malgudi. While his profession as a college teacher and life in the college milieu prove a drudgery, Krishna's family life is an arcadia. "Narayan in this novel," Walsh aptly states, "is the poet of Indian domestic life . . ." (1982, 51).

As expected, Krishna one day receives a letter from his father-in-law, saying that he is planning to bring Krishna's wife Susila, and their baby Leela to Malgudi. Hence, after renting a house, Krishna moves out of the college hostel. His mother arrives early in order to help them:

My mother arrived from the village with a sack full of vessels, and helped to make up the house for me. She was stocking the store-room and the kitchen . . . . She worked far into the night arranging and rearranging the kitchen and the store. At night she sat down with me on the veranda and talked of her house-keeping philoso-
As an authority on "house-keeping," Krishna's mother carefully arranges Krishna's new home. She also teaches Susila her secrets in this age-old art. Susila too proves herself a good learner, though prior to her marriage her knowledge of kitchen and home had been almost nil. Being the only daughter of her parents, her leisure was spent more in fine arts than in household arts. Yet, her apprenticeship under her mother-in-law begins soon after her marriage, and before she joins Krishna in Malgudi:

... after my marriage my mother kept her in the village and trained her up in house-keeping. My wife had picked up many sensible points in cooking and household economy, and her parents were tremendously impressed with her attainments when she next visited them. They were thrilled beyond words and remarked when I went there, "We are so happy, Susila has such a fine house for her training. Every girl on earth should be made to pass through your mother's hands..." which, when I conveyed it to my mother, pleased her. (The English Teacher, 29)

Once Susila and the baby are brought home, Krishna's mother is completely absorbed with her grand-daughter. Here, the three generations meet, and the wisdom of the past is handed over, not through formal classroom theories and exams, but through love and care. Susila is not only a good learner, but is also the guru to Krishna in every way from the moment she arrives. Krishna's boyish and immature behavior is obvious at the Malgudi railway station when Susila's father brings her with the baby to Malgudi:

I [Krishna] was pacing the little Malgudi railway station in great agitation. I had never known such
suspense before. She was certain to arrive with a lot of luggage, and the little child. How was all this to be transferred from the train to the platform? and the child must not be hurt. I made a mental note . . . (The English Teacher, 30)

In despair, Krishna wrings his hand and coaxes the porter to hurry: "I had offered him three times his usual wages to help me today" (The English Teacher, 31). Krishna runs behind the station master, "panting," and pleads: "My wife is arriving today with the infant. I thought she would require a lot of time in order to get down carefully" (The English Teacher, 32). In anxiety, he plans to delay the train if needed. He is beside himself with anxiety:

A bell sounded. . . . The engine appeared around the bend. A whirling blur of faces went past me as the train shot in and stopped. I hurried through the crowd, peering though the compartments. I saw my father-in-law struggling to get to the doorway. I ran up to his carriage. Through numerous people getting in and out, I saw her sitting serenely in her seat with the baby lying on her lap. "Only three minutes more!" I cried "Come out!" My father-in-law got down. . . .

"No time to be sitting down; give me the baby," I said. She merely smiled and said: "I will carry the baby down. . . ." She picked up the child and unconcernedly moved on. . . . All the things I wanted to say on this occasion were muddled and gone out of mind. I looked at her apprehensively till she was safely down on the platform, helped by her father. . . .

The mother and child stood beside the trunks piled up on the platform. I gazed on my wife fresh and beautiful, her hair shining, her dress without a wrinkle on it, and her face fresh with not a sign of fatigue. She wore her indigo-colored silk saree. I looked at her and whispered: "Once again in this saree, still so fond of it," as my father-in-law went back to the compartment to give a final look round. (The English Teacher, 33-34)

Krishna is completely absorbed in Susila and the baby;
hence, Susila gently reminds Krishna of her father: "'Father is coming down,' she said, hinting that I had neglected him and ought to welcome him with a little more ceremony" (The English Teacher, 34). After asking his father-in-law about the journey, Krishna drives the company home in a Victorian carriage. Here too Susila has to remind Krishna of the respect he should pay to his father-in-law. Krishna's liberation has begun, but as so often in Narayan's fiction, it begins with a lesson of calm and self-discipline in the face of mundane confusions and anxieties.

Once the family has settled in, Krishna learns the importance of order in that most mundane activity, shopping for groceries:

We sat down at my table to draw up the monthly budget and list of provisions. She tore off a sheet of note-paper, and wrote down a complete list -- from rice down to mustard. "I have written down the precise quantity, don't change anything as you did once." This was a reference to a slight change that I once attempted to make in her list. She had written down two seers of Bengal gram, but the National Provision Stores could not supply that quantity, and so the shopman suggested he would give half of it, and to make up the purchase, he doubled the quantity of jaggery. All done with my permission. But when I returned home with these, she saw the alterations and was completely upset. I found that there was an autocratic strain in her nature in these matters, and unsuspected depths of rage. "Why has he made these alterations?" she had asked, her face going red. "He didn't have enough of the other stuff," I replied, tired and fatigued by the shopping and on the point of irritability myself. "If he hasn't got a simple thing like Bengal gram, what sort of a shop has he?"

"Come and see it for yourself, if you like," I replied, going into my room. She muttered: "Why should it make you angry? I wonder!" I lay down on my canvas chair, determined to ignore her, and took out a book
. . . she pushed before me a glass goblet and said: "This can hold just half a visa of jaggery and not more; which is more than enough for our monthly use. If it is kept in any other place, ants swarm on it," she said. I now saw the logic of her indignation, and by the time our next shopping was done, she had induced me to change over to the Co-operative Stores. (The English Teacher, 39-41)

Something so mundane as shopping begins to establish a teaching role for Susila that gives her spiritual importance. Though not a liberated woman, she is moving both herself and Krishna toward liberation, in ways still unforeseen.

Again, Krishna sees her as an efficient finance minister at home:

On the tenth of every month, I came home, with ten-rupee notes bulging in an envelope, my monthly salary, and placed it in her hand. She was my cash-keeper. And what a ruthless accountant she seemed to be. In her hands, a hundred rupees seemed to do the work of two hundred, and all through the month she was able to give me money when I asked. When I handled my finances independently, after making a few routine savings and payments, I simply paid for whatever caught my eyes and paid off anyone who approached me, with the result that after the first ten days, I went about without money. Now it was in the hands of someone who seemed to understand perfectly where every rupee was going or should go, and managed them with a determined hand. (The English Teacher, 39)

Later in the novel the ordered calm and discipline which Susila brings into Krishna's life are essential to his spiritual liberation and transcendence. Without them he would collapse. But here, early in the novel, Susila's dedication to order and discipline seems nothing more than a young wife's determination to make a stable home. And perhaps it is nothing more. But yet with this begins the
Moreover, the order in Susila's life is explicitly religious, though she appears to make no distinction between her religious and secular life. This is typical of Indian tradition and culture, in which religion and daily life are synthesized, not compartmentalized. Both are a normal, everyday part of making a home for oneself and family:

An alcove at the end of the dining room served for a shrine. There on a pedestal she kept a few silver images of gods, and covered them with flowers; two small lamps were lit before them every morning. I often saw her standing there with the light in her face, her eyes closed and her lips lightly moving. I was usually amused to see her thus, and often asked what exactly it was that she repeated before the gods. Even when I mildly joked about it, "Oh! becoming a yogi!" she never tried to defend herself, but merely treated my references with the utmost indifference. She seemed to have a deep secret life. (The English Teacher, 37)

This is a tradition in most Indian Hindu homes. The daily activity of a household has in its agenda such prayers before the little shrine at home as Susila makes. In The Bachelor of Arts, the flower garden in the house is not merely for decoration. The chief reason for its maintenance is to provide flowers for the morning puja (ritual prayer) which Chandran's mother daily performs in their home shrine. Swami too, in Swami and Friends, prays in the puja room to have his boyish desires satisfied. Raju in The Guide sees in his very poor house a space set aside for the pictures of the deities before which his father mutters some mantras every morning before leaving for work.
Krishna, the narrator, stands aloof from the religious practices of his beloved wife, with few comments on them. The references to Susila's prayers are casual and few, but the reader may feel the impact of religion in the life of the characters: "The bizarre and strange gods of Forster's account, become, in Narayan's novels the familiar household deities, oblation to whom is part of the homely domestic routine" (Driesen 1977, 52).

Narayan recalls in My Dateless Diary, the words of an American reporter:

We have everything in the world, yet are unhappy. We as a nation are terribly bored; suffer from it, and so seek continuous forgetfulness in gadgets and so forth. Our suicide rate is increasing, our divorce rate is doubling. What do you think it is due to? What solution would you suggest?

"Meditation and withdrawal -- for about fifteen minutes a day" . . . In every Indian home we have a place called the Puja room or God's room, where the members of the family can generally withdraw and pray. Most Indians pray and meditate for at least a few minutes everyday, and it may be one of the reasons why, with all our poverty and struggle, we still survive, and are able to take a calm view of existence. I cannot say that we have any appreciable suicide rate in our country . . . " (1960, 48)

Casual though it may seem, a religious life such as Susila exemplifies clearly has the deepest possible impact for both the novel and the novelist.

Besides her altar and customary prayers at home, her religiosity permeates every minute of her life. For instance, on their way back home one day after looking at different new houses in Lawley Extension, Susila and Krishna
see a small, beautiful, newly-built temple along the road. Stone-pillared and stone-built temples of all sizes are common sights in India, and so is the variety of temple-goers with different levels of piety and religiosity. As indicated earlier, every inhabited area in India has its temple beside a river. Susila entreats Krishna to go with her into the temple for a moment of worship. They buy a package of offerings sold at the temple gate, and enter the temple. It is obvious that her decision to enter the temple is not preplanned, but is quite casual.

They place the offerings on the plate held by the temple priest near the sanctuary and wait for the ritual offering. Susila's composed and meditative mood in her prayer before the deity there outweighs the customary offerings and other formalities. Her deep faith is more eloquent than any ritual:

She brought together her palms and closed her eyes in prayer. . . . In this flickering light the image acquired strange shadows and seemed to stir, and make a movement to bless -- I watched my wife. She opened her eyes for a moment. They caught the light of the camphor flame, and shone with an unearthly brilliance. Her cheeks glowed, the rest of her person was lost in the shadows of the temple hall. Her lips were moving in prayer. I felt transported at the sight of it. (The English Teacher, 69-70)

Being deeply moved and elevated by the faith and the piety of his wife, Krishna gratefully acknowledges the gift of such a better half. The temple strengthens the human and spiritual bonds, and the sentiments of husband and wife.

The strength of this couple with all their occasional
bickerings and shortcomings springs from such deep medita-
tion of the spirit within. The visit to the temple is a
 casual one, but the sentiments aroused penetrate deep in
 their lives. Susila is not a fake guru, nor does she pose
 for her husband. She is just a simple housewife, but her
genuine silent prayer-life is more eloquent than any sermon,
and helps to effect the transcendence in Krishna's life. He
is strengthened by her physical and spiritual presence near
him. The very sight of her composure during their very
short time spent inside the temple "transports" him. This
is more than mere sensual bondage between a husband and
wife. This spiritual strength and respect serve as buttres-
ses in married life to safeguard men and women from any
storm that may apparently threaten to shatter their life and
commitments. She thus earns his respect and admiration
besides educating him. This is what is most sought after by
a good mother-in-law when she scrutinizes a bride for her
son in any Indian arranged-marriage--the woman's silent,
unobtrusive spiritual strength which can hold the family
together even under adverse conditions and situations.

Krishna's latent devotion, though it does not reach
the level of Susila's, gets manifested on occasion in his
love of nature and his love for Susila. He is aware of and
sensitive to the spiritual life of Susila, but he does not
appear very religious himself. Yet, as we later discover,
Susila is already a silent teacher, and continues to teach
beyond her own death. This silent education bears witness to the spirit of Susila, which enhances Krishna's transcendence.

In the domestic life of Krishna, a number of women characters cross the threshold, whereas in the college hostel and academic circle the absence of feminine influence is conspicuous. Hence, the domestic milieu offers multiple benefits:

[Krishna] rejoins the world of genuine response and human reality when he had been in danger, in the college and in the hostel, of drying up in a society of formal relationships, abstract preoccupations and waspish egotisms. Life now becomes present, actual, surrounding and supporting. (Walsh 1982, 53)

The women in the three novels, Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts, and The English Teacher represent a variety of human personalities. But they all play dynamic roles in the lives of the protagonists and family life. All compose the band of women who, often in mundane ways, advance the maturation and liberation of the principal characters. Swami’s grandmother passes on the religious tradition, while Chandran’s mother instructs him on family and social traditions. Krishna learns about the philosophy of house-keeping from his mother; Leela unveils to him the world of innocence and freedom, especially through her small school and her headmaster, who later in the novel deeply influences Krishna’s development. His mother-in-law’s world of love and faith is made known through her special prayers,
regular visits to the temple, and even her resort to exorcism with the help of a Hindu sanyasi.

Susila, however, excels over all other women as his mentor. Yet her role is so inconspicuous that the entire first half of the novel can be read, and often is read, merely as a richly beautiful portrayal of married life—something almost unknown in modern realistic fiction. Walsh sees past this feature of the novel to make the crucial point:

We see, too, in Susila the depth and strength of a girl of a simple traditional upbringing and habit of mind whose exquisite manners and deference to her husband go with the crispest clarity, conviction and self-respect. The more complete her relationship with Krishna, the more positive and independent her personality. Above all she possesses the serenity of psyche which seems so powerfully a part of the mature Indian sensibility, achieving a point of equilibrium between the unavoidable accommodations with, and the necessary responses to, the rhythm of life. Its coherence and calm are influences helping to produce a similar condition in the tenser nature of her husband. (Walsh 1982, 53)

Yet Susila is not without her flaws or imperfections. Narayan's characters are fully human and fully alive. Hence he does not leave out the normal "flame-like part of the emotion" and "the common combustible materials of everyday life," for instance, occasional bickerings over the purchase of groceries and other little things (Walsh 1982, 53). The greatness of the author lies in portraying imperfect and ordinary human beings aspiring towards growth, and their vital contribution to each other through ordinary mundane events. In the case of Krishna and Susila, their love
deepens and intensifies in the midst of household chores, prudent house-keeping, religious ceremony (at least on the wife's part), and Krishna's wry reaction to it, family irritations and awkwardness, simple pleasures like a visit to a cafe or a cinema, children's games and sicknesses, gardening, shopping. (Walsh 1982, 53)

The development of "the profoundest attachment" between Krishna and Susila, in the midst of domestic affairs and occasional bickering, reveals how they grow, liberate each other and become fully human through little things. In this novel, more than in any of Narayan's other works, one sees the absolute necessity of the mundane as a preparation for--and a schooling in--transcendence.

The marriage is not idyllic, however, and one quarrel in particular--the worst of all--is a masterly instance of Narayan's capacity to see the most absolutely and painfully trivial occasion as a way-station in Krishna's journey. The center of this quarrel is an alarm clock that Krishna has kept about him since his student days. The old clock, bought years "before at a junk store in Madras," and "eccentric with regard to its alarm arrangements," has a "reddening face," and has to be stopped from shrieking by placing heavy books "like Taine's History of English Literature on its crest" (The English Teacher, 5).

The clock puts them all into confusion one day when it breaks out suddenly with a very loud noise. Susila is unable to stop it, till Krishna snatches "Taine" and smothers it--ironically, the best use for the History of
English Literature. Susila is puzzled at Krishna's attachment to this oddity:

"It is not even showing the correct time. . . . It is four hours ahead! Why do you keep it on your table?" I had no answer to give. I merely said: "It has been with me for years, poor darling!"

"I will give it away this afternoon -- a man comes to buy all old things."

"No, no, take care, don't do it . . ." I warned. She didn't answer, but merely looked at it and mumbled: "This is not the first time. When you are away it starts bleating after I have rocked the cradle for hours and made the child sleep, and I don't know how to stop it. It won't do for our house. It is a bother . . ." (The English Teacher, 51)

On learning that evening that Susila has given away the clock, Krishna is infuriated. An emotional tornado commences. He walks out of the house in anger without listening to her, and returns late at night. The old lady, their house-keeper, informs him that Susila held dinner till eight-thirty. But the very name "Susila" enrages him:

"I ate in silence. I heard steps approaching, and told myself: "Oh, she is coming." I trembled with anxiety, lest she should be going away elsewhere. I got a glimpse of her as she came into the dining room. I bowed my head and went on with my dinner unconcerned, though fully aware that she was standing before me, dutifully as ever, to see that I was served correctly. She moved off to the kitchen, spoke some words to the old lady, and came out, and softly moved back to her own room. I felt angry: "Doesn't even care to wait and see me served. She doesn't care. If she cared, would she sell my clock? I must teach her a lesson." (The English Teacher, 52)

Returning to his room after supper, Krishna spends his late hours, quite unusual for him, in correcting composition books. When he hears "the silent night punctuated by sobs,"
Krishna walks to Susila's room and tells her that her cries and sobs are useless after committing a blunder. Susila sputters through her sobs an unfinished sentence: "If I had known that you cared more for a dilapidated clock" (The English Teacher 53). Krishna too spends a "miserable and sleepless night." Yet the absurd episode continues:

We treated each other like strangers for the next forty-eight hours -- all aloof and bitter. The child looked on this with puzzlement. . . . It was becoming a torture. . . . I had hoped Susila would try to make it up, and that I could immediately accept it. . . . I got a glimpse of her face occasionally and found that her eyes were swollen. . . . It came to a point when I simply could not stand any more of it. So the moment I returned home from college next evening I said to her, going to her room:

"Let us go to a picture. . . ."

"What picture?" she asked.

. . .

By the time we came out of the Variety Hall [the movie theatre in Malgudi] that night we were in such agreement and showed such tender concern for each other's views and feelings that we both wondered how we could have treated each other so cruelly. . . . When we reached home we decided that we should avoid quarrelling with each other since, as she put it, "They say such quarrels affect a child's health." (The English Teacher, 53-54)

The trivial fight thus brings the couple closer together, as they understand their own capacity for both cruelty and stupidity. Susila and Krishna are honest enough about their mundane frailties and use the very same for transcending. They help to liberate each other. The mundane is sometimes ordinary but sometimes frightening.

Narayan makes this point with terrifying honesty when
Krishna and Susila decide to go house-hunting. They start one early Sunday morning, and the outing starts off well:

A fresh morning breeze blew. . . . The fresh sun, morning light, the breeze, and my wife's presence, who looked so lovely -- even an unearthly loveliness -- her tall form, dusky complexion, and the small diamond earrings -- Jasmine, Jasmine. . . . "I will call you Jasmine, hereafter," I said. "I've long waited to tell you that. . . ."

"Remember, we are in a public road and don't start any of your pranks here," she warned, throwing at me a laughing glance. Her eyes always laughed -- there was a perpetual smile in her eyes. "The soul laughs through the eyes, it is the body which laughs with lips . . . " I remarked.

. . . .

We were now passing before Bombay Anandha Bhavan, a restaurant. "Shall we go in?" she asked. I was only too delighted. I led her in. . . .

. . . .

She tried to eat with a spoon. She held it loosely and tipped the thing into her mouth from a distance. I suggested, "Put it away if you can't manage with it." She made a wry face at the smell of onion: "I can't stand it," she said. . . . I knew that she hated onions but had taken no care to see that they were not given to her. I reproached myself. I called for the boy vociferously and commanded: "Have that thing removed and bring something without onion." I behaved as if I were an elaborate, ceremonial host. I wanted to please her. Her helplessness, innocence and her simplicity moved me very deeply. (The English Teacher, 57-59)

Krishna demonstrates here a wish to relish every little good thing life can offer. Starting with the rising sun, and the cool breeze, he is cataloguing, not mechanically, every detail of the physical and moral, even spiritual beauty of his wife. Susila's "unearthly loveliness," the smile in her eyes, her "innocence" and "simplicity," all enchant him.
With this image of Susila fresh in the reader's mind, Narayan details the beginning of the sickness that eventually kills her. Krishna and Susila arrive at Lawley Extension, and with the help of Krishna's friend, Mr. Sastri, they look at different types of houses. Finally, "an attractive house with a wide compound, broad windows, and a general appearance of spaciousness and taste" captures their attention (The English Teacher, 64). As they are going through particulars such as price and other negotiations with the contractor and Mr. Sastri, Susila leaves the company to look around the compound and the backyard. Susila's failure to return even after a lapse of thirty minutes compels the anxious Krishna to go to the backyard and look for her. Finding her locked inside a privy, Krishna, on Susila's request, kicks the door open and brings her out: "Out she came—red and trembling" (The English Teacher, 67). She tells Krishna:

"I went in there. The door was so bright that I thought it would be clean inside . . . but oh!" she screwed up her face and shuddered, unable to share the disgust that came with recollection. I felt agitated. "Why did you go there?" I cried. She didn't answer. It was a sad anti-climax to a very pleasing morning.

