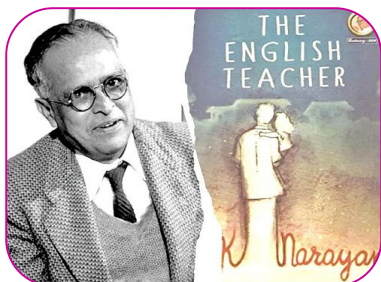





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**R. K. NARAYAN'S THE ENGLISH TEACHER: A PROFOUND SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY**


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**ABSTRACT:**

*This paper discusses The English Teacher – a standout amongst the most popular narratives penned by R. K. Narayan. It tries to present the coherence of a sensitive man's self-development and focus on the theme of "tradition to return" and the human spirit's ableness to 'embrace life as a-whole', to integrate life, death and the hereafter. Moreover, the paper makes an attempt to probe into the aspect of aloofness in The English Teacher and depict R. K. Narayan, as an author having a rare psychological insight into the human mind, character and mastery over the analysis of the internal workings of the mind.*

**KEYWORDS :** Tradition, Indianness, Self-realization, Spirituality.

**INTRODUCTION:**

R. K. Narayan states that there "is no escape from loneliness and separation... I told myself often. Wife, child, brothers, parents, friends.... We come together only to depart again. It is one continuous movement" (Narayan 117) R. K. Narayan observes economy of substance in *The English Teacher*, the last novel of the first phase of his career. The stem of the novel is the personal experience of the novelist, R.K. Narayan himself. It is highlighted that the work of fiction is an account of Krishnan (the central character) communicates the possibility of the material world which is an idea constantly examined in Indian philosophy.

The concepts, birth, the process of life as well as death make an unavoidable cycle in this 'magical' world from which no creature can escape. It is a thought that is invariably discussed in Indian philosophy. Salvation is believed to be attained through the faith and belief in the God. The autobiographical method stretches the reader's receptivity to the extreme as it deals on par with the psychological incidents, involving Rajam his dead wife like calling the spirit on the Planchet.

**THE SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY**

The storyline of the narrative *The English Teacher* is sectioned into three parts. The first part is Krishnan's life before marriage, the life after his marriage with Susila and their baby Leela, the second and the third part is after the death of his loving wife. Krishnan's endeavour for setting up his contact with the 'soul' of his demised spouse demonstrates his concern in parapsychology. The first half of the novel remains

to be distinctive from the second part as it shows his harmonious life as a lecturer in English living his life happy with his loving wife besides which the mechanical life of any lecturer is introduced through this central character. One witnesses a picture of a loving husband and careful father in the character of Krishnan.

After lecturing on Milton and Shakespeare in the Albert Mission College he returns to hostel room, chats with his colleagues, and indulges in discussion with other lecturers on points of common interest. All this indicates Krishnan's independent life in the hostel. It is an amusing and realistic picture of the academic life of Krishnan in a college. The coming of his spouse and child to Malgudi fetches an unimaginable transformation in Krishnan's life. It has been opined that the "story of their wedded life is a prose lyric on which Narayan has lavished his best gift as a writer" (Iyengar 367).

Krishnan and Susila passed a joyful and prosperous life for quite a few months as any other household from Malgudi. They would discuss the college matters and share with each other each moment to make them even more beautiful. Susila the wife of *The English Teacher* Krishnan is a loving wife and mother. She is the replica of an ideal Hindu wife. Even though she enjoys a short happy married life, her presence pervades the novel. Like Krishnan, however, Narayan does not tell her much about her physical appearance. The reader understands her capacity as a true Hindu wife when she celebrates her religious rituals and the way she learns and takes charge of the household duties from her mother-in-law and as a responsible housewife and reigns, the house with an iron hand as Krishnan's mother leaves the house. She becomes his "cash-keeper" and proves to be 'a ruthless accountant'. Krishnan says:

In her hands, a hundred rupees seemed to do the work of two hundred, all through the month she was able to give me money when I asked. When I handled my finances independently, after making a few 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 days, I went about without money" (Narayan, *The English* 128).

With the arrival of Susila all these have been changed. She keeps a strict check on household expenditure and whenever Krishnan even slightly deviates from her list of groceries, it leads to a minor squabble between the two.

In the light of Misra, Gandhi's view was: "Simplicity and Minimization of wants, according to him, lead to real happiness and fuller development of personality" (Misra 17). Only once does it lead to a fierce quarrel when Susila sells his old alarm clock with some useless papers. Krishna is livid and he shouts at her. They do not speak for forty-eight hours and eventually it is Krishna who makes the first-move as he cannot bear her sobbing and crying. Susila readily agrees and they go out to watch a film. They resolve not to quarrel because; as she firmly believes that such quarrels can affect a child's health. She serves him coffee and tiffin, and Leela is looked after by Krishnan till she goes about getting the dinner ready. She regards the old woman sent by Krishnan's mother to help her in her domestic chores as 'unnecessary expense' but is soon reconciled to this. She often declares "When we are old we must never trouble others for help. And remember there is a daughter, for whose marriage we must save." (Narayan, *The English* 43)

She firmly believes in the adage that one must live within one's means, and save enough. She has extracted a firm promise from Krishna Whenever he jokes about having more children, she covers his mouth with her fingers and reminds him of his promise. Susila shares Krishnan's love for poetry and encourages him to write. Susila's 'helplessness, innocence, and her simplicity' move him deeply. Her eyes always laughed. He recalled a perpetual smile in her eyes. Before going to Lawley Extension, Susila wants to take a detour to the riverside to bathe her feet. Krishnan agrees. He promises to take her on a tour to Europe when he has made enough money from the money he makes out of his books that he is going to write.

