

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

A Study of Narayan's Use of Irony in R.K. Narayan's *Talkative Man*

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By

Mahendra Kumar Khatri

University Campus

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This thesis entitled "A Study of Narayan's Use of Irony in R. K. Narayan's *Talkative Man*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Mahendra Kumar Khatri has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

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Mahendra Kumar Khatri

Abstract

This research is an attempt to show irony on Narayan's *Talkative Man* in which he ironizes the world the characters are living. The narrator, talkative man wants to further his fledging journalistic career by using a fraud, Rangan from the southern part of India. In doing so, he becomes an accomplice as he cooperates in promoting illegal activities Rangan is involved in Rangan, who calls himself Dr. Rann pretends that he is conducting a research on the UN project, but ironically his own activities and dealings land him in his deserted wife's trap. Later, he turns out to be a terrible womanizer and cheat. The novel ironically exposes the tragic state of the protagonist and thus, irony turns out to be a means of a rhetorical weapon to foreground the basic concept of it so as to reveal the unexpected result.

Content

	Page No.
Recommendation Letter	i
Approval Letter	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Chapter I. Introduction	1-11
Life and Works of R.K. Narayan	
Chapter II. Methodology	12-28
A Study of Irony	
Chapter III. Textual Analysis	29-45
Use of Irony in <i>Talkative Man</i>	
IV. Conclusion	46-47
Works Cited	

I. Introduction

Life and Works of R. K Narayan

This research is a study of R. K. Narayan's much talked-about novel *Talkative Man* published in 1983. It is set in Malgudi, the fictional town Narayan invented for his novels. The narrator of the novel, a very talkative man tries to advance his fledging journalistic career by using Dr. Rann who is a fraud as he claims to be a UN researcher. Moreover, the woman who arrives claiming to be his wife cannot be trusted. So, as these characters are engaged in creating fiction about themselves and their lives, they entertain only illusion, which causes depression in their lives. So, by exposing and ironizing the fictitious world the characters are living in, Narayan stresses and shows an Indian's quest for moral and spiritual values in the twentieth century India.

R.K. Narayan devoted his entire life in the creation of literary works and become renowned in the field of literature. Apart from the exceptional work as a school master for short period, Narayan devoted himself exclusively to writing, which is a rare phenomenon in modern Indian literature. We cannot find any apparent source of inspiration for him regarding the creativity except his inborn zeal for writing and his perceptive mind. The appropriate co-ordination of the zeal and perceptivity gave birth to the writing that we now ascribe to Narayan. At this point it becomes necessary to study his upbringing and his literary career.

R.K. Narayan (1906-2001) was born in Madras in his grandmother's house. From his early childhood, Narayan was firmly set in a disciplined track as his grandmother taught him Sanskrit verses and told him stories from epic. Migration from Madras to Mysore became one and only significant step of Narayan to enter into the world of literature. His father was a school headmaster in Mysore, where Narayan

moved during his early teenage. He read a number of British and American Magazines in his father's full-run school library, which helped sharpen his vision as a writer. Though his mother tongue was Tamil, he wrote purely in English. V.Y. Kantak comments on Narayan's writing, "[o]ur first impression of Narayan's English is that it is extremely limited. He does not seem to be interested in exploring the fuller and deeper possibility of language he uses" (67). His short time work as a reporter of 'Madras journal' enabled him to meet with a wide variety of people, many of whom provided the characters for his novel. The micro observation of the nature and behaviour of his characters make his novels superb and different from other Indian writers.

His treatment of the characters is quite different from other Indian writers. His primary focus rests on the Pathos and concerns of the individual himself. Thus, Narayan's novels can be viewed as 'novels of characters'. It is hardly surprising that in his own pronouncements about his art, Narayan, has more than once, stressed his preoccupation with human character. He once declared, "[m]y main concern is with human character- a central character from whose point of view the world is seen and who tries to get over a difficult situation of succumbs to it or fights it in his own setting" (qtd. in Naik 2). Narayan further views human relationship very intensely. It makes one's existence worthwhile-human relationship in any and every form, whether at home or outside. I think I have expressed this philosophy in my work successfully" (qtd. in Naik 2). Narayan portrays human character in different life-roles ranging from an honest teacher to a fraud saint. His minute observation of the characters with a subtle touch of reality makes them lifelike. M.K. Naik comments on Narayan's portrayal of his protagonists as, "[t]he protagonist in each of Narayan's novels is made to play his life-role, during the course of which he or she either matures in the

process, or rebels or simply drifts or again is chastised or even destroyed by a characteristic inner weakness" (1).