... .

Her face was beaded with perspiration. her cheeks were flushed. She was still trembling. (The English Teacher, 67)

After a wash and a little rest, Susila with Krishna leaves Lawley Extension. On their way back home they visit the temple. That night, Susila eats a poor supper and shudders
at the thought of the flies in the outhouse where she was locked a few hours back. After that evening, Susila begins to run a temperature and spends her time in bed. This shatters Krishna's spirits. Susila's illness is diagnosed as typhoid, and Krishna's life takes a different turn. The iron routine of taking temperature, visits of and to the doctor, trips to the medical store to buy the prescribed drugs, and vigils near Susila's bed fill Krishna's schedule. Krishna likes the routine:

It kept me so close to my wife that it produced an immense satisfaction in my mind. Throughout I acted as her nurse. The sickness seemed to bind us together more strongly than ever. I sat in the chair and spoke to her of interesting things I saw in the paper. She spoke in whispers as the weeks advanced. (The English Teacher, 89-90)

In health and sickness, they love and grow. Yet all the care and medications prove futile. Susila passes away after a few tedious weeks. Thus, the first half of the novel terminates with her untimely death. Yet Susila continues to be Krishna's mentor.

The second section of the book starts with Krishna's plight as a widower. The loss of Susila, together with his dissatisfaction regarding his job in the college, create a vacuum in his life. Soon after Susila's death, suggestions such as changing the house, a second marriage, etc., do not attract Krishna in any way:

It was expected that I should leave the house and move to another. It seemed at first a most natural and inevitable thing to do. But after the initial shocks had worn out, it seemed unnecessary and then impos-
sible. . . . I realized the experience of life in that house was too precious and that I wouldn't exchange it for anything. There were subtle links with a happy past; they were not merely links but blood channels, which fed the stuff of memory. . . . Even sad and harrowing memories were cherished by me; for in the contemplation of those sad scenes and hapless hours, I seemed to acquire a new peace, a new outlook; a view of life with a place for everything. (The English Teacher, 111-112)

Susila’s spirit—"life with a place for everything"—still lives in the house and in Krishna’s heart, but the "new place," and "new outlook" are short lived. Susila’s spirit is with him but Krishna’s spirit is unchanged. And he makes a series of mistakes that have in common a single object: the effort to fill Susila’s absence with a surrogate.

First and foremost is Krishna’s decision to devote himself absolutely and unreservedly to their daughter, Leela. His entire existence, he thinks, gets meaning from her; hence, he plans to spend the rest of his life in bringing up Leela, by playing the roles of father and mother:

The days had acquired a peculiar blankness and emptiness. The only relief was my child, spick and span and fresh, and mocking by her very carriage the world of elders. I dared not contemplate where I should have been but for her. . . . It kept me very much alive to play both father and mother to her at the same time. My only aim in life was to see that the child did not feel the absence of her. To this end I concentrated my whole being. From morning till night this kept me busy. I had to keep her cheerful and keep myself cheerful too lest she should feel unhappy. (The English Teacher, 108).

Leela, a replica of her mother, fills the place of Susila for Krishna. She easily accommodates to the new situations created by the loss of her mother. The small school near
her house comes as a blessing not only for Leela, but for Krishna, too, since it opens new vistas for his future.

One Sunday, when Krishna plans to spend the entire day in the company of little Leela, "She had her own plans for the day" (The English Teacher, 151). She insists upon being taken to the school. All efforts to reason with her by telling her that there is no school on Sundays fail when she puts on her coat and steps out saying: "You don't know about our school. We have school." Leela, quite unaware, now educates her father. She indicates clearly that he, despite all his efforts, can never play the role of Susila. The freedom and company of other children in that small school offer greater attraction to her than being at home with Krishna filling the role of a Susila-surrogate. Leela plays her part to help Krishna transcend from his mundane addiction to surrogates.

Little realizing how the adventures that Sunday are to affect his future, Krishna accompanies Leela to the school, and finds the "school alive with the shouts of children . . . The headmaster was with them" (The English Teacher, 151). The freedom and creativity which abound in this little place, without any sophistication, thrill Krishna. As a proud father, he is happy to hold in his hand his daughter's creation--a small, green, paper boat, and is delighted to see the "created universe" of the children. The headmaster's room--thatch-roofed, walled with mud-filled
bamboo splinters—"smelt of Mother Earth. It was a pleasing smell, and seemed to take us back to some primeval simplicity, intimately bound up with earth, mud and dust" (The English Teacher, 152). The simplicity of the school and the uninhibited creativity of the children please Krishna. Again, the "tie" between the "teacher and the taught" in this school, which Krishna misses in his profession, moves him very much.

Besides providing a sense of freedom and a down-to-earth physical setting for this small school, the headmaster plans some revolutionary experiments in education, and some of them he discusses with Krishna: "'Everybody speaks of the game way in studies but nobody really practices it. It becomes more the subject of a paper in some pompous conference and brings a title or preferment to the educational administrator'" (The English Teacher, 141). He feels that teachers pawn their freedom for financial reward from the Government, and asserts his own independence: "It has always seemed to me that our teachers helped us to take a wrong turn. And I have always felt that for the future of mankind we should retain the original vision, and I am trying a system of children's education" (The English Teacher, 168).

The original vision is that of synthesis of flesh and spirit, transcending and incorporating the mundane.

The headmaster proves himself an interesting storyteller. After hearing his story of a tiger, Leela pleads
with her father for a pet, a tiger. Instead of a tiger, she agrees to accept a kitten which the headmaster promises her. When the school is dismissed at noon, Leela, though very hungry, is now adamant about going with the headmaster to fetch the kitten he promised. Hence, Krishna has to invite the headmaster to their house. Delighted at the headmaster's company with her father in their house, Leela forgets the kitten for a while. The invitation to lunch with Krishna pleases the headmaster, though he appears concerned about his wife at home. Complying with the invitation, he asks Krishna for a few minutes to himself:

"Please grant me fifteen minutes. I usually pray and meditate for fifteen minutes before dinner, the only time that I can spare. Just fifteen minutes... Another thing that seems to upset my wife." His wife seemed to be weighing on his mind. He muttered: "I could have managed well as a bachelor, but they wouldn't let me alone." (The English Teacher, 158)

This request might have reminded Krishna of Susila's regular prayers and meditations before the alcove inside the house. Krishna finds the headmaster "more and more fascinating" (The English Teacher, 158). Ever since the demise of Susila, life in this house has been monotonous with no company or visitor, and so this unexpected visit of the headmaster is the first social event in many months, and they all find it a "delightful party." This mundane event, though not spectacular, helps Krishna to transcend--no one in the party has the foggiest idea that this inter-personal relationship contains the germ of later liberation.
After a few hours, Krishna has to set out with Leela to the headmaster’s house in "Anderson Street," a shabby part of Malgudi: "As soon as we crossed the gutter, three children of ages between seven and ten stood in the doorway and hugged him [the headmaster]. 'Is your mother at home?' he asked. 'No,' they replied" (The English Teacher, 162). Krishna is able to sense, from the conversation and the situation, the terrible domestic condition and woman-dominated relationship in the headmaster’s family. Soon the wife appears:

A fat woman of about thirty-five, with sparse hair tied to a knot at the back of her head, her face shining with oil and perspiration, strode up the steps of the house. She threw a look at him, . . . muttering: "So you have found the way home after all!" gritting her teeth. He didn’t reply but merely looked at me sadly. (The English Teacher, 164)

This, too, is India, the Indian housewife, and the Indian family. The "better half" of the headmaster is not the model woman. On the contrary, the man in this family, rather than the woman, seems to be the principal source of spiritual strength. Narayan’s honest depiction of India can accommodate the almost ideal family of Krishna as well as the "muddle" in that of the headmaster.

The day’s adventures affect Krishna in different ways and eventually change his life. On the whole, he likes the headmaster’s school and its atmosphere—above all the educational values. Krishna also feels sorry about the headmaster’s unhappy domestic situation after learning from him
a little more of the family dispute over some property. But Krishna's greatest realization that day concerns his absolute failure to be a surrogate mother or to find a Susila-surrrogate in Leela. She needs a wider range of human contact than he can even hope to provide on his own; and she alone cannot provide a complete life for him.

As so often happens in the effort to transcend mundane realities and mundane horrors, the first steps are misguided. They appear to be failures, and they often are failures. But the only absolute failure in a Narayan novel is absolute cynicism or absolute despair. Transcendence as a process is always underway, so long as the process itself is not abandoned, and this is quite obvious in the complex procedure Krishna undergoes when he abandons his attempt to replace Susila through Leela.

As Krishna is getting ready to leave the college campus one day after classes, he is informed of a boy who wishes to meet him. The boy looks a total stranger, yet he happens to be the bearer of a "a bulky envelope" which contains a note from the sender:

"This is a message for Krishna from his wife Susila who recently passed over. . . . She has been seeking all these months some means of expressing herself to her husband, but the opportunity has occurred only today, when she found the present gentleman a very suitable medium of expression. Through him she is happy to communicate. She wants her husband to know that she is quite happy in another region, and wants him also to eradicate the grief in his mind. We are nearer each other than you understand. And I'm always watching him and the child. . . " (The English Teacher, 119)
On first perusal, Krishna is baffled. But on a second reading, he is not only quite cooled down, but he is "seized with elation." Not surprisingly, the emotional Krishna is anxious to meet the medium. Krishna's fears and elation are on the mundane level. Irrespective of the credibility or rationality of the procedure, his only longing is to communicate with Susila.

The bearer of the letter guides Krishna to the gentleman's residence. The house stands amidst a dense cluster of trees. After giving a warm welcome, the gentleman takes Krishna around the estate, and finally to the northern edge of the estate which contains a pond and a temple. The small platform on the threshold of the temple is the spot for the man's meditation and communication with the spirits.

The man tells Krishna how of late, he had begun to spend more and more of his evenings alone on this pyol. Before starting for this place one day, he felt a great urge to bring writing materials with him. He brought some with the idea of writing a few prose-poems. While he was sitting on the pyol with the pencil and the pad, musing over some verse lines in his head, something happened:

"... but what was this thing within? I felt a queer change taking place within me.

... Before the light should be fully gone I wanted to write down my verse or drama or whatever it was that was troubling me.

I poised the pencil over the paper. Presently the pencil moved... I was struck with the ease with which it moved. I was pleased. All the function my
fingers had was to hold the pencil, nothing more. . . . "Thank you," began the page. "Here we are a band of spirits who have been working to bridge between life and after-life. We have been looking about for a medium through whom we could communicate. There is hardly any personality on earth who does not obstruct our effort. But we have found you. . . . Please, help us, by literally lending us a hand -- your hand, and we will do the rest." I replied, "I'm honoured, I'll do whatever I can."

"'You need not do anything more than sit here one or two evenings of the week, relax your mind, and think of us." (The English Teacher, 126-127)

The following week Krishna promptly comes to the same spot, and waits with the gentleman for the spirits to communicate: "We took our seats on the pyol of the little shrine. My friend shut his eyes and prayed: 'Great souls, here we are. You have vouchsafed to us a vision for peace and understanding. Here we are ready to serve in the cause of illumination.' He sat with his eyes shut . . . " (The English Teacher, 127). Krishna has to hold his breath as he waits. Suddenly the pencil begins to move, and letters appear on the paper: "The pencil quivered as if with life. It moved at a terrific speed across the paper; it looked as though my friend could not hold it in check. . . . It seemed to be possessed of a tremendous power" (The English Teacher, 127-128). The scribblings cover many pages, but none of them is legible; hence, the gentleman rests his hands for a while, and resumes the process in a few minutes. Now his hand writes, "We are here, trying to express ourselves. Sorry if you find our force too much for you. . . . Please steady yourself and slow down" (The English Teacher, 128).
The gentleman grips the pencil and steadies himself, but his hand writes, "No, no" . . . "Relax, slow down, control yourself . . . " (The English Teacher, 128). After composing himself, the man repeats the procedure, and gets the message on his third attempt. The message indicates that Susila is eager to communicate with her husband. Krishna is overwhelmed at hearing about Susila's excitement; a thousand pictures of the past—her excitement during their engagement and other events—cross his mind. To Krishna's question, whether Susila remembered their child's name, comes the reply in writing, "Yes, Radha" (The English Teacher, 130). The error in the name, "Radha instead of Leela," disappoints Krishna; hence, his "mind buzzed with questions." The message continues, and tells him not to feel miserable about the error in the name, since the communication depends on the relaxed and calm disposition of the holder of the pencil, the medium, who they say is not quite satisfactorily relaxed that day.

They attempt the following Wednesday, too, and the pencil indicates that Susila this time will communicate, and she does: "I have watched you since we met last and seen your mind. I saw the doubts crossing and recrossing through your mind regarding identity" (The English Teacher, 131-132). Krishna is startled when she asks him why he destroyed all her letters to him, because he destroyed them in the secrecy of that night when her condition was declared
hopeless, and when he moved about in a delirium of fret, anxiety, and love. He did it then to escape being tormented by her memory, but after her death, he had begun to search for at least one of her writings. Susila further informs him about the fourteen letters stored either in her trunk or in her father's place.

At their next meeting she reveals to Krishna that she knows about their child, Leela, attending a nearby school. Susila's meticulous concern about all household matters, and her happy involvement with all that is happening now to him and to their daughter, invigorate Krishna. After this he regularly frequents the house of the medium every Wednesday, to sit near the man for communications with Susila through automatic writing, and to walk back home alone in the dark night. He feels that "the distance and loneliness were nothing" to him, because, "She was with" him (The English Teacher, 150). Thus the medium serves as a Susila-surrogate.

At one point, Krishna has to wait several weeks before his next communication with Susila, owing to the man's illness and business out of town. The next communication is attempted while he is still out of town, in a sort of telepathic linkage, as per his suggestions and directions through a letter he mails to Krishna:

"... I have a feeling that we might attempt an experiment while we are out of each other's reach. For spirit matters, space is of no account, and there is no reason why we should not succeed. On Sunday at 4
o'clock in the evening I propose to try the experiment. So please keep yourself in your room and link up with me mentally with a request to your wife to communicate. As far as possible keep all other business from your mind. At precisely 4.30, you may consider it closed. I will send you the result of this sitting by post immediately." (The English Teacher, 173)

Finding "a new lease of life" in this suggestion, Krishna shuts himself in his room the following Sunday. He stills himself, and pleads with Susila to communicate. He fantasizes over the entire communication till 4.30. Their experiment does succeed. Two days later, the mail carrier delivers the envelop containing the message. Susila describes his disposition, and instructs him "not [to] allow his mind to be disturbed by anything," not to be "gloomy and unsettled," and to keep himself "in better frame" (The English Teacher, 174). Susila, thus, continues to be his guru, his mentor.

After expressing a sense of gratitude to this friend, the man through whom the spirits communicate, and indicating that he is not to be troubled any further, she gives a vital proposal to Krishna: "Please think yourself as being able to establish communications with us direct" (The English Teacher, 174). In order to achieve this communication, Susila tells him, "Keep your body and mind in perfect condition, before you aspire to become sensitive and receptive"; (The English Teacher, 174).

The routine of communication with the spirits every week at the gentleman's estate resumes on his return home.
This time Susila asks abruptly, "When are you [Krishna] starting an attempt at your own psychic development?" (The English Teacher, 176). She gives, as she used to in her housekeeping while alive, some important hints: "Relax, be passive, and think of me, and be receptive. Just ten minutes" (The English Teacher, 177). She urges him to be consistent with his psychic exercises. Thus commences the psychic development of Krishna.

The latter half of The English Teacher has received various comments from different people, especially Western critics. Hemenway criticizes the automatic writing, and Krishna's transcendent experience:

Narayan takes the reader on a flight of fancy after Susila's death. . . . The latter half of the book reaches some poetic heights but jars severely with the earlier narration. The whole episode appears as an artistic crutch to keep an otherwise fragile plot from toppling. (1975, 24)

Harrex, however, disagrees. The latter half, in his view, is about "Krishna's spiritual catharsis of despair and salvation," and the "intriguing transcendentism is perhaps the most interesting feature of Grateful to Life and Death."

(1968, 52). Chew considers Narayan to be a straight realist, who ought to know better better than to write the second half:

If an ironical perception of the human condition and a sound hold upon the concrete have to do with Narayan's strength as a novelist, then it is not surprising that the last three chapters of The English Teacher -- about

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8 The American title of The English Teacher.
half the novel -- should prove disappointing. (1972, 149)

Similarly, Iyengar, though an Indian, says, "The experiments in psychic communication with Susila with the help of a medium introduce a whimsical or fantastical element into a story that has so long been so transparently true to life." He admits that "automatic writing and attempts at psychic contact with the dead are not altogether uncommon: the soil of India doubtless breeds every type of idealist and eccentric, waif and vagabond." Yet it is difficult for him "to feel that the first and the second halves of The English Teacher blend naturally and make an artistic whole" (1985, 369-370).

According to Walsh, the second part of The English Teacher "dramatizes Narayan’s personal life at a most devastating point. . . . No doubt the act of writing itself proved a potent instrument of personal therapy, an activity which helped to control the chaos of life by submitting it to the discipline of art" (1982, 56). He further comments:

In developing the second theme Narayan daringly attempts one of the most extraordinary feats in realistic fiction. He further persuades the reader to accept Krishna’s efforts to bring his wife back from the dead. . . .

The question may be posed as to why so experienced a novelist as Narayan should consider allowing his hero to escape from his predicament by means of such an eccentric activity as spiritualism. (1982, 57)

Of the comments cited above, the negative ones reveal two factors: one pertains to the credibility of the content,
and the other to the artistic effect of the novel. Whatever
the reactions and comments may be, Narayan "protests that
but for the latter half, he wouldn't have written the novel
at all" (Narasimhaiah 1979, 176). Moreover, Narayan ref-
lects on these varied reactions:

Many readers have gone through the first half with
interest and the second half with bewilderment and even
resentment, perhaps they have been baited with the
domestic picture into tragedy, death, and nebulous,
impossible speculations. The dedication of the book to
the memory of my wife should to some extent give the
reader a clue that the book may not be all fiction.
(Narayan 1974, 135)

Narayan doesn't fret to establish either the credibility or
the artistic unity of the novel. It is also not his mission
to recommend communications with the spirits as a means to
transcendence. On closer observation, it is not hard to
comprehend that Narayan's entire concentration is on the
process within Krishna, and the mundane-transcendent inter-
actions; hence it is neither "flights of fancy" nor a per-
suasion that Narayan attempts. Rather he describes the
stages of transcendence in Krishna, who is made aware of his
Susila-surrogates, and is shown the ways to liberate himself
from such mundane entrapments.

While critics and academicians are engaged in ques-
tioning the credibility and the artistic unity of this
novel, Narayan recalls in My Dateless Diary, a "practical
problem." One Mrs. X seeks his help after reading this
novel:

"I am anxious to communicate with his [her deceased
husband's] spirit. Do you think it will be possible?
I feel psychically sensitive. I don't want to do
anything," she said, "that may seem odd and eccentric
in the American eye." (1960, 22)

This American lady, like some of the critics, resembles the
unliberated Krishna in laying her emphasis only on the
literal encounter with the deceased. She little realizes
the transcendent layer of the whole episode. The East
appears "odd and eccentric" when the rational West fails to
comprehend the transcendent layers.

Krishna, as we see during the sessions of the automatic
writing, is on the mundane level only. His immense
sorrow over the untimely death of a lovely wife is undeni-
able. It is also equally true that after her death, he is
on the lookout for a Susila-surrogate. His absolute failure
to find one in little Leela disturbs him. During the first
few communications prior to his psychic development and
liberation, Krishna makes these experiences, the communica-
tion with the spirits, a Susila-surrogate.

When gratified, Krishna exhibits optimism and enthusi-
asm: "The day seemed full of possibilities of surprise and
joy. At home I devoted myself to my studies more energeti-
cally. The sense of futility was leaving me. I attended to
my work earnestly" (The English Teacher, 136). Hemenway
remarks: "The lazy, likeable, machine-like English teacher
and narrator of the first half of the novel suddenly becomes
an otherworldly disciple of automatic writing" (V.II.1975,
24). Yet Hemenway fails to observe that this sudden change
is just a fleeting one, since it rests solely on mundane gratification. So in the initial stages of this experience, the communications serve Krishna as mundane gratifications though he describes them as "The greatest abiding rapture which could always stay, and not recede or fall into an anti-climax like most mortal joys" (The English Teacher, 130). Krishna's illusions about this spiritual communication do recede and fall away, because whenever the communication fails, there is a feeling of desolation in him:

For the first time in months, I felt desolate. The awful irresponsiveness of Death overwhelmed me again. It unnerved me. All the old moods returned now. It looked as though they had been in bondage all these days and were now suddenly unleashed. I was overwhelmed. . . . I kept asking myself: "I have been clinging to the veriest straw, thinking that I was on land. Now the straw has snapped and I know my position. I can only drown. I'm drowned and did not know it all these days. . . ." The little peace and joy I had seemed to grasp once again receded, and I became hopelessly miserable. (The English Teacher, 169-170, 178)

It is obvious that Krishna still lingers in the physical dimension and mundane gratification.