Nevertheless, alas, this is not to be. Susila contracts typhoid after she locks herself in a filthy lavatory in the house they have seen and liked. The central character of the novel is so dedicated to her that he completely lost a sense of time as he attempts his best to bring back her to healthiness. He is desolated when she passes away after a mere five years of happy wedded life. There is a sense of '*peculiar blankness and emptiness*' in Krishnan's life. He is stunned at this sudden loss till Susila's spirit decides to communicate

with him, first through a medium and then directly. She assures him that she is happy in the other world and that she is keeping a constant watch over him and the child. She is aware of their day-to-day activities and would like him to be calm and relaxed, and improve his 'sensibilities' if he wants to be in constant communion with her.

In her caring observation and sway, the husband goes away to work with a light-heart. The day seems to be full of surprise and joy even in such a dull, dreary and monotonous routine that he follows in college. At every sitting, she reminds of her ivory sandal wood box and the fourteen letters written by her to him which he hasn't been able to destroy. Fortunately, Krishnan finds the box in his mother's possession but is unable to trace the letters. Krishnan finds fulfillment at last and takes up the work that pleases him and gives him immense satisfaction. He gives up his college job and starts working in the school for small children at a quarter of the salary he was getting in college.

With Susila's spirit constantly by his side, he experiences "a moment of rare, immutable joy - a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death" (109). As in life, Susila is constantly with him even after her death, thus testifying to the power and permanence of true love. She indeed proves to be 'a phantom of delight' for her husband as she continues to guide and inspire him long after she has departed from this world. The fate in which Indian people carry strong faith is unkind to this happy couple. In search of a suitable house Susila contracts typhoid in an infected lavatory and dies of illness caused by typhoid. Krishnan's mother-in-law is superstitious by nature who believes that an evil eye has fallen on her daughter.

According to her, the new house must have a virulent spirit. The universal tendency of human beings everywhere either in the rural part or urban region is that if a family member dies in a year of accommodation of a new house it is labelled as haunted house by the evil spirit. However, normalcy is disturbed when Susila dies leaving her husband distracted and heartbroken. The scene is dominated extremely by the autobiographical elements and it is poignant emotionally. *The English Teacher* undertakes a quick and unexpected turn after the death of Susila.

The introduction of mystery strikes a remarkable but rather an unbelievable note. For its truth Narayan says that the concluding chapters of the book were concerned with the psychic experiments, and the English critics lashed out at them. Narayan himself confessed that the story about Krishnan is an autobiographical presentation of Narayan himself. In his autobiographical work, Narayan affirms that

More than any other book *The English Teacher* is autobiographical in content, very little part of it being fiction. *The English Teacher* of the novel, Krishnan is a fictional character in the fictional city of Malgudi, but he goes through the same experience, I had gone through and he calls his wife Susila, and the child is Leela instead of Hema. The toll that typhoid took and all the desolation that followed, with a child to look after, and the psychic adjustments, are based on my own experience (Narayan, *My Days* 136).

The plot of *The English Teacher* shows a kind of short-cut to resolution. A profound spiritual odyssey is presented through personal experiences of the protagonist personifying the novelist himself.

A strange episode takes place in Krishnan's life that he comes in contact with a man who is able to establish contact with soul of the dead person. He is successful in psychic communication with Susila. Attempts of psychic contact with the soul of the dead person through the planchet are common things in India, which are also matter of belief. With the help of a stranger Krishnan is able to establish communication with the spirit of his dead wife. As he comes home after the send off party, he finds himself helpless as he could not find his loving wife, Krishnan cries loudly "My wife...my wife, my wife...." (Narayan, *The English* 212).

Krishnan's wife appears by his side who has worn jasmine. Krishnan is able to bring his wife from the heaven on the earth on the basis of platonic love. Susila is reborn, spiritually resurrected, to be with him forever. Normalcy is restored with Krishnan psychologically rejuvenated and in a position to lead normal life which recalls Lord Rama, says Tyagi; "ideal king in Hindu mythology who remains attached to Sita even after her exile" (Tyagi 220). The readers of the novel do sense an incredible difficulty to consider the supernatural conversation of Krishnan with the 'soul' of his wife, Susila.

The author in, *My Days*, which is an autobiography clears it that the incident is factual. The life of stable peace is destroyed by chance 'entrance' of Susila into dirty latrine infected with flies. The wife, Susila dies and Krishnan begins his mystic experiment with the spirit for a reunion. The two episodes in *The English Teacher*, structured around minor characters- the schoolmaster and the planchet writer are dexterously integrated with the main plot. The preceding episode is especially effective as it seems to be an extension of the main theme- a search for purpose and happiness in life.

Narayan has contrasted Krishnan's family of domestic harmony with headmaster's house of disharmony. Even after his wife's death Krishnan in order to establish direct contact with his wife gives resignation from his college service and decides to join headmaster's Leave Alone School. The headmaster is compelled to lead a miserable life because of quarrelsome disposition of his wife. In a fit of sadness he leaves his family and house and begins to work for the cause of children's education. Following this, it may be noticed that Leela's headmaster, who plays a tragic-comic role in *The English Teacher*, is a man with unconventional and original views on education.