Narayan's theme points to a vision that comes out of a profound understanding of the human condition. An imaginary small town 'Malgudi', that he created for fictional purpose, provides the setting for almost all of his novels making the Indian equivalent of Thomas Hardy's 'Wessex' or William Faulkner's 'Yoknapatawpha'. But his milieu does not in any way make his works regional. He is adept in depicting social comedy centered on a sensibility that is truly Indian.

It is certainly extraordinary to produce each work with the subtle touch of irony. But Narayan has happened to do so. Almost all the works of Narayan exhibit ironic strains. He ironizes human foibles, frailties, their thinking, and behaviour, attitude and relations. K.N. Nair writes about the sources of Naraya's irony as:

This is not an isolated instance of ironic justification of apparently improper and incompatible actions in Narayan's novels. He regards hypocrisy, pretentious pseudo-allegiance to lofty ideals, and the ridiculous attempts to find philosophical justification to sinful and selfish activities better than baneful acts of sex and violence, as sources of irony. (123)

The presence of subtle irony born out of different situational manipulation, shifting point of view, mythical correlations, cultural confrontations, character contrasts, thematic peculiarities and linguistic innovations is a notable feature of the novels of Narayan. However, the use and attitude of his ironies are different in the different phases of his writing. Narayan used irony merely as a technique in his earlier novels *Swami and Friends* and *The Bachelor of Arts*. His ironies in these novels were

only 'local' yet lacking the 'infiniteness' as adopted by Wayne C. Booth. M.K. Naik views the use of irony in Narayan's earlier novels as:

Operating in a world carefully insulated from the larger concerns in life, and totally devoid of a moral context, his irony here remains a method; it has not yet become the message. It is mainly the surface irony of social critic, and not the deeper irony which . . . characterized as 'the familiar spirit of the philosopher, the mistress of truth'. (16)

Irony as a device in the earlier works of Narayan incontrovertibly matured into irony as moral discovery in his later works. At this juncture, Narayan's maturing giant leap is viewed positively by K. Chellappan as he quotes M.K. Naik, "The distinct development that his work shows over more than forty years from his first novel, *Swami and Friends* (1935), to . . . *The Painter of Signs* (1976) . . . a giant leap from irony as weapon to irony as vision, from irony of brief moment to irony of great occasion" (23).

Thus, in this developed phase of irony, Narayan's universally agreed three fictional works lies in *The financial Expert*, *The Guide* and *The Man Eater of Malgudi*, which constitute cream of his fiction. M.K. Naik writes about the significance of the irony as moral discovery in these novels, "[t]his is so because in the novels, irony, so far circumscribed in conception and consequently restricted in its operation, and develops from merely a useful technique into an all embracing vision of life" (44).

In the words of Professor K. R. Srinivasa, "Narayan's is the art of resolved limitation and conscientious exploration: he is the content, like Jane Austen, with his 'Little bit of Irony'" (9). As Narayan prefers to revolve within the small compass of his fictional town of Malgudi, he possesses a sense of

humour, which has a universal appeal and it places him "in the mainstream of the great comic tradition" (Sharan 8). In this regard, accepting the basic humanity of his comic vision, Sharan writes:

Narayan is a master of comedy who is not unaware of the tragedy of the human situation; he is neither an intolerant critic of Indian ways and modes nor their fanatic defender; he is on the whole, content to snap Malgudi life's little ironies, knots of satiric circumstances, and tragic-comedies of mischance and misdirection.

(13)

Narayan is an unassuming keen observer of life and manners. He dedicates himself mainly to the task of depicting the comic subtleties and pathos in the simple lives of the inhabitants of Malgudi, the Kingdom of his mind mixing south Indian realism with gentle irony. His keen observation of the life of people around him with an eye of compassion and tenderness provides the material for his writings. He writes mostly about people and things he is most familiar with. Narayan is on the whole content to snatch Malgudi life's little irony, knots of satiric circumstances and tragic-comedies of mischance and misdirection. William Walsh therefore comments on his novels as 'comedies of sadness', that offers ample ground to flourish a tragic-hero. Narayan's work becomes praiseworthy because he blends his fastidious art with exact realism, poetry, melancholy, perception and gaiety.