Krishna's devotion to Susila, relying much on the physical presence, is like the "bhakti" of ordinary devotees, which often needs objects or idols for worship:

"Bhakti is the way of love, devotion, adoration, and dedication to an external . . . Yoga is a more philosophical orientation in which the devotee seeks to experience god directly in samadhi" (Rothfork 1983, 32). The mundane in Krishna needs the external god or idol, which is here
susila's presence and communication, to sustain his interest in existence.

The reader is quite free to suppose that the reborn susila is a product of Krishna's desperately lonely imagination. But Narayan makes no case, one way or another. In any event, Susila in these times acts as a spiritual mentor. Harrex compares Susila to "an animated philosophical treatise" (1968, 56). But a philosophical treatise can deal only with abstractions. Susila is not here describing the metaphysics of communications or the rationale of their behavior: rather, her only interest in communicating with Krishna is to elevate him from the mundane, which she had been doing on a different level while alive. Emphasizing that "the mind must be calm and unruffled," she says, "I find the thoughts of me produce just the opposite effect" (The English Teacher, 178). She suggests that he could wait for some more time, since, she says: "Possibly there may be a change in your outlook. Then you will derive greater benefit" (The English Teacher, 179). Krishna follows her advice meticulously, and commences his psychic development: "'Calm, calm,' I repeated to myself like a mantra (a Sanskrit incantation). I blamed myself for not being aware of so simple a remedy. I think I sang lightly as I returned home that night. 'Be calm, my dear fellow' I said" (The English Teacher, 180).

In their next communication Susila gives the charac-
teristically practical guide lines for the yogic exercises which Krishna is practicing: "Why don't you change the time from night to morning and see if it will improve matters? Not more than ten minutes. . . . At night your mind is not very receptive. . . . Just try for ten days" (The English Teacher, 180-181). This is the practical, meticulous Susila we know from part one. It is not merely Krishna's imagination. This is the presence of Susila in Krishna's imagination.

The entire process here emphasizes, not occult practices or mysticism of any kind, but the conversion within Krishna, and his liberation from petty, selfish attachments through the yogic exercises. In these exercises, the inner Self can contemplate with greater realization, free of time and space, without external crutches. Harrex comments rightly that, "As the months pass, Krishna is increasingly convinced that 'self-development,' the main programme in his life, 'was a perpetual excitement, ever promising some new riches in the realm of experience and understanding'" (1968, 55). Nowadays one hears a good deal even in the West about yoga, which means "the process as well as the result, of balancing the different sides of our nature, body, mind and spirit, the objective and the subjective, the individual and the social, the finite and the infinite" (Radhakrishnan 1959, 36). Yoga in the West is thought to be a highly formalistic discipline (as it can be). But yoga in the
larger sense can occur, and does occur, in the spontaneous, even mundane, practices developing out of Krishna’s relation to Susila.

Krishna recalls the mental agony before reaching a stage of liberation:

For a fortnight I tried to follow her instructions rigidly. I relaxed with a vengeance. I kept my mind open. I posted a sentry at the threshold of my mind to stop and turn away any intruder who might try to gain entrance. I rigorously educated my whole being, including the subconscious, (where still perhaps lurked unsuspected raw grief) with the suggestion that my wife was everywhere, happy and well, and I was to think of her only with the greatest joy in mind; no cause for any sort of grief. (The English Teacher, 182)

With such tenacity Krishna does attain liberation; "I was beginning to be aware of a slight change in my sensibilities. There was a cheerfulness growing within me, memory hurt less . . . " (The English Teacher, 193). This is not Krishna’s vain presumption, because he is liberated to the extent of giving up the Wednesday meetings at the medium’s estate. He also has no "hopeless longing" for regular communications.

The pain and frustrations which Narayan himself had undergone in his personal life help him portray Krishna authentically:

But it [the philosophical understanding] was not easily attained. The course was full of hardship, doubts and despair against a perpetual, unrelenting climate of loneliness. I never hoped that I could ever take any more interest in the business of living, much less in writing. (Narayan 1974, 136)

Yet, there is immense potential achieved at the end of this
painful experience.

As Harrex observes, "Krishna's psychic revolution is neither perfunctory nor easily brought about" (1968, 54). Amidst frustrations and disappointments, his "eventual philosophical calm" is not "induced through any improbable distortion of his personality" (Harrex 1968, 54). Narayan employs no sentimental play or unwise idealism of any kind to bring about the integration in Krishna.

An important observation regarding the process of such communication leading to liberation in the case of Krishna is that there is no bizarre physical setting or violence. On the contrary every detail regarding the milieu and the medium is amiable and enchanting:

It [the gentleman's house and the whole estate] looked like a green haven. Acres and acres of trees, shrubs and orchards. Far off, casuarina leaves murmured. "Beyond the casuarina, would you believe it I [the gentleman] have a lotus pond, and on its bank a temple, the most lovely ruin that you ever saw! I was in ecstacy when I found that these delightful things were included in the lot." (The English Teacher, 123)

In this serene vicinity, very close to nature—with bright sunlight, river, temple, and grove, the gentle breeze vibrates with the laughter of the spirits, and spreads an aroma of sweetness and joy. The entire place seems to vibrate with a gentle melody emerging from the veena (an Indian string instrument). There is no darkness or horror of any kind.

As for the gentleman, with his "rich silent laughter," he "spoke incessantly, bursting with mirth, and explaining
his garden" (The English Teacher, 125). He is a well accomplished man with good taste. Commending the medium, Walsh says: "... the cheerful ordinariness of the medium, a chubby gentlemen-farmer whose spirituality is wholly encased in a very commonplace flesh, gives the mystical experience some footing in common life" (1982, 58). Things around seem to be in harmony -- "a glimpse of eternal peace" (The English Teacher, 127).

As Krishna continues his endeavors in psychic development, and tastes in increasing measure his freedom and fearlessness, while carrying on cheerfully his duties both at home and college, his mother comes to Malgudi to visit her son and grand-daughter. Krishna and Leela enjoy her company. This time, Leela has made up her mind to go with her grand-mother to her village. Although Krishna feels the pangs of separation, when he sees Leela "bubbling with enthusiasm," he has to tell himself: "Don't be selfish. She must have her own life" (The English Teacher, 201). Leela accompanies her grandmother, leaving her father in Malgudi. After a few weeks, Krishna pays a visit to his family in the village, and returns to Malgudi with the greatest realization that separation in "life is a continuous movement ... A profound unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life" (The English Teacher, 203).

With such profound but despondent thoughts, he continues his life at Malgudi. He begins to spend more time
with Leela's headmaster, and feels "a deep joy and contentment stirring" within him while watching the children listening to stories. The headmaster has earlier expressed his desire that Krishna renounce the world, and has also suggested that Krishna become a teacher at the school. Krishna had never previously given any serious thought to that suggestion. But now, he feels, "My mind was made up. I was in search of a harmonious existence and everything that disturbed that harmony was to be rigorously excluded, even my college work" (The English Teacher, 205). Without any thought or any worry over either status or remuneration, he decides to leave the college and to join the children's school.

When he drafts his letter of resignation, many negative thoughts of revenge and hatred cross Krishna's mind. With a strong tendency to ridicule the whole system, he writes down some scathing attacks: "'I am up against the system, the whole method and approach of a system which makes us morons, cultural morons, but efficient clerks for your administrative offices'" (The English Teacher, 206). On second thought, Krishna tears up the draft and feels that "there is something far deeper" that he wishes to say (The English Teacher, 206). Krishna, as he undergoes the psychic development and deeper self-realization, begins to see the problem not merely as an East-West issue. Without denying the problem created by the Western pattern of education, he
wishes to tackle it through some positive endeavor. He deserts his prestigious position as a college teacher, the Westernized mode of education, for a more traditional mode, but not because it is traditional—rather because it is freer, more humanly involving, and more likely to make a deeper difference in the lives of the students.

Krishna enters the principal's office, and hands over the letter of resignation to the principal, Mr. Brown. When the baffled principal asks Krishna the reason for such a decision, he replies: "Of all persons on earth, I can afford to do what seems to me work, something which satisfies my innermost aspiration. I will write poetry and live and work with children and watch their minds unfold. . ." (The English Teacher, 208). As an appreciation of Krishna's services to education, Albert Mission College hosts a party to bid him farewell.

The transition from the college to the small school for children is a smooth one. Here, too, Narayan is not isolating Krishna from the mundane milieu and work, because wisdom and work are not in conflict except for those who compartmentalize life and personalities. With renewed courage and fearlessness, and with no thoughts of remuneration, the liberated Krishna takes up his work in the school for children at Malgudi.

By the end of the novel, Krishna tastes the "noble intoxication" (The English Teacher, 212) of inner strength
and freedom, and his addiction to the physical presence of Susila gets healed by discovering the all-pervasive presence of his beloved beyond space and time. All barriers collapse, and Krishna lives in harmony: "The boundaries of our personalities suddenly dissolved. It was a moment of rare, immutable joy -- a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death" (The English Teacher, 213).

Throughout the first and second parts of the novel it is not hard to trace the blend of religion and life in the Indian family. Whether it be the silent prayers Susila mutters near the little alcove with the idols, the puja room, or their casual visits to the Srinivasa temple, or Susila's edifying composure during prayer at the temple, or the headmaster's prayers and meditation before lunch in Krishna's house, or the gentleman's prayer before commencing the automatic writing--all are part of Indian culture. In his realistic portrayal of Indian religious sensitivity, Narayan does not fail to present some of the bizarre practices, for example, the exorcism which Susila's mother tries, in hopes of curing Susila. Narayan doesn't advocate any particular devotion to any particular deity or particular creed, but portrays religious sensitivity as it permeates Indian life. Especially in the second part of The English Teacher, without any discussion of spiritualism, Narayan concentrates solely on, and presents the process of transcendence within, Krishna. Although Krishna attempts to
escape reality by taking refuge in the mundane—the automatic writing—Susila doesn't permit him to escape; rather, she reprimands, educates, assists, and liberates Krishna. There is no indication as to how much Krishna does transcend, but he transcends his mundane addiction to Susila-surrogates, and continues working out his transcendence, because transcendence is an ongoing process.

The mundane-transcendent interactions are obvious in the lives of Krishna and Susila both at home and at work. They work out their frailties when they argue over the purchase of groceries or the old alarm clock before they could finally transcend. The dissatisfaction in Krishna about his profession gnaws him every time he has to work against the prompts of his heart, and he is prone to blame the East-West issue as the sole cause. Yet, once liberated, he works out the problem without much ill feeling toward the system, though the issue still poses difficulties. Again, in seeking Susila-surrogates in Leela and the medium after Susila's demise, Krishna illustrates the human tendency to escape pain and struggle. Yet Susila as a guru educates and liberates him at every stage from such escapist tendencies and helps him to transcend. Sickness, untimely death of loved ones, etc., are unpredictable, unwished-for events in life, but they do happen—inevitably. The young husband, Krishna, has to face the loss of Susila though he tries his best to save her. While facing these calamities, the emo-
tional Krishna is irritable, restless and desolate. The intensity of the pain and struggle in the mundane-transcendent interactions is seen clearly when he tries to take refuge in the mundane—the automatic writing and the medium. Susila is a guru in removing his blinkers, and in liberating him from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge.

The spiritual adventures in *The English Teacher* are much more explicit and complex when compared to those of *Swami and Friends* and *The Bachelor of Arts*. Krishna's inner development ramifies through his interpersonal relationships, and affects his family as well as professional life. In the family life, the couple's love and attachment for each other grow steadily and strengthen their inner lives, too. The meticulous details of the domestic life reveal how amidst imperfections they help each other in the process of transcendence. In fact, the mundane enhances the transcendence. They emerge with renewed vigour and love after those little bickerings. The vital role of Susila in life and death as the guru to Krishna is a unique factor of this novel, Narayan's masterpiece. Right from the beginning of the novel Susila, imperfect though she be, spreads the sacred aroma of order and wholeness in Krishna's life.

The emotional and dissatisfied Krishna lives the routine of a college teacher until he takes up the small school for children to follow the desires of his heart. The British educational system and institution, with its East-
West issues, have their impact on Krishna's professional life. The issues remain, but they recede to the background once Krishna, after liberation, gains the stamina to step out of the institution in order to experiment on his own in the small school.

However complex the second part of the novel may be, the phases of transcendence are drawn with clarity. The desperate loneliness and restlessness of Krishna impel him to find a Susila-surrogate in all possible ways after Susila's demise. The bulky letter invites him to a very strange realm, although a beautiful realm—the medium's estate. Here he is bewildered and frustrated by the communication received from Susila—especially when the medium gets Leela's name wrong. In a larger sense, he thereupon enters the spirit-realm, which once again offers the customary bewilderment and sometimes doubt. Nonetheless, Krishna responds readily and tries to find a Susila-surrogate in the medium, but Susila's presence in Krishna's memory and imagination weans Krishna from such surrogates by instructing him in simple yogic exercises. Eventually, the new realm leads him to a spiritual discovery—thus helps him to do something "out of character." He begins to take charge of his life, with a degree of self discipline, courage, and maturity heretofore exceptional for him. He sends Leela to his parents, and hands over his letter of resignation to the principal in order to serve the child-
ren's school. In doing so, he achieves not merely a private 
transcendence, but a life of service and devotion in which 
he believes most deeply. The fearlessness and courage at-
tained by Krishna are more explicit than those of Swami and 
Chandran--a school boy and an adolescent. Yet the stages 
they pass through in the process of liberation are vital and 
similar whether the person be naive or mature. Narayan, in 
all these novels, pays meticulous attention to the painful 
and often beautiful passages his characters make through the 
stages of liberation, rather than to the degree of transcen-
dence.

The frailties of Swami, Chandran, and Krishna are 
normal. In Raju (The Guide), Narayan presents a complex 
character, whose frailties are even more severe and more 
persistent than those of the characters considered so far. 
But however complex or frail the character be, Narayan 
considers only the process of transcendence, which in Raju's 
case is often comic and controversial, but perhaps even more 
'realistic' for that.
CHAPTER IV

MATURE TRANSCENDENCE: THE GUIDE

While Krishna's frailties are quite normal, Raju's behavior in The Guide may puzzle any reader. Of all Narayan's characters, Raju is the most controversial. It is comparatively easier to study the mundane-transcendent interactions of other characters in Narayan's fiction than that of Raju, because Raju is an exceptionally complex human being. Moreover, the traditional notions of family and profession are brought to question in Raju.

Balarama Gupta labels Raju as "a selfish swindler, an adroit actor, and a perfidious megalomaniac" in his article, "A Sinner is a Sinner is a Sinner--A Study of Raju" (1981, 135). On the other hand, Narasimhaiah almost canonizes Raju as a saint: "With all his limitations Raju's is a rich and complex life--achieving integration at last. It is worthwhile studying this singular success of the novelist's creation. It is obviously not very easy to make a saint out of a sinner, especially for one with a comic vision of life" (1979, 186). These are two extreme views. It is better to bear constantly two things in mind while discussing the transcendent. First, in Narayan's fiction, there is no absolute integration or liberation; it is therefore misleading to speak of saints and sinners, as though such categories are mutually exclusive. Second, Narayan is not inter-
ested in presenting good or bad characters, but in tracing the reactions and vibrations which may affect the inner Self of a person during the process of integration through ordinary events. What counts is the process, not any absolute or final outcome.

Raju's life occurs in three phases: his position as a tourist guide, "Railway Raju"; his adventure with the dancer Rosie and her husband Marco; and finally his life at the village, Mangala. He never settles down with a family life. The remarkable and recurrent features in Raju's life in all three phases are several: his innate tendency to accommodate and please others ("I have to play the part expected of me. There is no escape" [The Guide, 45]); his gregarious nature and his love of public attention ("It is something to become so famous, isn't it, instead of handing out matches and tobacco?" [The Guide, 52]); the complex co-existence of the mundane and the transcendent--"self deception and sincerity" (Walsh 1982, 114); and finally, whatever his pretence and ambiguities may be, his concern for the welfare of those whom he serves, even though this concern is often self-serving.

Raju begins as the son of an ordinary shopkeeper who must occasionally tend his father's shop. He enjoys the position of a salesman in meeting a variety of people. When the railways come to Malgudi, Raju is urbanized, and also with some unique intuition he attains great fame and posi-
tion in Malgudi and environs as "the guide": "Tourists who recommended him to each other would say at one time, 'If you are lucky enough to be guided by Raju, you will know everything. He will not only show you all the worthwhile places, but also will help you in every way!'" (The Guide, 8). Raju is a helper by nature. His humble beginnings in no way indicate any possibility of his later becoming an "omniscient humanist":

You may ask me why I became a guide or when. It is for the same reason that someone else is a signaller, porter or guard. It is fated thus. Don't laugh at my railway associations. The railway got into my blood very early in life. Engines with their tremendous clanging and smoke ensnared my senses. I felt at home on the railway platform and considered the station-master and porter the best company for man, and their railway talk the most enlightened. I grew up in their midst. Ours was a small house opposite the Malgudi station. The house had been built by my father with his own hands long before the trains were thought of. (The Guide, 10)

From the time his father handed over the small shop at the station to Raju, Raju has been growing amidst the thrill he derives from the modernity and bustle of the environment. He enjoys company: "I liked to talk to people. I liked to hear people talk" (The Guide, 43). In order to accommodate himself to others and to meet the expectations of others, he equips himself in many ways: "I read stuff that interested me, bored me, baffled me, and dozed off in my seat. I read stuff that picked up a noble thought, a philosophy that appealed, I gazed on pictures . . . I learnt much from scrap" (The Guide, 44). He is never left alone: "Although I
never looked for acquaintances, they somehow came looking for me" (The Guide, 49). When people come with enquiries or to seek his help, Raju is unable to say "no" to anyone:

I never said, "I don't know." Not in my nature, I suppose. If I had the inclination to say "I don't know what you are talking about," my life would have taken a different turn. Instead, I said, "Oh, yes, a fascinating place. Haven't you seen it? You must find the time to visit it, otherwise your whole trip here would be a waste." I am sorry I said it, an utter piece of falsehood. It was not because I wanted to utter a falsehood, but only because I wanted to be pleasant. (The Guide, 49)

Without giving serious thought to the enquiries or the subject, Raju furnishes the information in order to please the enquirer, and to accommodate himself to any situation.

Thus, from the beginning of his career, he is an accommodator: "So extreme a degree of accommodation means that Raju's sincerity consists in being false, and his positive existence is being a vacancy filled by others" (Walsh 1982, 122). What Walsh ignores, however, is that Raju's attempts to accommodate, mundane as they are, nonetheless prepare him for the transcendent life he eventually achieves. While Krishna in The English Teacher broods over his inability to teach his college students according to his own convictions, here Raju accommodates as a product of others' interests and needs. Raju's personality is shaped as a kind of "selfless detachment," sacrificing self and identity to please others--this is also an essential quality for good business. Such detachment and sacrifice can lead to a loss of genuine identity. It can lead, however, to
transcendence.

One day a scholar named Marco and his wife Rosie arrive in Malgudi as tourists. Life takes many unexpected turns for Raju after Marco's appearance. "Enigmatic" and "a queer abstraction of a man," Marco has his interests in "collecting and annotating ancient art," and has little appreciation for Rosie's talents as a classical dancer, or indeed any other interests: "Anything that interested her seemed to irritate him" (The Guide, 67). With his humanitarian and tactful approach, Raju easily gains Marco's confidence: "I was accepted by Marco as a member of the family. From guiding tourists I seemed to have come to a sort of concentrated guiding of a single family" (The Guide, 100).

Marco's scholarly preoccupation with the ruined temples (reminiscent of totally secularized and insensitive teachers and scholars in Narayan's other works) and Rosie's loneliness and dazzling beauty initiate Raju into an affair with Marco's discontented wife. "Their relationship," as Walsh observes, "both at the beginning and later when she breaks off with Marco and comes to live with Raju, appears to be much more one of feeling than sensuality, a temperamental rather than a passionate union" (1982, 123). Rosie is the only woman Raju is infatuated with, though temporarily, and is the only woman in his life, save his mother, to warn him on his vanity. But, Raju accommodates Rosie, and--as always--takes an interest in what most interests her,
namely, classical dance.