Though he is not successful in regard to his own children's education, he tells that his school is open for all the students in the world and not for his own children because of his nagging and cantankerous wife. The strange story of this strange man comes to a strange end and all the tensions dissolve in a smooth anticlimax. The story of the Headmaster forms a sub-plot in the second half of the novel and acquaints the reader to an unusual world. The tragi-comic texture of the story has an undertone of irony.

As Krishnan tries to seek the peace of mind and happiness in the life by continuing spiritual union with the soul of Susila, the headmaster feels insulted and experiences tiresome in the company of his wife. The event of death prophecy given by a wandering sadhu underlines headmaster's superstitious attitude towards life. His wife changes her behaviour to suit the new situation as the headmaster is not interested in the life after death as Krishnan is.

The structure of the novel is autobiographical because similarity between the character of Krishnan and the novelist, Narayan. The description of events Krishnan's married life, the first few years of happiness, the suffering during Susila's illness, the journey to the cremation ground, resembles Narayan's individual life. Krishnan's misery and anxiety to be both father and mother of Leela and his psychic communication with Susila also is resemblance to Narayan's life as a widower.

It may be stated that the novel, *The English Teacher*, holds the idea, 'return of tradition' and household concord in comparison to household dissonance that is portrayed in *The Dark Room* by Narayan through the personas of Susila and Krishnan. The wife-husband bond results in springing the subject of unrest and delusions against actualities. The marital relation of Susila and Krishnan as the wife and husband depicted in the narrative is magnificent for the reason that it highlights discernment, self-respect and interaction involving them.

The role of fate and chance becomes significant when the love between husband and wife is established through marriage in the traditional way. The role of death, sex and love are central in shaping wife-husband bond, which point to the premise of household conjugal life. The marriage between Krishnan and Susila has taken place in the traditional way which shows fulfilment of romantic love. The death of Susila teaches Krishnan a lesson of inevitability of loneliness. Krishnan accepts the truth of death and loneliness as the law of life. Krishnan's communion with Susila at physical and spiritual level reflects 'life after death'. They are profoundly attached to each other. His love for Susila is Platonic. Krishnan is a devoted husband and Susila is a submissive wife. There is mutual understanding for each other. Krishnan's true love for Susila does not allow separation from each other.

Narayan contrasts this ideal relationship between Krishnan and Susila with the opposite type of relationship between the Headmaster and his wife. Susila, as a traditional wife is able to win the heart of her husband by her practical wisdom and domestic knowledge. His wife's irresponsible nature brings depression and unhappiness in the headmaster's domestic life. The theme of rebellion is focused on by Narayan in the novel through the character of Krishnan, the central consciousness of the novel. The uncompromising

idealist Krishnan, at the very beginning of the novel is seen expressing a restless and nagging sense of missing something valuable in India.

"After joining as an English lecturer in Albert Mission College, he passionately wants to bring enthusiastic change the social order. He observes the Indians around him are the victims of omens and false superstitions, and social-evils. Henceforth the duty of the instructor as indicated by him is to put new-life and soul in the convention ridden social order. The rebellious attitude of the protagonist is witnessed in his complete opposition to the system of education, which is implemented by the British in India. As indicated by Krishnan the British instruction has made Indians 'cultural morons' (Narayan, *The English* 206) and the Indians have overlooked their brilliant past, social legacy and standards of life. He has been teaching Shakespeare and Carlyle and is dictating the same notes from year to year."

Consequently, he feels displeased with himself and imagines that his work as a teacher is mechanical which leads to destroy happiness in his life. Krishnan does not even spare himself and says: "If they paid me the same one hundred rupees for stringing beads together or tearing up the paper bits every day for a few hours, I would perhaps be doing it with equal fervour" (12). The happy relationship between *The English Teacher* and his wife Susila puts an end to the restlessness of the poet.

Hence, Krishnan's rebellious nature may be suppressed by the relationship in the domestic sphere. A change in Krishnan's life takes place because he leaves the hostel and begins to enjoy happy and balanced life with his wife Susila and daughter, Leela in a rented house in Malgudi. It underlines domestic harmony which is moulded by the traditional world of Malgudi. Krishnan's coming back to the house after lectures; his enjoying coffee in the house with the family members shows him to be a caring Indian husband and loving Indian father. Susila's monthly-budget and her firmness underline her as an Indian house wife. Susila loves her child and knows how to treat the child psychologically, which reflects her Indian motherhood.

The untimely death of Susila causes the loss of harmony in the life of teacher, Krishnan, and it forces him to express his views on the cemetery. "This is a sort of cloak room, a place where you leave your body behind" (106). One may point out Krishnan's dejected reaction-'nothing will worry to interest me in life hereafter.' It suggests the negative attitude of Krishnan towards life which is temporary. The thought of despair comes out of illusions of life. It takes positive turn as soon as he is connected to Susila's soul. The process of meeting is considered as the union of two souls.

It is underlined that Krishna enjoys pleasant company of his wife, Susila in life after death. Krishnan is a spiritual rebel. The restless spirit occurs again when the teacher establishes a psychic contact with her soul. It has been opined that "Krishnan's journey in this world is full of innocence and his real development takes place in the spiritual world where he communicates with Susila psychically" (Mishra 22-23) It is the notion of rebellion. Krishnan, indulging in many trials finds successful in establishing the link with the soul of his beloved wife Susila. He, thus, describes, "When I opened my eyes again she was sitting on my bed looking at me with an extraordinary smile in her eyes" (Narayan, *The English* 212).