To sum up his ironical perception, the gentle irony pervades all of his writings with underlying recognition that the follies and foibles of ordinary human beings can be accepted and looked with amused tolerance and sympathetic reality. There is a realization towards the end that the discomfiture of individual's life of his own doing, a direct realization or result of his absurd aspirations and ambitions in a world where

the individual loses his importance and merges with the wider system. All this is done through a deep rooted irony.

A Brief Review of Narayan's Texts

Narayan's first novel, *Swami and Friends* is a delightful account of a school going boy Swaminathan. The very title of the novel is essentially ironical as the word 'Swami' raises the expectations of bearded and aged figure and his 'friends' could naturally be expected to be either his disciples or of same age and similar type. But all the expectations of readers are soon diverted as they just read out the first paragraph of the novel.

The readers are amazed with the irony in the opening paragraph that arises from the contrast between their expectation and the reality. The character, Swami, the shortcut of 'Swaminathan' turns out to be a school going child with the universal nature and behaviour of the children as he enjoys the freedom of Saturday and Sunday, loathes homework, hates examination, loves vacations and feigns illness to miss school. Hence, Narayan ironizes the frivolous childish behavior of the protagonist in the novel.

Narayan moves from the concerns of boyhood to the youth in his second novel *The Bachelor of Arts*. In this novel, Narayan deals with the theme of romantic illusions of youths and their experiences. Narayan has well depicted the fanciful imagination of a youth in the novel when we see Chandran attracted to Malathi and hopes that she is equally attracted to him. The youthful cynicism can be seen in him when we find that Malathi even does not know him. When his dream to marry Malathi is shattered, his heart is broken and becomes a 'Sanayasi' for a time being, but eight months later returns to the world, to a regular job and an arranged happy marriage with Susila, everything about her he finds 'divine'. The irony arises when he

later names his infatuation to Malathi as a 'Silly infatuation'. At the end of the novel, we encounter a more mature personality of Chandran following Hindu religiosity and oriental culture. K.N. Nair comments on the step taken by a youth in an orthodox traditional bound society as: "The irony sets in when one contrasts Chandran's act of meek surrender to the overpowering socio-conventional situation much against his heart's desire . . . He is not even ready to question the outdated beliefs and practices of an Orthodox and static social system" (61).

Narayan's other distinct novel, *The English Teacher* portrays a theme of life and death. The plot of the novel is wrapped with different kinds of ironies. It displays sometimes comic irony of the petty problems of the daily business of living, while on the other occasion, tragic irony operates as his dear wife Susila shuts her eyes for ever and leaves Krishna forlorn and lonely. At this point, M.K. Naik comments, "[a]n interesting development is the new note of tragic irony that is struck time and again especially in the first part of *The English Teacher* with occasionally even comic irony turning into Tragic" (25).

Another text *The Financial Expert* is counted to be the first entertaining and enlightening novel of Narayan after India's independence. The central issue of the novel is ironic reversal, brought on clearly by a capital stroke of 'irony of fate'. Ironic reversal, in the novel, brings the wheel of fate full circle. In the novel, fate, aided by human efforts makes an obscure middleman a financial expert, and later abetted by human error, reduces the financial expert to his former puny stature.

The novel deals about a man, Maragyya, who makes his living by sitting in front of the central cooperative land Mortgage Bank and helping people with their loans. One day, the Bank secretary humiliates him and shaken by this humiliation, he undergoes a long penance, fasts and worships Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, and his

luck turns. But ironically, it crashes and he resumes his humble occupation. Ironically, he shows himself the way and then suddenly loses the way so disastrously as to land him in total ruin. M.K. Naik comments on the drastic ups and downs in the life of the protagonist as, "[a]t every stage during the meteoric rise and fall of Maragyya, irony operates, illustrating again and again the turning of the wheel of fate" (47).

The Man-Eater of Malgudi is yet another masterpiece of Narayan, which unmistakably and rather convincingly bounds up the irony with ancient Hindu mythology. Vasu, a selfish, godless bully, who, as he waits to shoot the temple elephant on a holy procession; accidentally kills himself, when he slaps at a mosquito buzzing near his forehead. This novel is based on a well-known mythological episode. The use of Bhasmasura myth in the novel was his conscious literary strategy as Narayan himself told an audience:

At some point in one's writing career, one takes a fresh look at the so-called myths and legends and finds a new meaning in them. [. . .] I suddenly came across a theme which struck me as an excellent piece of mythology in modern dress. [. . .] I based this story on a well known mythological episode, the story of Mohini and Bhasmasura. (qtd. in Naik 66)

The novel also carries a moral as Naik further writes, "[e]very demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment" (67).