Dance in India is a religious ritual, because it is an archetype of the dance of Shiva, "the god whose primal dance created the vibrations that set the world in motion" (The Guide, 108). By caste Rosie is a temple dancer, familiar with the Natya Shastra of Bharat Muni (a thousand-year-old treatise on dance by sage Bharat). Besides her studious reading at least a couple of hours every forenoon in the ancient works of art ("to keep the purity of the classical forms") she wishes to be helped by some expert who can read and explain to her "episodes from Ramayana and Mahabharata, because they are a treasure house, and we can pick up so many ideas for new compositions from them" (The Guide, 108). She further demonstrates to Raju not only her skill, but her religious commitment to this ancient art. One day, standing at one end of the hall, she sings in a soft undertone a song from an ancient Sanskrit composition of a lover and a lass:

When she lightly raised her foot and let it down, allowing her ankles to jingle, I felt thrilled. Though I was an ignoramus, I felt moved by the movements, rhythm, and time, although I did not quite follow the meaning of the words. . . . "Lover means always God," and she took the trouble to explain to me the intricacies of its rhythm. . . . I could see, through her effort, the magnificence of the composition, its symbolism, the boyhood of a very young god, and his fulfilment in marriage, the passage of years from youth to decay, but the heart remaining ever fresh like a lotus on a pond. When she indicated the lotus with her fingers, you could almost hear the ripple of water around it. She held the performance for nearly an hour; it filled me with the greatest pleasure on earth. I could honestly declare that while I watched her perform, my mind was free, for once from all carnal thoughts; I viewed her as a pure abstraction. (The
On seeing the brilliant performance, and on hearing Rosie's eloquence and her earnestness on this subject, Raju feels that he ought immediately to pick up and cultivate the necessary jargon. I felt silly to be watching her and listening to her, absolutely tongue-tied. There were, of course, two ways open: to bluff one's way through and trust to luck, or to make a clean breast of it all. I listened to her talk for two days and finally confessed to her, "I am a layman, not knowing much of the technicalities of the dance; I'd like you to teach me something of it." I didn't want her to interpret it as an aversion on my part to the art. That might drive her back to the arms of her husband, and so I took care to maintain the emphasis on my passion for the art. (The Guide, 109)

It is obvious how sincerity and self deception, a caution not to offend or displease Rosie, an anxiety to be on a par in taste and knowledge, and a fear of losing this beautiful woman—all co-exist in Raju. The mundane pull is strong yet, as so often in Narayan's fiction, inextricably mixed with the sacred. But only because Rosie is in her own way a devout young woman, completely devoted to her art, can she serve as an improbable step in Raju's journey toward the transcendence of his own mundane and multifarious life. Raju, it may be said, has no mind of his own; he lives at the whim of others about him and his own transient emotion. Rosie does have a mind of her own, and together they embark on the most persistent and single-minded project imaginable for Raju.

Although Rosie makes many good efforts to stay with
her husband, and stabilize her love and marriage, Marco deserts her during their second trip to Malgudi: "The word 'dance' always stung him" (The Guide, 130). Dance, and other fine arts in India originated in the temple. Almost every composition or choreography of south Indian classical pieces of performing and fine arts is a form of prayer. Art was a form of bhakti, prayerful articulations of devotion to the Absolute godhead. But in Marco's opinion, dance is nothing more than some "street-acrobatics." Marco's dislike has some grounds, owing to the numerous scandals of lechery caused by some of the temple authorities and dancers. Hence, he is very much infuriated on hearing Rosie argue:

"Everyone except you likes it."

"For instance?"

"Well, Raju saw me do it, and he was transported. . . ."

". . . you are not my wife. You are a woman who will go to bed with anyone who flatters your antics. . . ."

(The Guide, 132-134)

With this argument, Marco makes up his mind to leave Rosie. When Marco leaves Malgudi, Rosie takes refuge in Raju's house in order to nurture her art. He consoles her on hearing her sorry plight: "'You are in the right place. Forget all your past. We will teach that cad a lesson by and by.' I made a grandiose announcement. 'First, I'll make the world recognize you as the greatest artist of the age'" (The
Raju's spontaneous promises and emotional utterances to console and help the other party are not surprising, since he has shaped himself to be an accommodator.

His widowed mother doesn't approve of Rosie's presence in the house, and warns him of the danger that might follow when a married girl, especially a dancer, deserted by her husband stays with a bachelor in the same house. The role of women in Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts, and The English Teacher in enhancing the transcendence of the protagonists is vital. Here, Raju, a self-made man, pays little heed to his helpless mother, and her sacred and traditional values: "'Don't interfere, Mother. I am an adult. I know what I am doing.' . . . "I don't care for their [his uncle and cousin's] opinion. Just don't bother about such things'" (The Guide, 135-136). Encouraged by Raju, Rosie starts her dance practice: "She got up at five in the morning, bathed and prayed before the picture of a god in my mother's niche, and began the practice session which went on for nearly three hours. The house rang with the jingling of her anklets" (The Guide, 136).

Raju's mother keeps insisting to him that Rosie ought to go to her husband "and fall at his feet" (The Guide, 137). She instructs Rosie too with anecdotes on the varieties of husbands, "good husbands, mad husbands, reasonable husbands, unreasonable ones, savage ones, slightly deranged
ones, moody ones, and so on and so forth; but it was always
the wife, by her doggedness, perseverance and patience, that
brought him round" (The Guide, 137). Such instructions to
Rosie from Raju’s mother increase day by day. She also
"quoted numerous mythological stories of Savitri, Seetha,
and all well known heroines" (The Guide, 137). Raju turns a
defear ear to his mother's traditional views, and Rosie is
torn between her passion for art and an indifferent husband.
With finances not so well off, Raju, though he wishes, is
not in a position to keep Rosie in any hotel. Hence, Raju
is forced to face gossips and insults from his people and
creditors, and has to stay with his mother in the same
house.

Rosie continues to be a devoted artist though in the
beginning Raju tries to use her just to satiate his carnal
emotions and passions, in order to forget his worries and
troubles. As for Rosie, "She was a devoted artist, her
passion for physical love was falling into place, and had
ceased to be a primary obsession with her" (The Guide, 145).
Raju never ponders over the sacredness of tradition and
morality. The women in his life are not able to effect his
crascendence. Although Raju’s mother tries to adjust to
Raju’s ways “as an unmitigated loafer,” the arrival of her
elder brother brings matters to a close. Finally, despite
his pleas, his mother leaves him and Malgudi in order to
live with her brother in another village. She reminds him
as she leaves, "'Don't fail to light the lamps in the God's niche.' . . . 'Be careful with your health'" (The Guide, 155).

After his mother's departure, Raju and Rosie are "a married couple to all appearances" (The Guide, 155). Rosie manages the house-keeping in addition to her dance practices. Raju is prone to steep himself "in an all-absorbing romanticism, until I woke up to the fact she was getting tired of it all" (The Guide, 155). Rosie insists on further plans as she is now ready for public performance, "a show for four hours" (The Guide, 157). The deteriorating financial position compels Raju to awaken from his licentious slumber.

One day, his creditor, a wholesale merchant, calls on Raju. Raju owes the merchant a good sum of money. Within a week Raju has to appear in court regarding his debts. With no friends left, except the taxi-driver, Gaffur, Raju shares with him his new vision of Rosie: "'She is a gold-mine' I cried. 'If I had money to start her with - oh!' My visions soared. I said to him, 'You know Bharat Natyam is the greatest art-business today. There is such a craze for it that people will pay anything to see the best'. . . ." (The Guide, 144). Raju's efforts, combined with Rosie's brilliance in and devotion to her art, open new gates to fame and money.

Once Rosie's talent and genius as a dancer are recog-
nized by the public, "rocket-like she soared" (The Guide, 162). Raju's relationship with Rosie alters "from being personal to functional or official." With the change of her name to "Nalini," Raju is now "less the lover and more the manager, trainer and agent of Rosie" (Walsh 1982, 124).

Living now in a world of "showmanship,"

[they are] going through a set of mechanical actions day in and day out -- the same receptions at the same station, fussy organizers, encounters, and warnings, the same middle sofa in the first row, speeches and remarks and smiles, polite conversation, garlands and flash photos, congratulations, and off to catch the train -- pocketing the most important thing, the cheque . . . . I demanded the highest fee, and got it, of anyone in India. I treated those that came to ask for a show as supplicants. I had an enormous monthly income, I spent an enormous amount of income tax. Yet I found Nalini accepting it all with a touch of resignation rather than bouncing contentment. (The Guide, 172)

Rosie's interest declines once Raju commercializes her art.

Krishna's dissatisfaction and anger in The English Teacher, too, partly rest on the fact that education, especially the profession of a teacher, is commercialized. Although by caste a temple dancer, and now a woman living away from her husband with another man, Rosie's sense of values is not entirely wiped out. Raju has no sense of any values of his own. With no awareness as to how his inner self is affected, he revels in publicity, money, and busy schedules. The experience with Rosie, though potentially transcendent, thus turns out to be a false start--as so often happens in Narayan's work.

The world of fortune and fame collapses as suddenly as
it came about. One day, a bulky letter addressed to Rosie from a lawyer's firm in Madras arrives by registered mail. Raju wavers for a moment, deciding whether to open it himself or give it to Rosie. The mundane wins. He opens the letter and learns that Rosie's lawyer has sent an application to be duly signed by his client and her husband Marco, for the release of her jewels from the bank. The mundane in Raju rejoices at the thought of more jewels, and prompts him first to delay handing over the letter to Rosie and finally to keep Rosie in ignorance of the letter and its contents. The lawyer's instruction, "Per return post," urges Raju to act fast, not through honest means, but to forge Rosie's signature. Whether Raju acted deliberately or "out of some muddled system of motives, a mixture of curiosity, jealousy, good will, sheer love of the devious, and the habit of doing things for no adequate reason at all," Raju is soon prosecuted for forgery, and sentenced to two years imprisonment (Walsh 1982, 124). With this event, the second phase of his career terminates.

In jail, however, Raju's leadership among his fellow convicts as "model prisoner" keeps him busy as a public person:

*I visited all departments of the prison as a sort of benevolent supervisor. I got on well with all the warders. . . . Whether they were homicides or cut-throats or highwaymen, they [the prisoners] all listened to me, and I could talk them out of their blackest moods. When there was a respite, I told them stories and philosophies and what not. And they came to refer to me as vadhyar -- that is, teacher. There were five*
hundred prisoners in that building and I could claim to have established a fairly widespread intimacy with most of them. (The Guide, 202-203)

The amazing vitality with which Raju could face the grim situation, and could do positive things for his fellow convicts cannot be dismissed. Raju does not allow either his spirits or those of the other prisoners to sink into hopelessness. Quite unaware, he is able to liberate the prisoners from their "blackest moods." Here, too, he is a guide, a guru, a teacher. Whatever his personal shortcomings, now in this environment, where men are locked up so as to undergo remorse, alienation, and loneliness, Raju gives them rays of hope. Raju had rendered the same kind of assistance to Rosie whenever her spirits got shattered by her indifferent husband.

After rendering his services to his fellow prisoners, Raju spends some time in solitude with nature and work in the vegetable garden:

I loved every piece of this work, the blue sky and sunshine, and the shade of the house in which I sat and worked, the feel of cold water; it produced in me a luxurious sensation. Oh, it seemed to be so good to be alive and feeling all this -- the smell of freshly turned earth filled me with the greatest delight (The Guide, 203-204).

Raju has the unique capacity to love life wherever he is, and to relish things around him. Despite his unedifying past, he lives the present in its every moment and accepts every thing it offers. Instead of brooding over things past and lost, he is in harmony with nature, and enjoys the
luxury of blue sky, sunshine, shade, and the earth. In fact he feels sorry to be released after his term, since he finds the prison "not a bad place," except "to be awakened every morning at five," which he hated (The Guide, 8).

After his release from prison, the third phase commences at a neglected temple on the outskirts of a little village, Mangala, where Raju seeks shelter. He spends the night here and awakes the next morning to find a peasant, Velan, staring at him intensely. Velan is the first peasant to discover Raju by the sacred precincts: "Raju welcomed the intrusion—something to relieve the loneliness of the place. The man stood gazing reverentially on his face. Raju felt amused and embarrassed" (The Guide, 5). Velan associates the temple and the river flowing beneath it, the sacred symbols of India, with Raju. After that day, the rustics unquestioningly impose reverence and devotion on Raju, and consider him a divine oracle: "The villager on the lower step looked up at his face with devotion, which irked Raju" (The Guide, 8). Raju asks brusquely, "Why do you look at me like that?" to which the man replies, "I don't know" (The Guide, 8). Thus, Raju is raised to the level of a spiritual leader without any effort on his part. Raju is astonished, and so he "stroked his chin thoughtfully to make sure that an apostolic beard had not suddenly grown there" (The Guide, 6).

Raju wants to tell them that he is at their village
because he has nowhere else to go, and that he is "not as great" as they "imagine" but just an "ordinary" man, but whenever he attempts to articulate this truth something or other hinders him. First, Velan seriously seeks Raju's guidance in dealing with a problem. Now "the old, old habit of affording guidance to others" asserts itself, and so Raju enquires about the problem without uttering the truth he wanted to. It is also "his nature to get involved in other people's interests and activities" (The Guide, 8). When the naive rustics approach him with problems, Raju nods his head and adds, "'So has everyone,' in a sudden access of pontificality. Ever since the moment this man [Velan] had come and sat before him, gazing on his face, he [Raju] had experienced a feeling of importance" (The Guide, 13). This time his role is that of a "spiritual guide." The extreme simplicity of Velan and companions, "the stuff disciples are made of" (The Guide, 17), which Balarama Gupta calls "idiotic," enhances the role of Raju (1981, 130). But in these simple folks, intellect is subordinated to intuition, and dogma to experience, and hence, they fail to probe the authenticity of any guru or sanvasi. Thereafter, Raju feels "like an actor who was always expected to utter the right sentence" (The Guide, 14).

Chandran in The Bachelor of Arts, too, takes the easy guise of a sanvasi to live amidst the villagers. But his choice is an alternative to suicide, and once he realizes
his folly he gives up the guise and returns home. The gifts of food brought by the villagers solve Raju's immediate problem of satisfying his hunger, whereas Chandran's sense of remorse is provoked by the very sight of the gifts the villagers bring as an offering. Yet in both cases, the villagers benefit by strengthening their own religious sensibilities. In Raju, Narayan presents "the ironic treatment of a hallowed Indian prototype whose avatars [incarnations] continue to beguile Indians and mystify Westerners . . . " (Kantak 1970, 42). But Narayan's irony in Raju "becomes something like a new perspective because his sympathies are as deeply engaged by the genuine component of that prototype as his derision is aroused by the imposture often foisted upon it" (Kantak 1970, 42). It is easier to brand Raju as a sinner than to wait with immense patience and compassion to trace the effects of such imposed spiritual leadership.

Narayan's comic art and subtle irony are at their height in these episodes, and doubtless many readers do (and should) enjoy them for that reason alone. But there is a deeper level, as we see Raju once again drawn willy-nilly, by a naive single-mindedness akin to Rosie's, into an ambiguously sacred role. He is compelled, by the will of others simpler even than he is, to rise above his limitations--or more precisely, to make the most of his talents and what by now must be called his long schooling in both unselfish dedication and shameless showmanship.
Ordinary utterances and simple guesses of Raju are sufficient to provoke the rustics' admiration, and to increase their pious sentiments. Velan comes one day and tells Raju of his worry concerning his step-sister:

"As the head of the family, I have given her every comfort at home, provided her with all the jewellery and clothes a girl needs, but . . . " He paused slightly before bringing out the big surprise. But Raju completed the sentence for him, "The girl shows no gratitude."

"Absolutely, sir!" said the man.

"And she shall not accept your plans for her marriage?"

"Oh, too true, sir," Velan said, wonderstruck.

(The Guide, 14)

Now, after this conversation, Velan has no doubts about the prophetic abilities of Raju.

Whenever Raju makes earnest attempts to make his position clear, and to erase their faith in him, he not only fails, but makes the reverence soar higher than before. Raju tells Velan sharply, "There is nothing extraordinary in my guess," and promptly comes the reply from Velan: "Not for you to say that, sir. Things may look easy enough for a giant, but ordinary poor mortals like us can never know what goes on in other people's minds" (The Guide, 27).

Sivaramakrishna points out that "The basic structural polarity of the novel, in terms of characters, is built around the villager Velan [or villagers] and the urbanized Raju . . . " (1978, 71). Here is a principle of double effects--the uncritical faith of the simple villagers acts
as a compelling force for Raju to continue amidst their company. The fine compliments and simple faith that well from the hearts of the people bewilder Raju, yet his uneasiness is only within him, and he never makes any bold attempt to clear the place on account of his second thoughts about his economy and identity which fare well near the temple, river, and village. Although he is aware of the false role imposed on him, he "acquiesces" in it.

Raju adjusts his physical appearance to suit the role --acquiring beard and beads--for which Balarama Gupta calls Raju "a classic example of a counterfeit guru, a hypocrite masquerading as a saint, a sinner in saffron" (1981, 31). However, Raju is amazed "at the amount of wisdom welling from the depths of his being" (The Guide, 41). No wonder "the Yogi is still a mysterious figure and a source of satirical portraiture in the hands of the Western novelist" (Narasimhaiah 1979, 182). There is a general tendency in most Westerners to associate Yoga or the mysticism of the East only with some rigorous and bizarre exotic exercises of the body.

Some Eastern crooks and vagabonds reinforce this general tendency by posing as astrologers, yoga masters, saffron-robed sanyasis with "beard and beads," etc., for monetary purposes. We can recall the humiliation Chandran suffered in The Bachelor of Arts, when the post-master correctly identified him as one of the "English-speaking
sanyasis" who are willing to foretell the future for a sum of money (The Bachelor of Arts, 113). Spirituality or religious sensibility can nowhere be commercialized. Narayan brings in these different figures and counterfeits to contrast with the genuine religious sensibility and culture of India. Those who pay attention to these fake figures are like the unliberated Krishna who, in the initial stages is misguided by the notion that automatic writing is the final goal in life. Raju, undoubtedly, is a fake sanyasi at this moment though he doesn't perform any of the exotic feats. Another important observation regarding Raju is that though he is far from any genuine sage, he never misguides these simple folks. On the contrary, he works towards their unity and their wellbeing.

One day when the children of the village throng around him and gaze in awe, Raju, in the manner of big men in cities, asks the small boys about their school and classes. On hearing that they have no school in the village and that the boys minded the cattle all day, "Raju clicked his tongue in disapproval" (The Guide, 39). His emotions and gestures, though often not genuine, have an infectious effect on his audience: "The gathering looked pained and anxious" (The Guide, 39). As usual, Raju explains grandly the importance of education, and inspires them with the suggestion of an evening school. Raju of course is a well educated man, though largely self-educated, through his indiscriminate
reading, his expertise as a tour guide, and his interest in Rosie's sacred arts. The next afternoon, a school master meets with Raju to talk about the difficulties of an evening school, but Raju says with authority: "'I like to see young boys become literate and intelligent.' He added with fervor because it sounded nice. 'It's our duty to make everyone happy and wise.' This overwhelming altruism was too much for the teacher. 'I'll do anything,' he said, 'under your guidance'" (The Guide, 41). The teacher goes back to the village "a changed man." Himself not yet liberated, still he helps the children of the village to liberation—from ignorance to knowledge.

The following evening, a dozen children of the village gather in the ruined temple for their education. The teacher points out to Raju the reason for the small attendance: "'They are afraid of crossing the river in the dark; they have heard of a crocodile hereabouts'" (The Guide, 41). Raju's eloquent lecture on courage and fearlessness is very effective:

"What can a crocodile do to you if your mind is clear and your conscience is untroubled?" Raju said grandly. It was a wonderful sentiment to express. . . . "Keep your ears open and mouth shut, that'll take you far," hitting upon a brilliant aphorism. (The Guide, 41-44)

Pouring out fine sentiments, often without realizing their seriousness, has become quite habitual for Raju. Courage and fearlessness are the fruits of transcendence, but the aphorisms Raju utters to the simple villagers are not those
of a transcended Raju; he merely poses as a guru as if witnessing to the spirit and some disinterested virtues. Yet the villagers' genuine faith in his spiritual guidance and fine sentiments always moves the villagers themselves towards liberation, and Raju's mundane virtues begin to take on sacred value. At the teacher's request, Raju talks to the small boys on godliness, cleanliness, Ramayana, and the epics. It is an irony to hear him speak of "clear mind" and untroubled conscience. Yet his eloquence does effect courage and fearlessness in them; the "upturned faces of the children" shone in the half light as they listened to Raju.