Krishnan's positive philosophy of life, spiritual maturity and union of two souls contributes him to arrive at, 'the spiritual catharsis of despair and salvation.' Krishnan accepts the truth of death and his feelings that he is alone. Acceptance of death and loneliness is the law of life. They are two natural agents of the bond of human relationship. He understands that there will never be a way out from forlornness and detachment. As indicated by him the institution consisting of spouse, kids, siblings, guardians, and companions is not permanent however temporal. All these individuals leave from us as we leave from them. This is the positive way of thinking of life and Krishnan's achievement of religio-spiritual development.

Narayan presents a spiritual rebel. Krishnan's last rebellion is considered as the extension of spiritual rebellion. The resignation underlines Krishnan's dissatisfaction with his job as a teacher. Krishnan's rebellion seems to be peeped in his act of resignation from his teaching profession and his decision to 'join the headmaster's school 'Leave Them Alone.' The British system of education he feels has subdued the learner's power of imagination and hence he keenly expects social freedom and independence of mind. 'Leave Them Alone' exists as a God sent mission, where he can pursue the work of his choice. Krishnan's intention in his

decision is commendable: "I'm seeking a greater inner peace, I find I can't attain it unless I withdraw from the adult world and adult work into the world of the Children" (211).

Krishnan and Susila do not have prejudices in their minds. One may underline their union of souls even after Susila's death. They do not interrogate individuality, pride and ego. Susila, representing every mother of the Indian society, worries for the wedding of her daughter, Leela. Krishnan's daughter, Leela in the novel grows under the care of her father, Krishnan after her mother's death. When she asks the story teller 'Oh! What will you do then', indicates that Leela looks more mature at this stage. Krishnan did not want to create storm of unhappiness in his daughter's life revealing the truth about his wife's death. The motherless child, Leela forces Krishnan to join the headmaster's 'Leave Them Alone School' and enjoy pleasure in the midst of the children, who seems to play the catalyst in the life of Krishnan.

It underlines Leela as a careful daughter. She is the only friend in his life. Leela is the only source of stability for Krishnan since the death of his wife, who teaches him, even corrects him at times. *The English Teacher* is rather unmatched by any other work of fiction. The texture of the novel is delicate and redolent with the fragrance of love. The uniqueness of his treatment of love and marriage here in this novel emanates mainly from the delicate fusion of the passion and purity of wedded love. Unlike Chandran, Krishnan is a married young man, father of a little girl. To him, love is not a physical appetite or obsessive passion. It has acquired serenity, beauty and tenderness of wedded love. The marital life of Krishnan and Susila is gradually unfolded through countless glimpses and occurrences.

*The English Teacher* is an unusual novel, particularly in its treatment of the theme, of love and marriage. It possesses shades of the emotion of love. The early part is filled with its ecstasy, the middle with its agony and the last with its fulfillment. It is notable for its richness and intensity. In spite of its obvious note of improbability in the second half of the novel, *The English Teacher* is Narayan's most lyrical portrayal of love. Furthermore, the novel, *The English Teacher* is certainly more than a work of fiction. It is a profound arousing enthusiastic experience of the poetry of matrimonial love with the smiles and tears.

The storyline of the narrative is sectioned into two parts as the novelist in the first part depicts close connection amid Krishnan and Susila yet it is concluded with the demise of Susila toward the end of the first part. In the second part of the novel Krishnan spends his time by setting up rapport with the 'soul' of his demised spouse and his association in 'The Leave Alone School'. The themes, which have been presented by Narayan are human relationships, illusion versus reality, conflict between tradition and modernity, return of the native and the theme of rebellion. The theme of human relationships has originated from the Indian tradition. The rebellion is realized as a deviation from the tradition. In the course of rebellion there runs the theme of illusion versus reality.

Narayan uses the device 'rite de passage' to focus on his principle of acceptance. Realizing the error, the deviators withdraw from the deviation and return to the place, Malgudi that indicates their growth on spiritual level. In this happy-go-lucky young man, his wife Susila brings a change. Susila-Krishnan love affair has all the ingredients of an ideal classical love affair. It has been observed that this emotion has taken such strong roots in both that it proves stronger after Susila's death. Love is not love if there's no separation is a testing period to assess the durability, the perseverance and the strength of love. That is why it is said that love attains fruition only in the re-union after separation. Separation may be caused by several factors and in this novel Susila's death separation Krishnan from Susila.

The narrative is more and more akin to an autobiographical story of the author furthermore is devoted to the author's spouse Rajam. It may be noted that the novel is among the third as well as is the concluding series of the set of three literary works related in theme, led by *Swami and Friends* along with *The Bachelor of Arts*. The novel recounts a tragical-romantic tale of the godly partition between two spirits – Krishnan and Susila. The central character, Krishnan experiences an intellectual, enthusiastic, emotional and religio-spiritual voyage over the course of the narrative, which encourages him to accomplish internal harmony and self-fulfillment. If one carries out resolution, aim, assurance, responsibility and freedom in the function assigned to oneself, he substantiates himself a real individual.

The thirty-year-old Krishnan is lecturer of English in Albert Mission College Malgudi, where he has been a student before. He does his work properly without getting any real delight or fulfillment out of it. At this point, the reader finds that Krishnan is unauthentic towards his job of English lecturer as he feels it monotonous and emotionless. In spite of the fact that he has enthusiasm for English writing however he does not care for the methods for teaching implemented in the college.