Day by day his name and fame grow enormously:
"... his prestige grows beyond his wildest dreams. His life had lost its personal limitations; his gatherings had become so large that they overflowed into the outer corridors..." (The Guide, 47). Things proceed smoothly till a drought hits Mangala, when hunger, poverty, loss, and petty quarrels between villages increase with time. Raju reflects and decides: "The village people do not know how to remain peaceful. They are becoming more and more agitated. At this rate, I think I’ll look for a new place" (The Guide, 84).

Narayan allows his readers to draw whatever implications they will from his relentless and comic exposure of Raju. Jones calls Raju a "delightful humbug," and comments: "His story is full of human qualities that hold true from
In the character of Raju, Narayan portrays the enormous proportion of the mundane in every man, which is constantly in conflict with transcendent urges, and which ever attempts to postpone or delay the integration to the very end.

Balarama Gupta accuses Narayan of being "less scathing and more covert" in his attacks on Raju, "because he [Narayan] can laugh at human follies and absurdities without any great involvement or a well-defined commitment to human values" (1981, 135). But Narayan, as Narasimhaiah states, knows his men and women; he knows their pettiness as well as their ideals and aspirations, and above all, the little ironies of their lives. He looks at all of them with a tenderness and a compassion more like a Jane Austen than a George Eliot, much less as a Hardy. (1979, 175)

At any rate, Raju grows, "against serious odds . . . " (Narasimhaiah 1979, 187). His fame and position as a guru are well established, yet they carry with them an enormous responsibility, especially in bad times. Raju dreads any serious responsibility, particularly when it concerns his own liberation from his deep rooted "self-deception," yet he cannot escape the situation at Mangala which grows worse with time. "His life," as Narayan explicitly indicates, "had lost its personal limitations."

He cannot exercise his charism to control nature, as he did with the simple folks. The rains fail. The wells
dry up. The cattle are found dead. People quarrel at the water-hole for priorities, and there is "fear, desperation and lamentation in their voices." Raju, "on observing the growing violence in the village, and the villagers' fights with other neighboring villagers for commodities," feels it "impossible to lecture on the ethics of peace, and so merely says, 'No one should fight'" (The Guide, 87). With selfish motives he reflects: "He did not like the idea of commotion. It might affect the isolation of the place, and bring the police on the scene. He did not want anyone to come to the village" (The Guide, 87).

While Raju is alarmed over growing unrest in the village, though with selfish apprehensions, Velan's younger brother, "one of the lesser intelligences of the village," brings news about a serious fight between the villagers. Raju feels too weary to reason with this "semi-moron," hence he grips the boy's arm and says:

"Tell your brother, immediately, wherever he may be, that unless they are good I'll never eat."

"Eat what?" asked the boy, rather puzzled.

"Say that I'll not eat. Don't ask what. I'll not eat unless they are good."

. . . .

This was frankly beyond the comprehension of the boy. . . . His eyes opened wide. He could not connect the fight and this man's food. (The Guide, 87)

Raju never foresees that the message he delivers to Velan's younger brother can undergo such an enormous distortion.
velan and company hear the message: "The Swami, the Swami, does not want food anymore . . . because . . . it doesn't rain" (The Guide, 88-89). The message is mistaken for a fast, and so the villagers start prostrating before Raju. They tell him: "You are not a human being. You are a Mahatma. We should consider ourselves blessed indeed to be able to touch the dust of your feet" (The Guide, 93).

Much against his will and expectation, another great title is conferred on Raju, "Mahatma" (great soul), which implies in this context fast and sacrifice. Gandhi is always addressed as "Mahatma Gandhi," because of his greatness. Shortly before his death in 1948 Gandhi undertook a fast to end communal disturbances and pleaded for brotherhood and understanding. So the undertaking of fast to bring peace and unity by great people is well known even to these illiterate simple folks of Mangala.

The whole countryside is now in a happy ferment, "because a great soul had agreed to go through the trial" (The Guide, 95). The villagers are edified by the sacrifice Raju is to undertake on their behalf: "They gazed on his face and kept looking up in a new manner; there was a greater solemnity in the air than he had ever known before," and "Raju felt really touched by this attitude" (The Guide, 93-95). Here, the villagers' faith and reverence infect him, and his old habit of complying and accommodating now compel him to serve them according to their wishes. The villagers' spon-
taneous remarks reveal and affirm the exalted regard they have for Raju:

"This Mangala is a blessed country to have a man like the Swami in our midst. No bad thing will come to us as long as he is with us. He is like Mahatma. When Mahatma Gandhi went without food, how many things happened in India! This is a man like that. If he fasts there will be rain. Out of his love for us he is undertaking it. This will surely bring rain and help us . . ." The atmosphere became electrified. They forgot the fight, and all their trouble and bickering. (The Guide, 90)

The villagers may appear idiotic in their blind faith in Raju, because, "Whatever the battle Gandhi might be engaged in, his weapons were always ahimsa ('non-violence, the refusal to hurt any living thing'), truthfulness, courtesy, and love" (Zaehner 1966, 173).

Raju, the reader knows, is far from the essential Gandhian ideologies which emphasized even during the freedom struggle that "until the Indians had freed themselves from egoistic passions, they would never free themselves from the British" (Zaehner 1966, 177). Raju's ego is still deeply satiated, though at times with apprehension, in the veneration he receives from the simple folks. Once this is acknowledged, one still must say that Raju's way of stroking his ego brings wonder, beauty, and liberation to the villagers--moreover, with hindsight, we can see that he has been doing this sort of thing throughout his life, and that his chequered career has even been a preparation for his ambiguously holy life.

Velan says that a Saviour should "stand in knee-deep
water, look to the skies, and utter the prayer lines for two weeks, completely fasting during the period . . . " (The Guide, 95). Raju realizes "the enormity of his own creation," and the "giant" he has created with his "puny self" (The Guide, 96). His realization leads to no remorse, rather it impels him to ponder on his imprudent calculations. If he had known that his pious suggestions would be applied to him, "he might have probably given a different formula" (The Guide, 97). Even now he is "perhaps ready to take the risk, if there was half the chance of getting away," yet he is moved "by the recollection of the big crowd of women and children touching his feet," and "by the thought of their gratitude" (The Guide, 97).

The earnestness with which the villagers express their sentiment and faith "brought tears to Raju's eyes" (The Guide, 95). He feels deeply that "after all the time had come for him to be serious--to attach value to his own words. He needed time--and solitude to think over the whole matter" (The Guide, 96). As he tries to speak, "his tone hushed with real humility and fear; his manner was earnest" (The Guide, 96).

Balarama Gupta may view The Guide as a "delightful" exposure of the "ignorance ridden Indian rural society as well as of typically Indian pseudo saints" (1981, 135): but the veneration, not the imprudence, of these simple folks, "with unswerving faith in God and the goodness of man"
(Narasimhaiah 1979, 178), for "Raju the sanyasi," can be attributed to their cultural heritage:

> From the beginning of her history India has adored and idealized, not soldiers and statesmen, not men of science and leaders of industry, not even poets and philosophers . . . but men who have stamped infinity on the thought and life of the country, men who have added to the invisible forces of goodness in the world. (Radhakrishnan 1959, 35)

There is a reversal of role here. While the villagers believe that Raju is their guru, Raju is now their disciple. Their faith and piety impel Raju to transform himself. In the end, Raju's resolution to keep away from food gives him "a peculiar strength," and his strength develops on these reflections: "If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?" (The Guide, 213). Narayan comments:

> 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. (The Guide, 213)

Raju's "earnest effort" and "full application" fill him with enthusiasm and vigour to go through the ordeal. On the fourth day of his fast, he goes down to the river and prays with perfect composure. Undoubtedly, it is "a supplication to the heavens to send down rain and save humanity" (The Guide, 213). The rhythmic chant, his form of prayer, lulls his tired body, and numbs his weak knees. Quite exhausted, he comes up to rest for a while on a mat near the temple.
only to Mangala, not only to the entire vicinity, but to the entire nation as well. Journalists keep reporting through various news media about Raju’s fast and his condition. Even an American, James J. Malone, film producer from California, expresses his desire to carry the scene back to his country with the help of his television camera.

On the eleventh morning of his fast, Raju, helped by Velan and others, steps into the river:

Everyone followed in a solemn, silent pace. The eastern sky was red. Many in the camp were still sleeping. Raju could not walk, but he insisted upon pulling himself along all the same. He panted with the effort. He went down the steps of the river, halting for breath on each step, and finally reached his basin of water. He stepped into it, shut his eyes and turned towards the mountain, his lips muttering the prayer. Velan and another held him each by an arm. The morning sun was out by now; a great shaft of light illuminated the surroundings. It was difficult to hold Raju to his feet, as he had a tendency to flop down. They held him as if he were a baby. Raju opened his eyes, looked about, and said, "Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs--" and with that he sagged down. (The Guide, 221)

With eyes fixed on the sun-lit mountain, and with lips chanting the prayer for rain Raju finally collapses in the river. As Narasimhaiah indicates, Raju merges "literally and symbolically, into the world of nature" (1979, 178). Regarding this end of the novel, Narayan says in My Days: "Graham Greene liked the story when I narrated it to him in London. While I was hesitating whether to leave my hero dead at the end of the story, Graham was definite that he should die" (1974, 168). The death, besides indicating the end of this earthly sojourn of Raju, also indicates his
death to his old self. There is also the traditional Hindu belief that "gods can be propitiated and rains can be brought about to end a severe drought if somebody sacrifices his life through fasting and prayer" (Varma 1985a, 136). Raju's final words, "'Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs -- '. . . " (The Guide, 221), leave the reader to conclude on his own--the rain is just on the hills, and it may or may not reach Mangala, yet Raju feels a merging with nature.

The poverty and violence in Mangala appear as hostile factors threatening Raju's apparent safety and security; but the very same factors bring seriousness to the life of Raju. It is uncertain whether his fast really brings rain to the village; but his efforts to subdue violence and bring peace do succeed. Once he starts his fast, crowds pour into Mangala--not for any fight or violence, but to watch the Mahatma, thereby to take part in the sacrifice. There is integration. Thus, Raju's sacrifice works out a collective transcendence. Mangala and the nearby villages, representing rural India, are illiterate; poverty drives them to violence; their religiosity may be of the folk standard; and Narayan doesn't shy away from the portrayal of these irrational people. Yet the sacred custom of revering a man of god and his sacrifice, and obeying his dictums even at the cost of surrender is vital in these simple folks' life and tradition. Thus, Raju not only calms the people, but unites
Transcendence in Narayan's fiction is never a solitary affair.

Balarama Gupta accuses Narayan of irresponsibility:

Narayan's attack on his roguish protagonist appears less scathing and more covert than it would have been at the hands of Mulk Raj Anand or Bhabani Bhattacharya, because he can laugh at human follies and absurdities without any great involvement or a well-defined commitment to human values. (1981, 135)

But this judgment springs from his expectation that Narayan or any novelist should write for social causes and didactic purposes. Narayan, however, accepts man in his totality—both his imperfections and his aspirations. Hence, Driesen commends Narayan: "The primary impression [in The Guide] is of fallibility and vulnerability—truly an Indian version of Everyman. Yet his characters remain rounded, individual and authentic portraiture" (1977, 58).

Despite severe arguments over the characterization of Raju, the pattern of transcendence with its different phases is indisputable, even though Raju's life is exceptionally disorganized. Raju has held several positions in life—a railway shopman, a railway guide, Rosie's agent, a prisoner, and finally an ascetic guru. While passing from one position to the next, Raju has encountered concrete realms of transition, several of them religious, but he proves immune to any spiritual milieu or transcendence. Starting as an ordinary boy minding his father's shop at the outskirts of Malgudi, Raju, a school drop-out, gathers knowledge from various sources—assorted reading of second-hand books at
the stall: "I read stuff that pricked up a noble thought, a philosophy that appealed, I gazed on pictures of temples . . ."; listening to tourists, etc., he "learnt much from scrap"—and elevates his position from a small shop owner to a tourist guide. Formerly a good business man at the railway shop, he gains recognition as a versatile tourist guide—every tourist is directed to "Railway Raju." As a tourist guide, he meets different and strange people, and guides them to strange places of interest. When people wish to see the source of Sarayu, a sacred place, Raju is unaffected by such religious sensibilities though he guides people to such spots, and eloquently provides information on them. Especially when Marco arrives at Malgudi as a tourist, Raju has to accompany Marco to the ruined temples of Malgudi. Hence, before Raju starts the tour, he educates himself on "the episodes of Ramayana carved on the stone wall in the Iswara Temple"—a religious realm, but there is no spiritual experience in him.

When he encounters and makes his acquaintance with Rosie, it is a beautiful, enchanting, and religious realm of music and dance—but it does not affect Raju. Night and day he sees Rosie entirely and religiously devoted to her sacred art even during a very tragic situation in her married life. When his little house is filled with the sweet music of Rosie's ankle bells during her long hours of practice—a new and sacred realm—though Raju enjoys her art and views her
as a "pure abstraction," yet even in this religious realm, Raju makes no spiritual discovery. Instead, he turns Rosie into a commercial venture. Even in prison, which may prove a bewildering physical realm for a normal human being, Raju is neither restless nor dissatisfied. He proves himself a good teacher to the fellow prisoners—personally, his value system remains unaltered, and there is no spiritual experience.

Finally, after his release from prison, he literally and physically enters a strange, bewildering, and religious realm, when he takes refuge in the ruined temple on the river banks at Mangala. The villagers almost identify him with one of the deities in the temple, and revere him as a god-sent prophet in the religious precinct. Raju is stunned, hence he checks whether an "apostolic beard" has appeared on his chin overnight. Even an adolescent Chandran could make a spiritual discovery in a similar situation at Koopal—but not Raju. Raju accommodates himself to this new role—"beard and beads"—feeling safe in this new identity. There are the externals of religion in Raju, but there is not even the fear of God. Raju is not internally converted.

Finally, the restlessness amidst the villages caused by the draught not only dissatisfies, but scares Raju—lest the turmoil should bring the police to the scene. Raju has to step into a totally different realm when Velan's brother distorts Raju's message, and the villagers mistake the
message for a fast. Raju is meditating on the ways of escaping from this strange realm of fast and prayer—yet the villagers's faith wins him over: the "earnestness" of the people "brought tears to his eyes." There is a spiritual experience, and he responds. In this phase of transcendence, Raju is bewildered, stunned, yet consents to go through the fast to the very end—he really does something very much "out of character":

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 something in which he was not personally interested. (The Guide, 213)

This is a spiritual discovery and experience not only for Raju, not only for Mangala, but for several villages. The degrees of transcendence may vary, yet there is a collective transcendence—a liberation. Transcendence is never just an "inner" experience.

Undoubtedly, the spiritual discovery of Raju is different from those of Swami or Chandran or Krishna. The schoolboy Swami's world of school companions and home offer strange realms, especially Rajam's house and the dramatic scene there, followed later by the forest experience. Although with negative experiences, the adolescent Chandran makes spiritual discoveries in those strange and shocking realms—Madras and Koopal. The emotional Krishna is bewildered and often frustrated when he first encounters the spirit-realm, but he eventually attains a degree of self
discipline and courage beyond anything the novel has led us to expect. In all the protagonists the world of contact is widened, and their spiritual discoveries affect the world positively. But here, too, Raju’s case differs. He doesn’t live to see the effect of collective transcendence. Nonetheless, Raju testifies to the fact that to attempt transcendence is not the monopoly of the pure and saintly.

In all his novels, Gilra says, "The comic thematic pattern is one of illusion—realization—disillusionment, or catastrophe—self-awareness—resolution" (1983, 103). But the term "resolution," as already indicated, is too simplistic. Gilra makes it sound like the end of a problem or process. Catastrophe and resolution may form the components of an ideal Greek tragedy; but in Narayan’s work there is no final solution. In the lives of all the protagonists, starting with the little schoolboy Swami to the fake guru Raju, there is no perfect or final resolution of life’s problems. Neither the cricket team nor Rajam’s company resolve all the problems for Swami. Of course the cricket club and Rajam play a tremendous role in liberating Swami from his petty egocentricity. Yet Swami has to discover his strength amidst his frailty as he grows in life. Chandran is on the threshold of a family life and a promising job. He too has to await what life has in store for him, and continue to transcend in greater measure than he did in his adolescent stage. Although Krishna transcends his petty
addictions to Susila-surrogates, and turns to a project of his heart's desire, we are not encouraged to think that he will live happily ever after. Although the dynamism of these characters at the end of the novel after their liberation is obvious, yet transcendence is never complete and absolute. It is, and remains, a process.

In these four novels, *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The English Teacher*, and *The Guide*, whether it be the naive transcendence of Swami and Chandran, or the complex process of transcendence in the lives of Krishna and Raju, it can be seen that Narayan portrays the Indian religious sensibility as an inescapable part of life.

All the novels are inconclusive, to varying degrees, and this suggests that transcendence is an ongoing, perennial process and never conclusive. There is no indication of any sort at the beginning of the novels about the way the interactions between the mundane and the transcendent will work out, nor is there any conclusion at the close of the novels guaranteeing the irrevocable transcendent position of the protagonists. There is also no metaphysical certainty about the degree of transcendence—sinners can be saints, and even the most saintly have conspicuous human frailties.

In all the characters, transcendence is not a flight from the mundane; rather, the mundane gets incorporated into the transcendent. Raju's mundane thirst for knowledge, and his self-education from "scrap" help him immensely when he
guides the naive villagers of Mangala. His worldly wisdom, his simple psychological insights acquired through many acquaintances, and his accommodation to others' wishes aid him to the very end.

There may not be any explicit East-West issues in The Guide, as there are in Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts, and The English Teacher. But one can see clearly how the urbanized Raju compromises morality even when he is cautioned by the traditional characters—his mother, and Gaffur, the taxi driver. While Swami, Chandran, and Krishna eventually find a way of fitting into the pattern of school, home, family and profession, Raju's life is one of multiple ambiguities. Yet in the end, even Raju takes seriously his sacrificial fast to found a home on earth for the villagers as well as for himself.

Indeed, founding a home or finding a home—even though it be in a ruined temple on the outskirts of a remote village, as in the case of Raju—is a characteristic outcome of transcendence as we see it in Narayan's fiction. Swami, Chandran, and Krishna as we have already seen, all feel a deeper sense of belonging and a wider range of human contact at the conclusion of the novels. This quest for a home, as old as Homer's Odyssey or the Upanishads, may indeed still be the central quest to which all great literature turns its attention. At any rate, the quest for a "lastimg home" is, according to E. M. Forster, the central issue of his own
novel, *A Passage to India*.

As we have repeatedly indicated, transcendence in a Narayan novel is always a process, so the idea of a "lasting" home is foreign to the novels here under discussion. The idea of a home, however, as a sense of belonging and a phase in the process is clearly in keeping with Narayan's thinking, and it does provide a useful reference point for a comparison of Narayan's work with Forster's. That comparison does, in any case, seem essential, since Forster's novel has provided the standard against which fiction about India is often measured. Narayan, it must be argued, has overturned that standard.
CHAPTER V

NARAYAN, FORSTER, AND "A MORE LASTING HOME"

Of the Anglo-Indian writers who have represented India, Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) and E. M. Forster (1879-1970) have considerable reputations in British Literature. But Kipling is not a favorite in India. Although he admired the Indian landscape, the temples, the sari and dhoti, wrist bells, sounds, and smells, "the East, and India in particular, attracted Kipling mainly by its exotic," (Kalinnikova 1983, 37). He is chiefly remembered for his celebration of British Imperialism.

Moreover, it was chiefly the Britishers living in India, and not the natives, who interested and occupied Kipling in his writings. In The Jungle Books published in 1894 and 1895 after his return from England to India, Kipling didn't venture to speak much of Indian culture. Even while in India, he saw "India through English glasses" (Iyengar 1969, 118). His vision is embodied in the lines: "Oh the East is East and the West is West and never the twain shall meet, / Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgement Seat" (Kipling 1954, 233).

In setting a new standard for Anglo-Indian fiction, Forster deviates from the stereotyped Anglo-Indian motifs such as the imperial ethos, tiger hunts, sexual infidelity, places of historical interest, Anglo-Indian "superiority,"
Forster's *A Passage to India*, acclaimed as a "classic" among his works, served as a "powerful weapon in the hands of the anti-imperialists, and was made to contribute its share to the disappearance of the British rule in India" (Chaudhuri 1954, 19). Through his humanism and realism, Forster attempts in *A Passage to India* to "show how officialism worked to corrupt the English" (Hawkins 1983, 56), and succeeds; but he says that "the book is not really about politics, though it is the political aspect of it that caught the general public and made it sell. It's something wider than politics, about the search of the human race for a more lasting home, about the universe as embodied in the Indian earth and Indian sky . . . " (qtd. by Stallybrass 1978, xxv). With all his good intentions and effort, Forster, the outsider, fails. It is hard to decide why he fails--yet one of the reasons may be Forster's superficial knowledge of India, for "he had not chosen his Indian types happily" (Chaudhuri 1954, 21). Despite his satire on the British, the British characters are portrayed more or less realistically, whereas the Indian characters are so clownish and undeveloped that they hardly seem to belong in a realistic novel written by an intelligent and honest literary craftsman.

Narayan faces the enormous task of setting a new standard over Forster, to depict a "Real India," which is an indigenous image of India in search of a more lasting home
(Kumar, qtd. in Kalinnikova 1983, 49). With a tone neither political nor vehement, though fully aware of the British imperialism in India, Narayan surpasses Forster not only in realistic narrations and characterizations of Indians, but also in his portrayal of "the search of the human race for a more lasting home," whether in India or elsewhere. The following pages attempt a comparative study of Narayan's *The English Teacher* with Forster's novel on India, *A Passage to India*, in order to see how these artists work out such a search.

David McCutchion too feels that "a comparison [needs] . . . to be made between Indian novels in English about India, and the tradition of writing about India by Englishmen" (qtd. in Hemenway 1975 V.I, 5). Graham Greene observes: "Kipling's India is the romantic playground of the Raj. . . . E. M. Forster was funny and tender about his friend the Maharajah of Dewas and severely ironic about the English in India, but India escaped him all the same" (1978, 6). He further contends that it was Narayan's novels that brought to him an India that is alive and real. Philip is more blunt when he quotes the *Times Literary Supplement*: "To read his [Narayan's] books is to understand the comparatively superficial nature of much of even the better European novels about India" (1986, 98). All the above comments besides favoring a comparative study affirm the superiority of the native's work.
Many of Narayan's readers abroad seem to consider *The English Teacher* the best of his creations. To quote Lyle Blair's personal tribute to Narayan when he was touring New York in 1956: "Let me tell you, in future, you may do well or ill, but to have written *The English Teacher* is enough achievement for a lifetime. You won't do it again and can't even if you attempt" (Narayan 1960, 164). Narayan too feels that "the book had a dimension not felt in his other novels" (Croft 1983, 26).

*A Passage to India* is almost universally established as Forster's masterpiece: "Almost all critics--Trilling is a notable exception--regard *A Passage to India* as the greatest of Forster's works, his major and rightful claim to a place in the history of twentieth century fiction" (Wilde 1985, 10). Moreover, this novel is named as the "progenitor" of a kind of "Indian novel."

Any discussion of the "search for a more lasting home" in *The English Teacher* and *A Passage to India* should focus on the chief characters' mundane-transcendent interactions, beginning with the locale where they work out their destiny. Forster's "Indian Universe" is confined to the northern sector of the Indian peninsula. Forster describes his fictional city in the opening lines of the novel itself: "Except for the Marabar Caves--and they are twenty miles off--the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary. Edged rather than washed off by the river Ganges, it trails
for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely" (A Passage to India, 1). For Forster, "India is the country, fields, fields, and then hills, jungle, hills, and more fields" (A Passage to India, 136), because Forster seems to have missed seeing a lot of the "real India." No wonder, his fictional city, Chandrapore, is dry, though it is a "city of gardens." The "unholy Ganges," "mean" streets, and the "ineffective" temple are portrayed as the outstanding features of the place. Bodenheimer comments that "the sentences seem to give up description in despair" (1980, 43). According to Ronny Heaslop, the British Superintendent of Police in A Passage to India, there seems to be "nothing in [Chandrapore or] India but the weather . . . It's the Alpha and the Omega of the whole affair" (A Passage to India, 29). In brief, the soil of Chandrapore smells of despair.

There is heat and dust in Malgudi too. There are also the streets and institutions named after some victorious Britishers such as "Anderson Street," "Lawley Extension," "Albert Mission College," etc., existing side by side with the streets and other places with indigenous names—"Vinayak Mudali Street," "Srinivasa Temple," "Bombay Ananda Bhavan," etc., and thus, the East and the West co-exist. Again when one, especially a foreigner, perceives India through Narayan's Malgudi, "despite the unfamiliarity of the territory and the quirkiness of the circumstances" one can feel
that one is witnessing an everyday milieu of almost every man. Above everything, one notes the aura of sacredness that permeates every moment and layer of the lives of the Malgudians in ordinary daily events, despite frailties and shortcomings. In the words of Anthony Thwaite, "Unlike E. M. Forster's India, (Narayan's) is seen from the inside" (qtd. in Philip 1986, 99), and because Narayan "perceives India from the vantage of interiority," Forster's fictional city Chandrapore, especially when held against Narayan's Malgudi, fully demonstrates the limitations of Forster's fiction and the remarkable achievement of Narayan. Yet Narayan's Indianness in no way narrows the vision of Malgudi as a whole to regionalism. On the contrary, it is chiefly the portrait of Malgudi alive, and the image of India projected through the small town, that reveals Narayan's universality of vision, and earns him a vast audience abroad.

Native Indians in *A Passage to India* are represented chiefly by the Moslem doctor Aziz, and the Brahman Hindu, Professor Godbole, though there are Hamidullah, "the Cambridge educated lawyer," the Nawab Bahadur, "a copious mixture of superstition," Ram Das, "the beleaguered Hindu magistrate," and others. Chaudhuri, the Indian commentator, is infuriated by such personalities:

Aziz would not have been allowed to cross my threshold, not to speak of being taken as an equal. Men of his type are a pest even in free India. Some have acquired a crude idea of gracious living or have merely been caught by the lure of snobbism, and are always trying to gain importance by sneaking into the company of
those to whom this way of living is natural. . . .

Godbole is not an exponent of Hinduism, he is a clown. Even for us, friendly personal relations with these men become possible only if we assumed we were in an anthropological reserve. (1954, 21)

As Greenberger remarks, "A Passage to India presents all the Indians in it either as perverted, clownish or queer characters" (1969, 129). Chandrapore, with Aziz and Godbole, offers neither a lively nor a totally believable picture of Indian religion or Indian family life.

Narayan told Ved Mehta once that "To be a good writer anywhere you must have roots both in religion and family. I have these things" (Mehta 1971, 148). When asked whether he is a Hindu, Narayan answered: "Definitely. Of the Saivite Sect. But it doesn't make much difference to what sect one belongs. God is one" (Hartley 1965, 90). We have already seen that in the slow-moving, and only apparently plotless The English Teacher, Indian family is the immediate context in which Narayan operates. Family is the nucleus of the Indian community. All the characters, Krishna, Susila, and their parents bear ample testimony to the sacredness of a vital family and its values. With all their foibles and shortcomings, they live, love, and grow without any metaphysical disquisitions, and help each other in their "search for a more lasting home."

Krishna Rao observes, "Eternity, not temporality, is the central chord of the Indian national consciousness to which The English Teacher bears a convincing testimony"
Although Krishna Rao names this "eternity" or the transcendence or the search for "a more lasting home" as Indian national consciousness, it is in fact a universal consciousness, and it is achieved through common, temporal means, namely, ordinary, daily events encountered by the individual.

The English Teacher, as seen earlier, abounds with incidents from family life. In A Passage to India, Forster doesn't discuss any Indian family. As Chaudhuri remarks, "Mr. Forster chose the sector of which he had personal knowledge. As an Englishman paying a short visit to India, he naturally saw far less of Indians in general than of his own countrymen and of the Indians with whom the latter had official business or perfunctory social relations" (1954, 20).

Obviously, Forster has no intimate, first hand knowledge about Indian family traditions or Indian women or Indian values. In Forster's view, "All English women are haughty and venal" (A Passage to India, 13), whereas, "All Indian ladies are in impenetrable purdah" (A Passage to India, 65). He reduces the function of the Indian woman to "Wedlock, motherhood, power in the house--for what else is she born . . . " (A Passage to India, 14). With all his descriptions and artistic mastery, Forster's work "does not contain a deep analysis of Indian reality and Indian characters" (Kalinnikova 1975, 180).

On the contrary, as we have had occasion to notice
before, Narayan presents Indian homes, women, and traditions with an "eye for the concrete and homely detail that only genuine intimacy could give" (Driesen 1977, 51). The homes of Krishna and Susila, their mothers-in-law, the eccentric headmaster's family, etc., and the role of women in the search for "a more lasting home" bear ample testimony to Narayan's "genuine intimacy." The women of Narayan are not in purdah, and they are not ultra-modern either; rather, they resemble millions of Indian women of every generation "who have never found fame, but whose daily existence has helped to civilize the race, and whose warmth of heart, self-sacrificing zeal, unassuming loyalty and strength in suffering, when subjected to trials of extreme severity, are among the glories of this ancient race" (Radhakrishnan 1948, 197-198).

Forster makes no mention of Professor Godbole's family or any woman in his household, and presumably he seems to have no friends, either. All that Forster divulges of this queer and clownish character is that he is an employee in Chandrapore's Government College in the capacity of a professor of philosophy. Appearing as a solitary figure with no roots or branches, Godbole is "The Brahman, polite and enigmatic . . . He was elderly and wizen with a grey moustache and grey-blue eyes" (A Passage to India, 72). With his Eastern turban and western socks, "his whole appearance suggested harmony--as if he had reconciled the products of
the East and West, mental as well as physical, and could never be decomposed" (A Passage to India, 72). But apparel alone cannot reveal the authenticity of a culture or amalgamation of cultures, nor the interior vision molded and instilled by the age-old traditional and religious values which in turn help one in founding a "more lasting home."

Forster uses Godbole as an exponent of Hinduism, but Godbole is not. He is characterized like many of the folk Hindus who, in over-emphasizing the ritual, miss the kernel of its message, and who think that "the touch of a non-Hindu would necessitate another bath" (A Passage to India, 304). Yet Forster makes Godbole the mouthpiece for some metaphysical aphorisms such as "good and evil are the same," "nothing can be performed in isolation," "when evil occurs, it expresses in the whole of the universe," etc, (A Passage to India, 177). Indian metaphysics captivates Forster more than the ordinary, daily life of an Indian in which the spiritual and the practical are integrated.

Aziz, the Moslem doctor, is presented as a widower, and his family life with his wife before her demise is given through a flashback. Even there, no incidents are narrated. One day, the district collector of Chandrapore arranges a "Bridge Party" in order to show some Indians to the new Britishers, Mrs. Moore and Miss Adela Quested. Although Aziz is one of the Indians invited to the party, he stays away from it, because the very same day, prior to the party,
an "inevitable snub" from Mrs. Callendar, his boss's wife, fills Aziz with shame and anger. The day also chances to fall on the anniversary of his wife's death, and this serves as a convenient excuse to abstain from the party.

Retiring into a mosque, Aziz tries to recall the past. At this juncture Forster tells the reader that Aziz's wife had died soon after he had fallen in love with her; he had not loved her at first. Touched by western feeling he disliked union with a woman whom he had never seen: moreover when he did see her, she disappointed him, and he begat his first child in mere animality. The change began after its birth. He was won by her love for him, by a loyalty that implied more than submission, and by her efforts to educate herself against that lifting of the purdah . . . She was intelligent, yet had old fashioned grace. Gradually he lost the feeling that his relatives had chosen wrongly for him. (A Passage to India, 55)

Forster does not narrate how she won Aziz's love--homely details, both pleasant and unpleasant--though Forster himself emphasizes that it is more than mere sensuality: "Sensuous enjoyment--well, even if he had had it would have dulled in a year, and he had gained something instead, which seemed to increase the longer they lived together" (A Passage to India, 55). Aziz's wife, an "intelligent woman," still with "old fashioned grace," has converted him from an unloving husband to a loving one. There has been a transformation. Daily events, ordinary household incidents, and other details undoubtedly played a dynamic role in this transformation, especially in the home of Aziz, because his wife is a woman behind the purdah, whose household is her entire world. Forster doesn't narrate any of those details,
either because he doesn't know them or he doesn't value these small events as means of transcendence—whatever the reasons be, "real India," and the means for founding a "more lasting home" or transcendence slip off. The phrase, "touched by Western feeling," suggests that Forster makes Aziz, like some of Narayan's protagonists, Chandran for example, to regard his mundane outlook on love and romance as an East-West issue. However, the love and loyalty of Aziz's wife eventually wins him over, and he gradually falls in love with her. He realizes only after her death that "no woman could ever take her place. . . . he mourned his wife the more sincerely because he mourned her seldom" (A Passage to India, 55-56). Yet now, with his three children left with their grand-parents, she is just an occasional memory to him.

Although all factors conducive to transcendence are at hand, Aziz does not transcend and does not even aspire to found a lasting home. The realistic portrayal of Aziz has in it the dissatisfaction, struggle and pain, bitter interpersonal relationships, loneliness, alienation, etc., which in Narayan's fiction generate a movement to transcend these conditions. But Forster fails to work on them because he considers only one dimension of his characters, namely the "objective" reality. It cannot be dismissed as Forster's insensitivity, but it is really hard to know the reason for such inadequacy. Most Westerners ascribe Indian spiritua-
lity to mysticism or other bizarre and austere gimmicks, and metaphysics. Forster seems to be fascinated by Indian metaphysics. Such objectivity compartmentalizes life as it happens in his characters Aziz, Godbole, and all the Britishers. There is no integration or liberation possible, and this is the chief difference between Narayan and Forster, namely, the integration of the spiritual and the practical through and in every small incident which is inherent in Indian culture. These fail the observation of Forster. This is also the secret behind the positive vision of life in the Malgudians, and their success in seeking "a more lasting home." As suggested earlier, it is inappropriate to argue that Narayan’s characters actually achieve a "lasting home," since achievement is always relative and never conclusive. But they do seek, with the kinds of success that one learns to expect in a Narayan novel.

One cannot but recall at this juncture the first section of The English Teacher, where Narayan presents the minute details in the domestic life of Krishna and Susila, which unveils not only the real India, but also the process through which the characters work towards a "a more lasting home" in their daily lives, and ordinary, trivial chores. How something so mundane as the purchase of the monthly groceries or bickering over some old alarm clock can liberate the characters, and lead them toward "a more lasting home," is vividly portrayed by Narayan. Narayan, in
such presentations, demonstrates the latent sacredness of the mundane, and how a writer can unveil to the reader this secret about the beauty of life through simple realistic narrations—in this sense the writer is a guru who leads, educates, and liberates the readers to knowledge and illumination from ignorance and darkness.

Krishna's life as a widower comprises the second section of The English Teacher. A comparison of Forster's Aziz and Narayan's Krishna, as widowers, is compelling. Aziz's love for his wife in purdah is only a late discovery, and his weakness for women and beauty deprives him of a lasting love for her. This is what Forster has to say of Aziz on the loss of his wife:

And unlocking a drawer, he took out his wife's photograph. He gazed at it, and tears sprouted from his eyes. He thought, "How unhappy I am!" But because he really was unhappy, another emotion soon mingled with self-pity: he desired to remember his wife and could not. Why could he remember people whom he did not love? They were always so vivid to him, whereas the more he looked at this photograph, the less he saw. She had eluded him thus, ever since they had carried her to her tomb. He had known that she would pass from his hands and eyes, but had thought she could live in his mind, not realizing that the very fact that we have loved the dead increases their unreality, and the more passionately we invoke them the further they recede. A piece of brown cardboard and three children -- that was all that was left of his wife. (A Passage to India, 56)

All through the novel, Aziz is portrayed as an embodiment of self-pity, and dark feelings of enmity. He is prone to retain whatever is dark and unkind, and to forget the bright and kind. This is the chief reason for his dim memory of
his wife and vivid recollection of all those he did not love. His memory of his wife's love and loyalty serve to soothe his "self-pity." He even "meditated suicide." Later in the novel when he honors Fielding, the British principal of the local Government College, by letting him see his wife's photograph, it is evident from Aziz's remarks that she is now nothing more than a piece of brown cardboard: "She was my wife . . . put her photograph away . . . she was not a highly educated woman or even beautiful, but put it away . . . put her away, she is of no importance, she is dead" (A Passage to India, 116). Although his wife, while alive, won his affection by her love and loyalty, Forster doesn't account for Aziz's inconsistency. Aziz is capable of appreciating qualities other than the exterior, but now, Aziz appears to rate women by their exterior--education and beauty--giving little credit for interior beauty. Aziz is falsely representing himself to his British friend in a demeaning way. It is hard to decide why Forster lets Aziz represent himself so very falsely and foolishly. Aziz now gives an impression to Fielding that in the death of Aziz's wife, he has lost a mere uneducated, unattractive, loyal sex-partner. Her loyalty and genuine love have not instilled in him any enduring virtues--rather, he doesn't seem to have any desire to found a lasting home.

Aziz is portrayed not merely as insensitive but also as silly, especially when he arranges the expedition to
Marabar. The genesis of this expedition goes back to the day of the informal tea party held at Fielding's house. One day, Fielding, the most humane of the characters in *A Passage to India*, arranges a small informal get-together in his house for Mrs. Moore and Miss Adela Quested to see and meet two Indians, Professor Godbole and Aziz. During their conversation about various spots of interest, mention is made of the Marabar caves. Emotional and immature as he is, Aziz is hasty in committing himself: hence, he promises to take the company on a picnic to the caves. His imprudence in hosting the picnic puts him eventually in many difficulties. Godbole, the Hindu Brahman, requires vegetarian items totally different from those for the Britishers, who are to be provided with Western cuisine and alcohol. Aziz faces the responsibility for all the arrangements. With borrowed servants and supplies, he spends the night before the expedition at the railway station in order to be punctual. His feelings of insecurity and also of unreality make him panic as he waits for the company to arrive. Hoping to lean on Fielding for support, he sees Fielding nowhere in the vicinity. Despite mixed feelings, when the car drives up carrying Mrs. Moore, Miss Quested, and their Goanese servant, "he [Aziz] rushed to meet them, suddenly happy. 'But you've come after all. Oh, how very kind of you!' he cried. 'This is the happiest moment of all my life'" (*A Passage to India*, 127-128). As Godbole and Fielding miss the train,
Aziz has to leave for the caves with the two ladies. When left alone to entertain the ladies, he tells them, "One of the dreams of my life is accomplished by having you both here as my guests" (*A Passage to India*, 143).

It is hard to respect an Indian like Aziz, who displays unmanly and undignified efforts in order to gain the company and friendship of Mrs. Moore and others, and it is harder to trace in his behavior any search for "a more lasting home." The whole scene, from the proposal of the trip to the return journey, makes this well educated Indian surgeon appear ridiculous. On the whole, the episode of this expedition shatters even the little hope the company had for genuine human contact, to say nothing of liberation from the race prejudice and misunderstanding that Adela and Mrs. Moore think they want. Even if it had been Forster's intent to satirize Indian life, his exclusive use of Indian caricatures in a purportedly realistic novel undermines even the satire. Narayan, too, often pokes fun at the people of Malgudi—as we have seen in novel after novel—yet his characters are never caricatures.

We have already seen how Krishna waits at Malgudi station, in a scene resembling that of Aziz waiting for his British friends. One can recall how in his anxiety Krishna coaxes the station master and the porter to halt the train a little longer, if needed, at Malgudi station. He even remains foolishly anxious when Susila and Leela arrive safely
in the company of his father-in-law. However, the decorum of his wife and father-in-law and the whole group reflect the Indian tradition of a close-knit family, the love and respect they bear for each other. Susila must prompt her distracted husband whenever he fails in observing traditional respect towards his elders. But a warm and beautiful reception arranged by his mother awaits them at the gate, a traditional Indian ceremony, before they are allowed to enter the new house:

My mother came and welcomed her [Susila] at the gate. She had decorated the threshold with a festoon of green mango leaves and the floor and doorway with white flour designs. She was standing at the doorway and as soon as we got down cried: "Let Susila and the child stay where they are." She had a pan of vermillion solution ready at hand and circled it before the young mother and child, before allowing them to get down from the carriage. After that she held out her arms, and the baby vanished in her embrace. (The English Teacher, 35)

Susila and the baby ease Krishna of all the tensions he had prior to their arrival. One can sense in this incident and description, however trivial it may appear, the impact of tradition, and the collective endeavour to found a home.

Aziz and Krishna are anxious, boyish and immature in their behavior, but Aziz remains immature with his flattery and imprudence, whereas Krishna's disposition is totally different. There is no servile or snobbish outcry in Krishna, whereas Aziz's self delusion and peevishness, besides making him a laughing stock, leave him unliberated. The irony is that what he calls "the happiest moment of
[his] life" on seeing his new white friends, brings him the most bitter experience of his life. Above all there is no search for or founding of a "more lasting home."

Krishna and Aziz aspire to be poets, but their professions take them in different directions. As indicated by Krishna Rao: "A teacher by profession, Krishna is a poet by nature, an explosive mixture of 'prosaic reality and poetic imagination. . . .'" (1972, 75). Unhappy in his position as a teacher, Krishna justly complains about the educational system in the college, where little credit is awarded for originality. He is also irritated by the British principal, Mr. Brown, and his guarding the purity of English spellings. In a way Brown resembles Forster's characters--Ronny with his British imperialism, and one of the English women who "learnt the lingo, but only to speak to her servants, so she knew none of the polite forms, and of verbs, only the imperative mood" (A Passage to India, 121).