It has been commented that Narayan's "earlier idealism for his subject and his interest in his students were both rapidly thinning out. He was constantly nagged by the feeling that he was doing the wrong work" (Walsh 48). On a certain day, Krishnan receives letters, one from his father and the other from Susila. By means of these letters, Krishnan happens to realize that Susila along with the 7-month-old daughter is arriving at Malgudi to stay with him. The protagonist is skeptical regarding his ability to deal with a family unit. However, his father ensures him that his mother is coming along with Susila and the girl child – for assistance in arranging a home at Malgudi.

Subsequently, at this point, the reader finds that Krishnan fears to support and undertake the responsibility of looking after the family. It may be noticed that since the last ten years, the protagonist is found to have been leading his life in a hostel. He does not have the foggiest idea how he will deal with his the 7-month-old girl child. The reader does not anticipate such things from a developed individual. However, at a specific point, the same personality shocks the reader where the persona is found bribing the priest and getting married, though there is mismatch in the horoscopes. In this way, one can say that he is unauthentic in his function.

On the other hand, as his father assures the protagonist regarding his mother coming and supporting him, with this Krishnan goes for a house-on-rent where he had his own feelings of dread about his wife's behavior with his mother. Following this, on the subsequent Friday, Krishnan strides with incredible fomentation in Malgudi's railway station moreover excitedly sits tight waiting for the child and his wife. Krishnan is stressed over huge baggage Susila would be bringing with her as well as the girl child's wellbeing. The protagonist's conscience comes to a relaxed condition after the family – reaching home carefully. At this point, the reader may notice the author's portrayal of Krishnan's naive nature and his childish behaviour.

Following this, it may be mentioned that the protagonist's intimacy with Susila would assist him in attaining grown-up mentality – generally until to that point – Krishnan is amateurish in undertaking the duty of a household. A blissful, happy and cheerful marital life starts between Susila and Krishnan. The protagonist comes out of the college every day around 4:30 p.m. – besides reaches his house in about 20 minutes. Krishnan notices his wife mowing the lawn located in front of the house, apparently sitting tight for her husband. However, Susila is showed feigning and mentioning, "I didn't come out to look for you, but just to play with the child..." (Narayan, *The English* 35)

The character, Susila does the cooking and looks after the girl child. Moreover, she may be noticed assenting with every conversation made by Krishnan as well as substantiating with her-self as an excellent housewife. Nevertheless, as it comes to the case of money related matters, she has her very own theory and she does not like intrusion.

Furthermore, it may be noticed that Susila acts as a money-keeper and financial organizer for Krishnan. Nevertheless, Krishnan influences his wife to retain the elderly woman as a cook – and to this Susila accepts for the reason that the elderly woman is sent by Krishnan's mother. Retaining the elderly woman in the position of a cook would render Susila and Krishnan additional time – to be close with one another. Krishnan's adoration concerning poems is revived as soon as he finds additional time. With this, he is shown getting a 500-page notebook and composing in Tamil as well as English. Their romantic tale is not quite the same as customary romantic tale as it begins the moment they attain the status of – parenthood. Furthermore, Krishnan's father proposes to offer him some money to buy a house in Malgudi on the birthday occasion of Leela.

It has been commented that the “possibility of Krishnan’s genuine entry into the role of *grihastya* comes when his father offers to advance him the money to buy or build his own house rather than have to rent” (Thieme 57). Krishnan along with Susila prefers to settle at Lawley Extension. Hence, on a Sunday, they reach the location to select a plot/house. They meet Krishnan’s associate, Sastri who in turn refers to a residential building-contractor. While Krishnan is discussing about the cost with the building contractor and his friend, Susila goes to the backside of the place all alone. At this point, Susila enters into a soiled bathroom and bolts herself in. Eventually, Krishnan breaks open the door and while Susila comes out, she seems trembling and uneasy. The dirt in the bathroom appears to have nauseated her. However, after their visiting a temple on their way back, Susila feels recovered. Furthermore, Krishnan requests Susila to forget about the incident.

Susila falls sick after coming home and loses her natural self. With this, she stops eating. Subsequently, Krishnan approaches Dr. Shankar. Shankar of ‘Krishna Medicals’ is regarded as the best practitioner in Malgudi. For the next fourteen days, Susila undergoes medication that is prescribed to her. However, her fever does not come down. Krishnan demands the practitioner to treat Susila at least once in a day. The medical practitioner’s visiting Susila makes the household happy. On the other hand, the fever does not come down. At that point, eventually, on a particular day the practitioner takes the blood-samples of Susila. The medical tests reveal that Susila is suffering from typhoid. Within no time, the room in which Susila is placed turns into a sick-ward.

The table placed close to her bed is found to be filled with medicines and the girl child is not allowed to enter the place. Hence, the girl child is noticed spending much of her time with her friends and grandparents. The circumstances produce a deeper attachment between Susila and Krishnan. Krishnan does care or count the number of days that have passed by. However, he is identified performing the same thing repeatedly and not feeling the weight of it.

At this point, Narayan is found remarking, “But I liked it immensely. It kept me so close to my wife that it produced an immense satisfaction in my mind. Throughout I acted as her nurse. This sickness seemed to bind us together more strongly than ever”. (Narayan, *The English* 81) The fever does not come down moreover Susila becomes woozy and begins conversing unintelligibly. Presently, the practitioner’s delight is likewise lost. He calls for a doctor based in Madras to analyze Krishnan’s wife at her house. The visiting doctor inquires Susila, directs her to stop using the medicine specified by Shankar, along with proposes to take alcohol and glucose through solomine at regular intervals. The fever incidentally descends and Krishnan is glad.

Following this, it may be observed that at any rate, Susila’s condition becomes deteriorated. Susila begins to have trouble in breathing. The local medical practitioner begins to apply hot moist cloth to the body to ease pain. Nevertheless, Susila dies. The practitioner goes out and an unexpected rocklike calmness fills the house. The funeral arrangements are undertaken. The bearers and the local priests are called. Krishnan observes everything quietly. Krishnan feels shattered after the demise of his dearest spouse Susila. Everything in the world seems to be empty for him. Nevertheless, it is for the little girl, he endures in spite of planning to commit suicide. Krishnan in addition firmly rejects sending his girl child with her grandmother while she is leaving to her home. Krishnan becomes more concerned regarding Leela and – except the college time – starts catering most of his time for her.

In this manner, Krishnan feels depressed after the demise of Susila and does not care for the social order. Krishnan senses that his thought process has become numb. Besides the protagonist behaves indifferently to compassion and consolation that is shown by others towards him furthermore caring for Leela becomes his sole issue. Krishnan thinks that nobody but he alone is eligible in taking care of his daughter. Soon after, the reader finds that Krishnan is unauthentic in his instinct and is without something in looking after her. Krishnan goes to the college and performs his duty as a lecturer. However, the protagonist eventually feels that his job has become monotonous and as the bell rings, he is spotted leaving for home.



As a result, it may be noticed that the protagonist is performing his duty as a teacher without any sincerity. For this reason, Krishnan is regarded as unworthy in his job. He does not take up the extra-class levied on him by the character, Gajapathy. Furthermore, Krishnan mentions, "I implored Gajapathy to spare me this pain since as a student I had found language a torture, and as a teacher I still found it a torture" (104). At this point, the reader comes across Krishnan being highly disheartened due to the sudden demise of Susila. In addition, the protagonist loses the slightest enthusiasm that he possessed in teaching at the college as well as appears tired with his profession. This looks as if Krishnan is not behaving responsibly towards his students and so he is labeled to be insincere in performing the duty of a teacher.

It has been commented that this "teaching of English just holds him in life, there is no authentic satisfaction. He, therefore, badly needs something where he can forget temporarily the cause of his alienation" (Sidhu 41). It may be observed that at a particular point of time, while Krishnan is leaving the class, a boy – around 15 years old, comes down and submits a letter to him given by his father. It has a message from Susila, his dead wife. It mentions that she needs to communicate to Krishnan. With this, the protagonist leaves for the boy's home and ends up beguiled as well as befuddled. The boy's father explains to him in detail about souls and spirits and asks him to be back on the coming Wednesday.

The boy's father and Krishnan sit together in the following week holding a pencil and paper. All of a sudden, the pencil starts writing with a dynamite pace. The protagonist is asked to get back a little for an enhanced outcome. He gets information that Susila's spirit is eager, however is not able to gather her thoughts effectively. He gets everything confirmed as the letters are safe in the wooden box. In the next meeting, Susila advises Krishnan not to be worried so much over their little girl, Leela. She discloses to him that he ought not to feel hopeless because of her. She additionally encourages Krishnan to send their daughter to school, so that the girl will learn not to depend on others.

Krishnan appears relieved and lightened. He goes to his work with a smile. From then on, Krishnan prepares his lectures with care. She lets him know the value of time and meditation. This assists Krishnan to sense and pursue the notions without any further hindrances. He considers these practices would help and lead him to get away from depression towards a life that is real. As Krishnan's wife informs about spirits being liberated from stresses and all diseases – henceforth be grateful for a happy life – fetches a few transformations in Krishnan's perspective likewise. These alterations assist the protagonist to discard the insincere constraints that he possesses. Krishnan's wife assures that she would come with him to home. She further requests him to think about her before going to bed. As Krishnan was walking across the grove of Nallappa, he is found feeling lighter – that Susila is beside him.

It may be observed that Narayan remarks "Her presence was unmistakably there. I could sense it. The darkness of the night was not felt by me. The distance and loneliness were nothing to me. She was with me. I quietly enjoyed the fact without stirring the slightest thought" (Narayan, *The English* 133). Krishnan undergoes desolation. Furthermore, the author asserts 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" (149). After reaching home, Krishnan is unable to sleep properly. He starts to dislike eating and working. In addition, the next day at college, Krishnan goes wild on a student – who is good at studies – the moment he is posed a question. The protagonist feels like committing suicide, while he is sitting all alone on the bank of the river. Krishnan is not even worried about his little girl, as he has already arranged enough money for her. Looking at a pyre that is burning at the river, Krishnan considers that "this is also my end. Oh, God, send me to those flames at once" (151).

Consequently, the reader notices that Krishnan's wisdom has not yet refined. His recurring thoughts about the past kindle him to go for committing suicide. As Krishnan's mind is agitated and bothered, he even does not take into consideration his only daughter and becomes disturbed observing the funeral. Krishnan passes bleak and despondent days until he gets a letter from his companion, the peasant. The peasant encourages Krishnan to handle the situation – 'in absentia' and the sitting – since for spirits the aspect of

space becomes irrelevant. They can go to any place. He tells to Krishnan about the sitting at his house on the coming Sunday at 4:00 p.m. After 2 days, Krishnan receives a message given by Susila in a letter from his companion.

The most important thing I wish to warn you about is not to allow your mind to be disturbed by anything. For some days now you have allowed your mind to become gloomy and unsettled. You are not keeping very strong either. You must keep yourself in better frame.... (152).