Besides lamenting the lack of close relationships between the teacher and the taught, Krishna also feels that he is not any better than his students:

I was merely a man who had mugged earlier than they the introduction and the notes in the Verity Edition of Lear, and guided them through the mazes of Elizabethan English (The English Teacher, 9).

He seems to derive no contentment or joy from his profession. With such remorse and self rebellion, and with a sense of "something missing," Krishna, in the beginning, sees the whole problem mostly as an East-West issue. But
once he transcends, he is endowed with honesty and courage to respond to his heart, and so he does something positive rather than brooding over issues which are beyond his capacity to modify. Finally, he gives up his "hundred rupee a month" as English teacher in the college to be a creative teacher in the small school for children.

Whenever he is treating patients and performing surgery at the hospital, Forster's Aziz, the skilled surgeon, "ceased to be either outcast or poet, and became the medical student, very gay, and full of details of operations . . . His profession fascinated him at times, but he required it to be exciting, and it was his hand, not his mind, that was scientific" (A Passage to India, 53). He loves the knife and uses it skillfully, but is repelled by the "boredom of regime." His efficiency is known to his British boss too: " . . . in his [Major Callendar's] heart he knew that if Aziz and not he had operated last year on Mrs. Graysford's appendix, the old lady would probably have lived. And this did not dispose him any better towards his subordinate" (A Passage to India, 53). There is every reason for Aziz's anger and frustration. His career appears to him a total failure on account of the imperial milieu. In addition to this frustration, the after effects of the Marabar episode, his arrest, trial, and other humiliations drain Aziz of any interest in the city as well as his professional milieu.

The mundane-transcendent interactions here stem from and are
intensified by the strain in the interpersonal relations. It never occurs to Aziz that by facing the situation in a manly way he can work out his liberation and unleash the positive force behind the whole affair. On the contrary, running away from the entire situation seems to him the only remedy. Forster provides him with an easy solution:

I [Aziz] am determined to leave Chandrapore. The problem is, for where? I am determined to write poetry. The problem is, about what? . . . But who does give me assistance? No one is my friend. All are traitors, even my own children. I have had enough of friends. (A Passage to India, 270)

This soliloquy of Aziz reveals a defeated, pessimistic man with no focus in life. He is eaten up by ego and self-pity. With no faith either in himself or in the goodness of man, he is blinded to the kindness and friendship of Fielding. Finally, Aziz moves to the non-British territory, Mau, to start a dispensary of his own, and to serve as the physician in the palace. Yet change of place doesn't liberate him. The problem doesn't totally rest on the East-West issue, but on the unliberated self. Aziz's irksome nature still abides with him; hence he resents Fielding. His vengeful attitude towards Adela has its embers. Quite unforgiving, he wants "yet" more kindness from the English. He feels that his suffering is a local consequence of a political situation which according to him is a hindrance to better personal relations: "Clear out, you fellows, double quick, I say . . . yes, we shall drive every blasted English man into the sea, and then . . . and then . . . you and I shall be
friends" (A Passage to India, 137). He blames everyone and everything except his unliberated self. His growth and responses are always conditioned by external crutches such as "more kindness," "non-British territory," etc. Forster's characters such as Aziz and others most likely will never found a more lasting home under the Indian sky or elsewhere. Moreover, they fail as convincing characters owing to the unbroken superficiality of everything they say and do.

Godbole too resigns his position at Government College at Chandrapore, but how, when, and why he does it speak for this unliberated Indian. After the arrest of Aziz, while Fielding is in a very disturbed and worried state, Godbole appears before Fielding quite insensitive to the whole situation:

"... I am leaving your service shortly, as you know."

"Yes, alas!"

"And am returning to my birthplace in Central India to take charge of education there. I want to start a High School there on sound English lines, that shall be as like Government College as possible."

"Well?" he sighed trying to take an interest.

"At present there is only vernacular education at Mau. I shall feel it my duty to change all that. . . ." (A Passage to India, 176)

His immediate need is to select a name for his new school for which he has come to consult Fielding. The whole conversation reveals Godbole's disposition. With no room left for any sympathy either for his companions or their situations, he locks himself in his narrow, egoistic shell.
order to escape, as Fielding says, Godbole slips off "un-
molested to his new job in a day or two: he always did
possess the knack of slipping off" (A Passage to India,
192). The geographical area he is now moving into is a non-
British territory. The irony of the whole affair is that
Godbole escapes only the British territory, and not the
British system of education, since he clearly explains to
Fielding an educational system "on sound English lines" is
his hope for the new school in the non-British territory.
He runs away from the problems without transcending them.
This is far from searching for a "more lasting home." We
learn later in the novel that his new move is a failure as
his service is undistinguished, and the school building
degenerates into a barn. Thus, we see that Aziz and Godbole
do not engage the difficulties posed by their vocations at
all. They simply run away. They have no past or future
whether they be in the British India or in the free India.

By contrast, in novel after novel, Narayan faithfully
portrays the institutions of India, especially its educa-
tional systems. We see the shortcomings of both the Indian
faculty and the English in all the novels, and remarkably in
The English Teacher. Especially in Krishna's effort to
resolve his professional misgivings, we see a genuine, fully
drawn human being, devoted to education and to the young at
every level. His own shortcomings as a teacher are fully
exposed, but his gradual maturation and his ultimate deci-
tion to resign the college provide a realistic, believable, and characteristically Indian way of coming to terms with one's calling.

Aziz and Godbole, without facing the difficulties in their professional lives, simply run away. Indian professionals as portrayed in *A Passage to India* are indeed the strange inhabitants of an "anthropological reserve," as Chaudhuri says. One wonders how they could find a place in a "realistic" novel--it is hard to know why Forster leaves them undeveloped.

Through his tristructural pattern, "Mosque," "Caves," and "Temple," Forster attempts to probe into the "more lasting home" under the Indian sky. But none of his characters exhibit any trace of aspiration toward this outcome. In fact, the Westerners try to see India through its mosques, temples and caves. To any visitor, the Indian palm-groves, marble columns and temples with strange figures and architecture--Dravidian, Brahminical, Buddhist, Jain, and Moslem--appear "to constitute the outward and visible part of the legacy of India" (Zetland 1937, xvi). They do, yet they are only symbols representing India's age-long inquiry into life.

While Aziz, the Moslem, is associated with the "Mosque," Godbole, the Hindu, is the chief celebrant of the Hindu festival in the section entitled "Temple." The Caves, originally the abode of the Jain monks, bring together and
shatter the multi-national and multi-religious characters in the novel.

How far the mosque enhances the founding of a "more lasting home" for the human race under the Indian sky is a legitimate question in *A Passage to India*. Forster's Aziz takes refuge in the mosque whenever his spirit crumbles: "He had always liked this mosque. It was gracious, and the arrangement pleased him" (*A Passage to India*, 18). It is also in the mosque, while feeding his self pity with the memory of his wife, that Forster has Aziz encounter Mrs. Moore.

One day when Aziz is sitting inside the mosque, he hears a noise, and sees a frail white figure standing at the entrance. The figure is that of Mrs. Moore who has left her white company in the Britishers' club in order to look at "India" in the mosque. Aziz's reaction to Mrs. Moore's presence in the mosque is hostile in the beginning, and also reveals how much he is entrapped in a broken world of narrow vision:

"Madam, this is a mosque, you have no right here at all; you should have taken off your shoes; this is a holy place for Moslems."

... 

"... If I remove my shoes, I am allowed?"

"Of course, but so few ladies take the trouble, especially if thinking no one else is there to see."

"That makes no difference. God is here." (*A Passage to India*, 20)
Whatever Forster's intentions in composing the above conversation, Aziz appears excessively sensitive in his attitude toward the mosque and his faith. Mrs. Moore with her innate aspiration for "a lasting home" respects any place of worship. As a person who believes in universal brotherhood, she also drives home the point to Aziz that it is fanatical to fuss over mere externals and formalities of religion; so she asks, "If I remove my shoes, I am allowed?" Aziz is fully entrapped in mundane religious fanaticism—but never liberated.

The long description of the caves, and the episode created out of the picnic to the caves, are central to the whole book. The picnic group consists of just Aziz and the two white women, Mrs. Moore and Adela, since Fielding and Godbole are left behind. With the help of the local guides, Aziz takes his guests to visit the caves. Mrs. Moore is unable to bear the darkness, suffocation and the crowd; hence, after seeing one, she doesn't join the group to see the other chain of caves. She is able to recall nothing but the darkness and the echo. Adela in another cave undergoes the illusion that Aziz has attempted her seduction, an illusion strong enough to cause her severe shock, and to send Aziz to trial, the trial which affords the structural climax of the novel.

What ought to have been an ordinary, simple picnic, which could have brought the East and the West, and the
Hindu, the Moslem, and the Christian together in informal sharing, understanding, and liberation fails totally, destroying even the little they had in common together.

A voice very old and very small speaks to Mrs. Moore in one of the caves and inexplicably demolishes her sense of values so that she accepts a total negation, and wants no communication with anyone, not even with God: "She lost all interest, even in Aziz, and the affectionate and sincere words that she had spoken to him seemed no longer hers but the air's." For her, Marabar "robbed infinity and eternity of their vastness," and reduced them to an echo (A Passage to India, 150). Hawkins comments: "The barrier is the echo. For Mrs. Moore, the echo reduces all human expressions to the same dull 'boum'" (1983, 61). Before the cave adventure, she had great expectations about India, and with them she encountered every person and event with love and openness, but now the cave experience drowns all beautiful feelings:

Mrs. Moore had always inclined to resignation. As soon as she had landed in India, it seemed to her good, and when she saw the water flowing through the mosque-tank, or the Ganges or the moon, caught in the shawl of night with all the other stars, it seemed a beautiful goal and an easy one. To be one with the universe! So dignified and simple. But there was always some little duty to be performed first. . . Marabar struck its gong. . . . Visions are supposed to entail profundity but . . . (A Passage to India, 208)

In fact, Forster doesn’t account for what takes place in the caves. Philip says, "Indeed, he cannot, since to do so requires an imaginative leap to embrace the meanings of
another culture . . . " (Philip 1986, 26). The "boum" echo produced by the smallness and emptiness of the caves becomes one of the major expanding images of the novel. But this echo in the caves seems mostly to signify the void and chaos that existed before the order of the universe. By contrast, the "ohm" sound, very likely the sound that Forster heard in the caves, has an entirely different and sacred meaning to Indians, for whom it is like the Greek "logos": "It is like the Greek alpha and omega, the beginning and the end which embraces all words, all meaning, all sound, all creation itself" (Griffiths 1983, 41). The "Caves" of Forster reveal nothing of Oriental values, because the "foreign writer's knowledge of India always remains 'external and inferential'" (Philip 1986, 29).

From ordinary events, and from people of ordinary proportions, a tragedy results with the arrest of Aziz--Mrs. Moore leaves India but never reaches England; Ronny and Adela break off; having renounced her own people, Adela realizes that "a great deal has been broken, more than will ever be mended" (A Passage to India, 242); Fielding resigns and returns to England. In brief, there is neither liberation nor founding of a "lasting home."

The spiritual communication through automatic writing in The English Teacher is as curious as the "Cave" and the "echoes" in A Passage to India. Yet Narayan's main emphasis is on the mundane-transcendent interactions processing
within Krishna, and not on the technique of communication. In the beginning, Krishna is interested in the automatic writing not for its technique or its philosophy, but solely because it transmits the presence of his wife. He finds a Susila-surrogate in this new comfort. Yet the mundane tool, along with Susila's guidance, helps Krishna to liberate himself, as a result of which he attains "courage and fearlessness," and founds a transcendent home in Malgudi itself without escaping the milieu.

For many readers, especially Western readers, the spiritual practices in the second half of The English Teacher may appear curious, even superstitious. An analogy can be drawn to Forster's Marabar caves in A Passage to India about which "a great deal of dispute" regarding its meaning is going on. Greenberger quotes Virginia Woolf's observation, and calls it a satisfactory answer:

The inability of Europeans to understand the Caves -- or like Fielding even to go into them, demonstrates their failure to understand the Soul of India. The Caves also partake of the element of irrationality. Objectively, it poses Western rationality against Eastern mysticism: time against eternity: the conscious against the unconscious -- the mysterious East where things happen which would be impossible according to Western thought. (1969, 158)

But Narayan is not presenting in The English Teacher mere mysticism or "the mysterious East," rather he lifts the veil of mystery in presenting the ordinariness of transcendence -- an ordinary man Krishna, endeavoring his utmost to be a free man, to transcend the mundane, to found a "more lasting
home" though he does not start the communication with such pure intentions.

In the last section, "Temple," Forster attempts to see the Hindu festival, "Krishna Jayanthi" (birth of Lord Krishna), as a symbol of a search for a "more lasting home." Forster calls this nine-day festival, which made a profound impression on him during his seven-month stay at Dewas (India), "the strangest and strongest Indian experience ever granted to me" (qtd. in Stallybrass 1978, xiv). Godbole, Forster's exponent of Hinduism, is the chief celebrant. Barrett remarks, "The whole of 'Temple' belongs to him [Godbole] and as he presides over the birth of Krishna his presence infuses the scene with an atmosphere of comic celebration which insists, to an extent beyond anything else in Forster's work, on the joys of multiplicity" (1984, 91). Forster is tantalized by this festival though it doesn't make much sense for him personally, yet he observes that "Religion is a living force for the Hindus" (A Passage to India, 304). About the festival and the singing, Forster comments: "The singing went on even longer . . . ragged edges of religion . . . unsatisfactory and undramatic tangles . . . no man could say what was the emotional center of it, any more than he could locate the heart of a cloud" (A Passage to India, 316). This hardly seems to be religion as a "living force." One wonders just how Forster really sees all this. Perhaps he is only betraying his own penchant for
glib and superficial judgments, tossed off with little understanding of his own feelings, much less the feelings of others. Godbole too bears no evidence of any transcendence, since he is still unconcerned, insensitive, unappreciative in his everyday life. For instance, had he informed Aziz of Fielding's new wife, Mrs. Moore's daughter, before Fielding appeared in Mau, Godbole could have saved Aziz from continued bitterness and ill-feeling, because Aziz has been wrongly agitated thinking that Fielding has married Adela Quested. Godbole could have mediated a pleasant encounter between Aziz and Fielding--but he did not. Many people give up religion, because they have known too many so-called religious men like Godbole. Godbole's spiritual or religious life is smothered by dead forms and externals, making his daily life petty and trivial. The characters of Forster hardly aim at any collective search for a "lasting home" under the Indian sky. In brief, not only the external relationships are abortive, but the spiritual quest on the practical level, as depicted through the characters in A Passage to India, too, is a total failure since they are stupidly superficial--probably reflecting Forster's own superficial knowledge of India.

While Forster is rambling through the mosques, caves and temples in search of ideas and observations, Narayan consistently portrays a special mode of transcendence:

To discover god is not to discover an idea but to discover oneself. It is to awaken to that part of
existence which has been hidden from sight and which one has refused to recognize. The discovery may be very painful; it is like going through a kind of death. But it is the one thing that makes life worth living. (Griffiths, 1980, 12)

Besides being part of the culture of India, Narayan possesses a compassion towards his characters with no intention of demolishing them. However roguish a character may be, Narayan can with gentle compassion await the conversion or transcendence and patiently trace the search for a "more lasting home." By contrast, Forster lacks the wide-ranging sympathy that could have made his novel both convincing and great. It should probably be argued that Forster's failures can be attributed to the simple "rudeness" which he saw as the heart of the general British failure in India.

Perhaps the most damaging assessment of his novel, his characterizations, and his narrative, comes from Forster himself. The British characters, despite the satire, remain believable and realistic. Hence, it is hard to know why Forster portrays the Indians as clownish. It is almost incredible that a major English writer would attribute the one-dimensional qualities of his own characterizations to the moral failure of an entire subcontinent, of which he knew only one corner, and little enough of that. Hence his comments: "It was as if irritation exuded from the very soil [of India]. . . . There seemed no reserve of tranquility to draw upon in India. Either none, or else tranquility swallowed up everything . . . " (A Passage to India, 78). Such
a view of "India," not limited to Forster, of course, suggests the enormity of the task facing Narayan. When he began to write, *A Passage to India* was the standard in English for anyone who wanted to write about India. Narayan, quite wisely, did not bother to attack this standard, but rather set about the much more difficult labor of establishing a new standard. He did succeed in setting that standard, but, as this study has attempted to show, he succeeded best of all in putting before the world a sense of "tranquility" which is not the "tranquility [that] swallowed up everything"—a stereotyped tranquility already widely ascribed to "India," well before Forster's time—but a dynamic tranquility that leads to an active and vital life, the liberation of a Krishna, a Chandran, a Raju for active engagement with the world—–with children, wife, students, villagers—a tranquility that is never absolute and never final but always subject to the vagaries and eccentricities of the everyday effort to be fully human. By comparison, Forster's easy dismissal of "India" can never again be taken seriously.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

With the rise of Indian English Literature, the Eastern sensibilities, the Indian in particular, started appearing in the Western hemisphere through the writings in English of native Orientals. Thus, the East began to represent itself, and continues to do so. In the tradition of Indian English Literature, Narayan reigns supreme for representing India essentially through his unique perspective. Indeed, such a perspective consists primarily in the sacred aura that permeates the lives of his characters, and this appears primarily as the process of transcendence within and through the mundane. The sacred aura is the essence of Indian culture and tradition, and is not Narayan's discovery. Ancient Indian literature and every fine and performing art in India bear testimony to this rich Indian spiritual sensibility. Today's India may be sluggish in remembering or living up to such a spiritual heritage in its headlong process of Westernization, in which case Narayan's works may well serve to revive the ancient culture in the modern context. In concentrating on the unspectacular, daily lives of his characters, Narayan differs from fellow artists of high calibre in the Indian English tradition, such as Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and even Tagore, who often
engage themselves in discussing the "economic" or the "political" or the "metaphysical" or the "mystical" man.

Today, the population of Indian English novelists has increased considerably. Writers like Khushwant Singh,* Bhabani Bhattacharya,* Kamala Markandaya,* Kamala Das,* Anita Desai,* R. P. Jhabvala* and Chaman Nahal*, to mention a few, have added to the quality and quantity of Indian English Literature, and have also gained recognition. Yet, Narayan's discussion of the "eternal man" or the total man, which perhaps is "more properly the province of a creative writer" (Iyengar 1968, 28), makes him a superb artist, and overrides all merely current social or political considerations, thus making him "the foremost and popular Indo-Anglian novelist" (Alphonso-Karkala 1974, 26).

What Narayan accomplishes in his works is more than mere representation of "Real India" through Malgudi (Kumar, qtd. in Kalinnikova 1983, 49). His fictional town Malgudi, "the great corporate literary creation" (Kaul 1977, 50), of all his novels is today more than a geographical, regional, or national representation—it is universal, because what happens in Malgudi happens in the world; Malgudi is "immeasurably far from us [the West] in space, in manners and moral attitudes, but with human problems that seem curiously familiar and relevant to our own" (Editors of Time 1966, vii). It is not hard to locate a Swami or a Chandran or a Krishna or a celebrated Raju in the human community anywhere
in the world. Hence Malgudi is universal. In presenting India through Malgudi and its people Narayan in fact portrays the universal journey through life, a transnational human nature, and its passage through the mundane-transcendent interactions in that journey. The vitality which this fictional city gains in novel after novel reveals the dynamism in human life, and the secret that the universe is not hostile after all, but sacred. This great positive vision is in contrast with the Chandrapore of Forster, which evokes hopelessness. The transcendence and achievement of Narayan's characters in Malgudi speak of his faith in the individual, and the universality and ordinariness of transcendence.

Any contemporary novelist may come to realize, amidst noise and distractions, that "the outside world is too much with him" (Iyengar 1968, 29):

The events in the political market place and the social stock exchange are instantaneously exciting, and sex and sentimental nuances and urban violence and sophistication make a ready appeal to the common reader. The anthropological slant gives an exotic air, and a glance at iniquitous apartheid always provokes the liberal. But it needs daring on the part of the writer to pose the first and last questions--to take a look at the other eternity, the soul. (Iyengar 1968, 29)

Amidst all noise and bustle, Narayan dares to ask and discuss the "inner man" and his struggle within, when the "outside world impinges on his consciousness" (Iyengar 1968, 29). Yet the greatness of Narayan lies in his special ability not to isolate the "inner man" or "eternity" or
"soul" from the total man; rather, the total man and the interplay of the mundane and the transcendent through him—this forms Narayan's theme throughout his writings, this makes his characters transnational.