Subsequently, Susila tells Krishnan to remove the stifling thoughts from his mind on the following Sunday. In the following 10 days, Krishnan's friend comes and they both do the sitting as performed in the past. Susila's spirit motivates Krishnan. Moreover, Susila asks Krishnan to develop his concentrating ability and tells him that

Just as I am thinking of you, I know you will also be thinking of me. But I want this thought to be coupled with the desire to commune with me. It is this aspect that I want to impress upon you as necessary for psychic development and free communion between us (155).

Susila spirit assures that it would directly interact to Krishnan devoid of intercession of any intermediate. On that very night, Krishnan makes an attempt, however fails to interact. In next couple of sittings with the medium – to make a direct interaction – Susila's spirit systematically guides Krishnan. Furthermore, the spirit proposes to Krishnan to permit his thoughts to concentrate on her. Susila's spirit motivates Krishnan to retain her image in his mind and not to think of anything else. The spirit of Susila realizes her husband requires clairvoyant advancement. She persuades him for direct correspondence with her. When he finds confrontations, she encourages him at each progression.

Along these lines, the reader can observe Susila's demise turning into a powerful impact on Krishnan, as he is unable to think about the daily life situations around him. Krishnan's intemperate adoration for his wife turns him into an abnormal personality. However, it may be noticed that the spirit of Susila attempts to bring his mind back to normalcy. The aspect of Krishnan's self-fulfillment progresses in accordance to the enticement received from the spirit of Susila. With this, Krishnan stops his regular sittings that he does on every Wednesday and converses with Susila once in a month. His conversation at the end of each day with Susila's spirit bestows him peace of mind. On a particular day, Krishnan sitting with the peasant near the river makes the spirit of Susila contented and reiterates to him about their treading in the garden sometime ago.

Following this, later one day, the mother of Krishnan who comes to stay for a month, presents a gold chain to Leela, which is taken out from a sandalwood box. At this juncture, the protagonist recognizes that the sandalwood box is similar to what his wife had referred to in their sittings. In the meantime, Krishnan comes to realize that he is not taking care of his child to the mark. Therefore, he sends his daughter with her grandmother. Consequently, it may be observed that Krishnan's abilities are recovered subsequent to his regular conversations with Susila's spirit. Krishnan removes agitation, depression and the other disturbing influences from his mind.

It may be noticed that the author while concluding the novel remarks, "the boundaries of our personalities are suddenly dissolved. It was a moment of rare, immutable joy- a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death" (Narayan, *The English* 184). Along these lines, Krishnan who lives in unauthentic attachment all through the story is moved towards faithfulness towards the conclusion of the narrative after his solid resolutions, which he comes up short on all through the narrative through association with his wife and her spirit. At the same time, it is also well presented the character of Leela as she was a baby encountering his father at the railway station, her life after the death of her mother and now as a grown up girl.

Leela, in the second phase, grows under the benevolent and tender care of his father, after the premature death of her mother. She asks innocent questions like, 'Father, why is the door shut?' and equally innocently accepts the explanation that, 'Mother is given bath'. When the father tells her that she may be able to read a lot of stories all by herself if she pleases Goddess Saraswathi, Leela bowls the story-teller

asking him, 'Oh! What will to do then?' The child certainly creates a ripple of innocent laughter. One may, perhaps, feel that Leela of this grows and looks more mature than her tender age would permit. The judge phase marks Leela more as a symbolic character than as a motherless innocent child. She initiates her father to the headmaster's 'Leave Them Alone School' and eventually becomes instrumental in Krishnan's obtaining the essence of pure joy and good in the company of the children. The little girl seems to play the catalyst in the life of her own father. Krishnan's acceptance of employment as a teacher in kindergarten school is an undertaking to re-characterize the idea of *Moksha* in the contemporary social setting."

"The author in his *The English Teacher*, consolidates the conceptualization of *Moksha* in *Samsara*, the world. It has been affirmed that "The self does not withdraw from the network of socio-familial obligations" (Prasad 106). In other words, it is through Leela that Krishnan ultimately realises the essence of human life in the context of the law of Karma. "The law of life can't be avoided.... All struggle and misery in life is due to our attempt to arrest this law.... A profound unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life. All else is false" (Narayan, *The English* 203). One may venture to say that Narayan's Leela, at least in the second half of the novel, looks like a child wearing an outsize garment of an adult and recalls the epigram, 'The child is the father of man'.

The story of the novel is believed to have been based (mostly the second half) on the writer's personal experiences. The novelist builds up the case of his rebellious, marking distinctly the developmental stages in his unique rebellion. Significantly enough, at the beginning of the novel Krishnan, although having nothing to complain about (on the worldly plane of existence), is seen expressing a restless and nagging sense of missing something valuable. Krishnan also feels a vague dissatisfaction with himself and thinks that he is doing a wrong work. Once introduced, the rebellious attitude runs all through the novel until it gets dissolved and the protagonist sees the light in the form of proper understanding of the mysteries of life and death.

One of the issues in the rebellion of *The English Teacher* is Krishnan's total dissatisfaction at the colonial system of education. As a product of the same system, he does even spare himself and vents his dissatisfaction thus if "they paid me the same one hundred rupees for stringing beads together or tearing of the paper bits every day for a few hours, I would perhaps be doing it with equal fervour" (106). It might be noticed that Krishnan's bafflingly pestering feeling of missing something essentially significant and his joy with himself might be translated as the poet's inward desire for 'a life freed from distracting illusions and hysterics' sensed by Chandran. The teacher's inner urge, however seems to have been bypassed temporarily as he happily gets ensconced in the warm love of his beloved wife.

It is, therefore, essential to gauge the material relationship between *The English Teacher* and his spouse. It may also be noted that if the happy relationship lulls the poet's restless spirit, eventually, it becomes instrumental in reviving the teacher's potentially rebellious attitude. May be because of the intensely personal overtones of the novel, Narayan's portrayal of the marital relationship in *The English Teacher* comes out with a touch of delicacy. Says Iyengar "The story of their wedded life is a prose lyric on which Narayan has lavished his gifts as a writer."

In fact, the novel, *The English Teacher* may be regarded as Narayan's notion of the ideal marital relationship. Krishnan, basically a poet has been realized as the most caring and loving husband and father. One catches Krishnan as he faces the little Malgudi station in 'great agitation' when he goes to receive his beloved wife and the darling (infant) daughter. Although the entire scene has a Narayan's touch of comicality, what is concealed beneath is the sensitive teacher's tenderly realized human concern. Krishnan has come out as a caring husband (particularly during Susila's illness) and a beloved 'daddy' (particularly after Susila's death).

On the other hand, it is the portrayal of the ideal womanhood, projected through Susila's character, which seems to be the crux of the marital harmony. Needless to say, her character merits a close look. In the primary section of the narrative, Susila is realized as the encapsulation of the classical model of womanhood referred by the dramatist, Kalidasa, *Ghrihi sacivah sakhi mithah; Priya-sisya lalite kalavidhau* (You are my

beloved wife, a counsellor, a playful companion and a dear pupil in all the arts). Nevertheless, more than Susila's worldly excellences, Narayan seems to be concerned with her spiritual attributes. It is here that the mention of jasmine becomes significant. It is natural that the teacher feels stunned and benumbed to witness the premature and tragic death of his beloved wife. What, however, seems relevant to note is the loss of the essential harmony in his life, turns the bereaved husband philosophical. One may recall, for instance, his view of the crematorium: 'This is a sort of cloak-room, a place where you leave your body behind.'

It is significant to note that despite his despondent reaction to Susila's death- 'nothing will worry or interest me in life hereafter,' - the moment he realizes the possibility of establishing communication with the soul of his departed wife, the old restless spirit strikes again. It is essential to note the process of this rebellion itself to underline its nature. One may certainly regard the meeting as the symbolic projection of the union of two souls. What seems to be of primary importance is that the meeting helps the disturbed teacher in resorting the psychological balance of his mind. In the final analysis, it helps him attain, the 'spiritual catharsis of despair and salvation.' As the teacher fights against the darkness in his heart- the darkness of despair and warring attitudes basically emerging from the agnostic's illusory perception of life- and attains a state of quietude and a balanced view of life Narayan seems to present a rare kind of rebel, a spiritual rebel. Besides, Krishnan could be portrayed as a genuine *Satyagrahi* one might say that he is facing an interior conflict for truth and self-fulfillment through the dismissal of Western system of instruction. In the systematic procedure of self-investigation, he figures out how to renounce the everyday undertakings of life which set impediment in self-fulfillment."

In fact, Krishnan's final rebellion may be taken as the extension of his spiritual rebellion. It is realized in the form of his registration of his job and his decision to join the headmaster's *Leave Them Alone School*. The registration may, however, be taken as the reaction of the uncompromising idealist's complete dissatisfaction with the nature of his job. The kind of education which he himself had and which he has been imparting to the new generation, was criticized and found fault with by the idealist himself from time to time. Krishnan views the colonial education system as the brain-child of the English ruler and having no relevance to the Indian students.

The first draft of his registration faithfully reflects the view of the idealist: "I am up against the system, the whole method and approach of a system of education which makes us morons, and cultural morons, but efficient clerks for all your business and administrative offices" (Narayan, *The English* 211). *Leave Them Alone* comes as a godsend. Here he could do the work of his choice. He views his decision in these words: "I'm seeking a greater inner peace; I find I can't attain it unless I withdraw from the adult world and adult work into the world of children" (141) The 'Leave Them Alone' may also be regarded as Narayan's concept of education, best and ideally suited the Indian pupils. A rebellion born and developed out of selflessness and human concern and, more importantly, out of the dedicative approach to a noble cause, may certainly have a place of pride in Malgudi.

## CONCLUSION

It may further be noted that that the rebellion in *The English Teacher*, is realised through *grahasthashrama*. One may endorse the view that Krishnan is the first of Narayan's three-dimensional characters. His development is realised as he passes through his journey from despair and doubt to hope and belief. The story, in this manner, is charged with a passion that can come merely from a profoundly felt involvement. Its subject-matter is grounded on an imperative to comprehend the significance of death and life, which as indicated by Narayan dwells in the realization that 'life' and 'death' are just two distinct realities - one principal material and the other all profound.

Narayan reveals to the reader that when he had the option to set up a profound fellowship with his dead wife, the soul of his wife told him "in your plane, your handicap is the density of the matter in which you are encased. Here we exist in a more refined state, in a different medium" (Narayan, *My Days* 146).

Furthermore, the author concurs that the novel had a dimension not felt in his other works of fiction, yet would not clarify the reason – “It just happened that way.” Remaining as a widower, Narayan avers his loyalty to tradition in the face of modernity that is inevitable corollary and reality. In conclusion, it may be stated that the character, Krishnan may perhaps be linked to the author himself, as it is for the time being may be comprehended that this narrative is intimate.

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