Standing at a distance from politics, romantic analysis, and ideologies, Narayan reflects on total man—whose life may or may not include much interest in politics, romanticism, and ideologies. (Most Indians tend to be skeptical of all these.) One indubitably can extend to Narayan T. S. Eliot's compliment to Henry James, as Kaul puts it, that "Henry James had so fine a mind that no idea could violate it" (1977, 47). Neither the Eastern nor the Western ideologies, not even the ideal Gandhism, could tempt this apparently simple writer, who refreshingly presents man and his aspirations. His compassionate humor, coupled with detachment, permits complete freedom to the characters, as well as to the readers, to act and react to the limit of their capacities.

Thus, Narayan's fiction, with its emphasis on the total man, is "quite different from the usual run of novels about India . . . with miscegenation, the villainies of the British Raj, the political tract disguised as art," (Christine Weston, qtd. in Balarama Gupta 1983: 21). Narayan is neither a preacher of Hinduism nor an authority on Indian Vedanta or mysticism, nor is he interested in presenting India as a spectacle or a pilgrimage center.
Engrossed fully in the total man, Narayan's refreshing depictions of the common man and man's common aspirations prove that the process of transcendence is an inescapable and perennial issue in the human agenda, and that this agenda is transnational. This universal theme brings a positive message to mankind, mediates between man's mundane life and his transcendence, and adds a unique charm and strength to life itself, as it does for the Malgudians, whether the transcendence be at naive or mature levels.

The transcendence, in all the novels here under discussion and other novels of Narayan, commences with some kind of dissatisfaction or restlessness which the protagonists feel about their conditions in life. While Swami is restless about school work and boyish bickerings with his companions, Chandran grumbles about his college milieu and the orthodoxy of Malgudi. Krishna's dissatisfaction about his profession and the British system of education is obvious. Raju's position is different, since he, despite his skill to fare well in his many jobs, changes from one to another as an opportunist. Yet he, too, in the end grows tired of his pretensions.

The second phase of transcendence, the entry into a radically different world, is seen in diverse ways in our protagonists. Swami enters into a new world, Rajam's company—a world of radically different values: to Swami's surprise, many new spiritual experiences await him in his
friendship with Rajam. More than Swami's admiration for Rajam's material superiority and leadership, Swami is thrilled to be led into a world of cooperation and companionship. Swami is affected by Rajam's company remarkably on three occasions—near Sarayu when he watches Mani and Rajam giving up the challenge and pledging friendship, in Rajam's house where the friends experience a scale of hospitality, wisdom, and leadership beyond anything they have ever imagined. Swami's forest experience, too, triggers a naive spiritual discovery, an encounter with the gods, and ultimately an awareness and realization of his own potential to go beyond his petty self—to transcend his mundane, mostly passive, behavior, to perform an act of devotion that requires a degree of initiative not common for Swami.

Although Chandran's experiences are all negative—bitterness and anger over the traditions of Malgudi, escape into Madras and Koopal, unpleasant adventures in Madras, the role of a fake sanyasi, etc., there is in these totally different worlds a spiritual discovery of his immense strength to be a dynamic human being. With a new stamina, he returns to his family and town, and ventures to do something "out of character"—instead of blaming the system, he attempts to do something positive to educate Malgudi and to bring love into his own life and the lives of others. The encounter of Krishna with Susila through the medium carries him to an unexpected and thrilling world, though a curious
one. The unforeseen conditions caused by drought in Mangala, and the faith of the villagers lead Raju into a world of dedication and serious sacrifice.

Thus, in all his novels Narayan encourages the idea that the highest life is only to be found by seeking or accepting experiences that carry us into a strange and often bewildering realm. This, of course, is what transcendence has always meant, though usually in a more narrowly religious or philosophical sense. In Narayan's works the idea of experiencing another realm has a special meaning for World Literature in English, because this step into other realms is precisely what World Literature in English offers; it is moreover, precisely what the achievement of a world culture requires. But that "other realm" must be what it is in Narayan's fiction, a realm accessible to ordinary people, prepared by ordinary experience. The step into "other realms" required both by World Literature and by the emergent world culture must not be a step reserved only for a religious or philosophical elite, nor can it be a purely private sort of transcendence. It must be transcendence in the largest possible sense—a spiritual experience, certainly; and an experience that requires from us the ability to tolerate and even enjoy the bewilderment that any genuinely new realm must impose; finally, an experience that brings us together with other people, no matter how odd or misguided they might at first appear.
In accomplishing such a tremendous task of awakening new dimensions in human individuals so that they may live their human potential fully and dynamically, in convincingly portraying the transnational character of human nature, in mediating between the mundane and the transcendent, and in helping to find a "more lasting home," Narayan, the Indian English novelist, proves himself a great artist with a universality of vision. As Philip comments, "Narayan works towards a fulfillment of one of the intellectual's primary responsibilities--the establishment of a truly universal culture" (1986, 97). The universal culture of Narayan in this context presents to humanity the sacredness of life, and the amazing simplicity of the process of transcendence in every man, and man's working towards it. Narayan reveals the supreme secret that transcendence is not something remote and inaccessible, but something immanent and tangible.

The universal culture also implies an integral humanism. Herein lies the important function of World Literature in English--to create "the larger community of the world literary tradition":

The study of a foreign literature enables a people to understand the soul of another and add to its own intensity of perception and extensiveness of experience. It is an incentive to a nation's own self expression and evolution. (Gokak 1964, 139)

World Literature in English, besides offering immense scope for cosmic vision, can create a civilization, devoted to the
sacredness of life and its potential, a civilization that must "henceforth be human rather than local or national" (Coomarasamy, qtd. in Balarama Gupta 1977, 118). Tagore's Vishvabharati University in India, in which he offered the best of East and West through fine arts, attracted international scholars from all over the world, thus testifying that, "A world community is an achievement to be gained through not only political, economic and historical means but also educational and cultural forces" (Radhakrishnan 1968, 175).

While the West was contributing to a world community of ideas through its literature and philosophy, the Eastern treasures came to the Western field through their translations. The comprehensive mind of Goethe, with no sophisticated technical systems for communication, conceived of a World Literature and studied the Classics. Indian philosophy and Classics, even in their translations, inspired Goethe and other European as well as American thinkers. In Goethe's World Literature, as Dasgupta indicates, Oriental poetry would have played a vital part:

For he [Goethe] believed as he said in 1811 about the Vedas, that if they could be adapted in a language of Europe "an altogether new world is bound to be born where the peculiarities of our mind will be fortified and will be refreshed for new activity." (Dasgupta 1972, 292)

When human experience is given literary expression, as Narayan and other writers do, and when such literary expression is shared with others through a common medium, as World
Literature in English does, Literature can accomplish for the future what science and technology have, in their special ways, already accomplished.

While the sciences of biology base their experiments and advancement on the common, physical and chemical factors of the human body, and the sciences of psychology trace the similarity of behavior patterns, and study mankind, World Literature in English can reinforce and articulate efficiently the transnational character of human nature and the total man.

In the contemporary world, with the impact of Freudian ideas and Jungian psycho-analysis, of science fiction and computer technology, or the growing despair and search for spiritual synthesis in world's mystical experiences under the caption of Existential Re-expres­sion, the nations and regions are losing some of their "narrow domestic walls" (which Tagore ardently wished to crumble!) barriers of language or culture, coales­cing into global consciousness, Upanishadic unitary perception in spite of rich diversity. (Alphonso-Karkala 1977, 268)

The West seems to be apprehensive about World Literature in English. For instance, the literary circles of the West did not seem appreciative when the great Indian poet, Tagore, received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for his Gitanjali:

While the Swedish Academy which awarded the Indian poet its Nobel Prize remarked that "no poet in Europe since the death of Goethe can rival Tagore in noble humanity, in unaffected greatness, in classical tran­quility" there was great confusion in literary circles in Europe and America when an Indian poet achieved this recognition. (qtd. in Dasgupta 1972, 293-294)

When Tagore's reputation was "at its highest in Europe in
1921, a critic observed that a full acceptance of Tagore's ideas would mean a grave danger, nay the decline of European culture" (Dasgupta 1972, 294). But there were exceptions like Yeats and Ezra Pound:

Not many could agree with W. B. Yeats who said about the Gitanjali that "we are not moved by its strangeness, but since we have met our own image" and even Ezra Pound who discovered in the work "a saner stillness come now to us in the midst of our languor of mechanisms." (Dasgupta 1972, 294)

One need not fear the dominance of the globe by any particular national literature or culture, but one has to wonder why World Literature in English is not taken more seriously for articulating and reinforcing the transnational character of human nature—and thereby, perhaps, help the world itself to transcend the petty jealousies that even Swami and friends eventually overcome.
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A GLOSSARY OF INDIAN TERMS

Adharma -- not befitting the law of life, Vice.

Advaita philosophy -- Advaita literally means non-dualism, Monism. This is the philosophy expounded by Sankara.

Anand, Mulk Raj. -- Anand (1905 - ), educated at Amritsar (India), and later in London under Professor Hicks, is a prolific writer. His publications include fifteen novels, seven collections of short stories, and many books on education, culture and art. He has been the Chairman of Lalitha Kala Akademi, New Delhi.

Anandha -- bliss.

Arthasastra -- a classic treatise on polity, is a compilation of almost everything that had been written in India up to third century B.C. on artha (property, economics and material success).

Avatara -- incarnation, "descent."

Bhagavadgita -- literally means "Divine song" or "Song of the Lord," forms a part of Mahabharata. Most authorities date Bhagavadgita to the first century B.C. This most famous epic, quite important in the religious life and thought of the Hindus, symbolized the spirit of the creative synthesis of the age of the Maurya dynasty in India (325 - 185 B.C.).

Bhakti -- devotion.

Bhattacharya, Bhabani. -- Bhattacharya (1906 - 1987), studied in Indian and London Universities. He has served in the Indian Embassy, Washington (1949-1950), as Assistant Editor of The Illustrated Weekly of India (1950-1952), as Secretary of Tagore Commemorative Volume Society, Ministry of Education ([1959-1960] Government of India), Senior Fellow, The East-West Center Honolulu, Hawaii (1969-1970), as Visiting Professor, Hawaii University (1970-1972) and Washington State University (1975), and as "Distinguished Visiting Professor," Washington University (1973). He has received Prestige Award from the Universities of New Zealand (1962). Boston University Archives has established "Bhabani Bhattacharya Collection." Besides his publications in Bengali, Bhattacharya has several novels published in English. His novel Shadow from Ladakh (1966), received the Sahitya Akademi Award. He settled in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Brahma -- name of God, the Creator.

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Brahmin -- the highest caste among the Hindus.

Chaudhuri, Nirad C. -- Chaudhuri (1897 - ), studied in Calcutta. Besides being a journalist and freelance writer, he has served as Assistant editor, Prabasi & Modern Review (1929-1933); Commentator, ALL INDIA RADIO (1941-1952); and Visiting Professor, Texas University at Austin (1972). He delivered the Annual Quadrangle Lecture at Chicago University (1971). Of his several publications in English, The Continent of Circe (1965) received Duff Cooper Memorial prize, and his biography, Scholar Extraordinary (1975), received Sahitya Akademi Award. He has settled in Oxford, UK.

Coomarasamy, Ananda -- born of a Sinhalese Indian Father and an English mother. He was neither an Indian citizen nor did he live in India. But the entire orientation of his thought is Indian, and hence he is considered by Naik and others as an Indian English writer.

Das, Kamala. -- Kamala Das (1934 - ), educated mainly at home, was the Poetry Editor of The Illustrated Weekly of India and The Youth Times, and Project Director, the Book Point. She has published many books including Summer in Calcutta (1965), The Old Playhouse (1969), My Story (autobiography - English Publications), besides a number of compositions in her mother tongue, Malayalam. She is also the recipient of Asian Poetry prize, Manila (1963); Kerala Sahitya Academy Short Story prize (1969); and Chimanlal Prize for Fearless Journalism (1971).

Desai (Mazumdar), Anita. -- Desai (1937 - ), educated in Delhi, has to her credit several novels, novelettes and books for children of which Fire on the Mountain (1977) won her the Sahitya Akademi Award. Her ninth and latest novel, Baumgartner's Bombay (1988), published by Heinemann, and Knopf, was reviewed by David Walton in Chicago Tribune (Sunday, March 6, 1989). Daughter of a German mother and an Indian father, Desai is now an English teacher at Holyoke College in Massachusetts.

Dharma -- rules of religious law, virtue, the law of life.

Dhoti -- South Indian attire for men, usually cloth worn around the body below the waist.

Ganesh -- elephant-headed God.

Ghee -- clarified butter.

Guru -- teacher, spiritual guide.
Indian Languages -- languages spoken in the Indian subcontinent. Although there are hundreds of dialects, the Indian Government recognizes fifteen regional languages. They are: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

Jhabvala, Ruth Prawar -- an internationally known author, Polish in origin, born in Germany, educated in England, married to an Indian, she has lived in India for more than two decades, and has written in English.

Kalidasa -- (Fifth century A. D.), Sanskrit poet and dramatist, probably the greatest Indian writer of any epoch. In drama, Kalidasa's Sakuntala is the most famous and is usually judged the best Indian literary effort of any period. Sakuntala tells of the seduction of the nymph Sakuntala by King Dusyanta, his rejection of the girl and his child, and their subsequent reunion in heaven. The epic myth is important because of the child, Bharata, eponymous ancestor of the Indian nation, Bharatavarsa (subcontinent of Bharata). Kalidasa remakes the story into a love idyll. It is said that Kalidasa, as in all his works, depicts the beauty of nature in Sakuntala with a precise elegance of metaphors that would be difficult to match in any of the world's literature.

Kamban -- the author of the principal Tamil version of Ramayana in South Indian setting.

Kannada -- refers to the state of Karnataka on the southwestern coast of India, and also to the language of the region.

Karma -- action, work.

Kautilya -- (Third century B. C.), also called Chanakya, was the Hindu statesman and philosopher, who served as minister to King Chandra Gupta Maurya. Kautilya systematized the science of political economy (Arthasastra).

Madhva -- (Thirteenth Century A. D.) the third Indian philosopher to systematise Vedanta. His school of philosophy is dualism, dvaita.

Mahabharata -- one of the two great epics of ancient India, the other being Ramayana. With the Puranas and the Vedas, Mahabharata is ascribed to the mythical author Vyasa. The epic deals with the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The two great epics were injected with didactic sections on religion and morality and given the status of
sacred literature. Their heroes Krishna and Rama are considered as incarnations of the god Vishnu.

Manimekhalai -- composed by Sathanar, bears the name of its heroine. It continues the story of Silappadikaram, but unlike which Manimekhalai is a partisan to Buddhism. With lively discussions of religion and philosophy, it is also known for its poetry.

Mantras -- prayers or sacred words.

Markandaya, Kamala. -- Markandaya (1924 - ), one of the outstanding Indian English women novelists of the century, has to her credit the following novels: Nectar in a Sieve (1954); Some Inner Fury (1957); A Silence of Desire (1961); Possession (1963); A Handful of Rice (1966); The Coffer Dams (1969); and The Nowhere Man (1973).

Mysore -- Narayan at present lives in the outskirts of Mysore, a beautiful city in the state of Karnataka.

Moksha -- liberation.

Nahal, Chaman. -- Nahal (1927 - ), presently Professor of English at University of Delhi. He was British Council Scholar in U.K., Fulbright scholar at Princeton, USA, Visiting lecturer in Malaysia, Japan, Singapore, and Fiji, and visiting professor, Long Island University, USA. About a dozen of his publications include My True Faces (1973), Azadi ([1975] won the Sahitya Akademi Award), The English Queens (1979), etc.

Nirvana -- (the literal meaning) extinction or blowing out. In Indian religious thought, the supreme goal of the meditation disciplines. The concept is most characteristic of Buddhism, in which it signifies the transcendent state of freedom achieved by the extinction of desire and of individual consciousness.

Padma Bhushan -- the highest title of honour conferred by the Indian Government upon civilians, for outstanding contributions to the nation.

Puja -- sacrifice, ritual worship.

Puranas -- mythological stories.

Pyol -- elevated and roofed veranda in front of a house.

Ramanuja -- (Eleventh-Twelfth centuries A.D.) the second of the three Indian philosophers who developed the theistic systems of Vedanta. His philosophy is a qualified nondual-
ism (Visistadvaita).

Rao, Raja. -- Rao (1908 - ), a novelist and a short story writer, is from an ancient South Indian Brahmin family. With his enchanting prose style, Rao reveals in his work his sensitive awareness of past tradition. His novels--Kanthapura (1938), The Serpent and the Rope (1960), The Cat and Shakespeare (1965), and Comrade Kirillov (1976)--has won him very good recognition. Although a native of Mysore State, South India, since his departure for France in 1929 for his research on the mysticism of the West, he lives abroad except for his periodic visits to India. He has moved from France to the U.S.A. in 1965. Kanthapura evokes the Gandhian age in English fiction. The action of The Serpent and the Rope, with some autobiographic coloring, is set in France and England. He is commended by some as "the most 'Indian' of Indian English novelists." He is also a "symbolist, stylist, and philosophical novelist."

Rasipuram -- the name of Narayan's ancestral village.

Ravana -- In the epic Ramayana, Ravana is depicted as having ten faces and twenty hands. He abducted Rama's wife, Sita. Rama slays Ravana, and brings Ravana's head back to Rama's wife.

Sahitya Akademi -- one of the National cultural Institutions in Delhi, the capital of India. It fosters and co-ordinates literary activities in the Indian languages.

Sangam -- literally means academy. The earliest Tamil writings that may properly be termed literature are those of the Sangam. The secular poems of the Sangam period have internal evidences and references to trade with the west.

Sankara -- (Eighth or Ninth century A.D.), a great Indian philosopher who was one of those who developed the theistic systems of Vedanta. Sankara's philosophy is Advaita Vedanta, unqualified nondualism (suddhadvaita).

Saree -- South Indian woman's dress.

Sanyasa -- renunciation.

Sanyasi -- a monk, one who has renounced worldly life.

Silappadikaram -- composed by Ilango Adikal. It is a fine synthesis of mood poetry in the ancient Tamil genius, which gives a detailed poetic witness to Tamil culture, its varied religions, town plans and city types, the commingling of Greek, Arab and Tamil peoples, and the arts of dance and music.
Singh, Khushwant. -- Singh (1915 - ), a lawyer by training, Singh's most enduring work has been done in the field of Sikh history and biography. Besides his two novels, A Train to Pakistan (1956) and I shall not hear the Nightingale (1959) and two collections of short stories, he has translated into English a few Urdu novels.

Siva -- name of God, the Destroyer and Regenerator.

Tagore, Rabindranath. (1861 - 1941) -- Bengali poet and mystic. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for his Gitanjali (Song Offering) which is a translation of his Bengali poems into English by himself. He was most influential for introducing the best of Indian culture to the West and vice versa. He was awarded knighthood in 1915, but he surrendered it as a protest against the bloody Amritsar Massacre. He was also a well known composer and gifted painter.

Despite his variety of activities, Tagore was a prolific writer; twenty one collections appeared in the last twenty five years of his life. Much of that period was spent in lecture tours in Europe, America, Japan, China, Malaya and Indonesia. Many of his works are translated into English by himself and others; but it is said that the English translations fall far below the Bengali originals. Tagore was also a gifted composer, setting hundreds of his poems to music, and was among India's foremost painters.

In 1901 Tagore founded a school at Santiniketan, near Bolpur (Bengal), where he sought to blend the best in the Indian and Western traditions. In 1921 he inaugurated the Vishva-Bharathi University there.

Tiruvalluvar -- the author of Tirukkural ("Sacred Couplets") which is the most celebrated of the post-Sangam literature. Its 1330 hemistiches (half lines of verse) are probably the final distillation of different periods.

Tulsidas (1543? - 1623) -- Indian sacred poet whose principal work, the Ramacaritmanas ("Sacred Lake of the Acts of Rama"), is said to be the greatest achievement of medieval Hindi literature. This Hindi version of the Ramayana is the "Bible" of North Indian homes.

Upanishads -- sacred texts that answer the question "Who is that one Being?" by establishing the equation Brahman = atman. Upanishads also refers to the religious texts of Hindus.

Valmiki -- a Hindu hermit, legendary author of the great epic Ramayana in Sanskrit.
Veda -- knowledge, sacred scripture.

Vedanta -- the end of the Vedas, philosophy.

Vedic Literature -- the sole documentation of all mythology before Buddhism and the early texts of classical Hinduism. Vedas means books of knowledge.

Vishnu -- name of God, the Preserver.

Yoga -- A mental-psychological-physical-meditation system which makes room for God not on theoretical grounds but only on practical considerations.
The dissertation submitted by Sr. Mary Beatina has been read and approved by the following committee:

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date: 1 April 1989

[Signature]

Harry T. Puckett