Waiting for the Mahatma is Narayan's other dominant novel, written after independence. The novel presents Gandhian ideology of non-violence struggle for independence. The ironical instances are seen time and again in the novel. The very title of the novel itself carries the ironical expression puzzling us as our expectation

goes wrong when we find Bharati and Sriram waiting passionately for the permission of Bapu (Gandhi) for their marriage.

The Vendor of Sweets continues the spirit of Gandhian ideology with an ironical treatment to the theme. In the novel, Narayan brings forth the issue of; clash of generation, East-west confrontation, and the Hindu ideal of life in post-independence India. Jagan, the sweet vendor, who is a Gandhian, finds his only son, Mali, lured away by the west. Mali returns from United States with a half American and half Korean girl. Narayan presents the sweet vendor, Jagan, at the end, renouncing the frustrating world.

Narayan's *The Painter of Signs*, published after nine year of silence, deals with a nature of complex human relationship. Raman, the protagonist of the novel, a signboard painter, proclaims to be a rationalist and is always conscious of his existence. He seeks rational explanation for everything. The relationship between Raman and his beloved Daisy is the center focus of the episode. Daisy is the representative of modernity in Malgudi. In this love-relationship, Raman's propensity towards modernity is ironized by Narayan. A capital stroke of irony arises when Raman, a rationalist accepts every condition laid down by Daisy in order to marry her.

Narayan is an unassuming keen observer of life and manners. The compassionate tone of his irony persuades the people to look into themselves and amend their ways. A close observation shows Narayan to be a special expert in constructing ironic artifacts. K.N. Nair views the nature of Narayan's irony as,

His irony is gentle in the sense that it gives rise to neither indignation nor condemnation. His good-natured mockery is not directed specifically against any particular individual or institution. It is rather a

general exposure of human frailties with a 'sympathetic twinkle of eye'.

(138)

Narayan's portrayal of ironic expression can be found even in the very titles of his novels. In *The English Teacher*, Krishnan gives up teaching at the end of the novel, whereas "the guide," Raju is guided by others rather misguides himself and the villagers in *The Guide*. Narayan's technique of intermixing tradition with modernity is further clarified as mirror, when Raju fails to produce any miracle in a complete traditional Indian setting in *The Guide*.

The present study is based on Narayan's *Talkative Man*. All the major characters in *Talkative Man* are engaged in one kind of selfishness or the other. They seem bent on securing a good material life at any cost without regard to morality. The narrator, a very talkative man tries to secure his journalistic career by using fraud a UN researcher Dr. Rann. Moreover, the woman who arrives claiming to be his wife cannot be trusted. So, as these characters are engaged in creating fiction about themselves and their lives, they entertain only illusion, which causes depression in their lives. This is what Narayan ironizes in the novel.

This study has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents an introductory outline of the work, a short introduction to R. K. Narayan and a short critical response. Moreover, it gives a bird's eye view of the entire work.

The second chapter tries to briefly explain the theoretical modality that is applied in this research work. It discusses an overview of irony.

On the basis of the theoretical framework established in the second chapter, the third chapter analyzes the text at a considerable length. It analyzes how Narayan ironizes human foibles and hypocritical lives of his characters in the novel. It sorts out

some extracts from the text as evidence to prove the hypothesis of the study – By exposing the characters' susceptibility to self-deception due to entertaining illusions, Narayan ironizes modern man's pretentious and hypocritical nature through *Talktive Man*. And finally, the fourth chapter is the conclusion of the work.

Chapter II. Methodology

General Introduction of Irony

The term "irony" generally refers to an implied discrepancy between what is said and what it means. In modern usage, it refers to incongruity between the intended meaning of an action and the actual or perceived meaning of an action. There is some argument about what is ironic, but all the different senses of irony revolve around the perceived notion of an incongruity between what is said and what is meant; or between an understanding of reality, or an expectation of a reality, and what actually happens. In fact, all human activities carry a note of irony. The importance of irony in literature is beyond question. However, we should not accept the view that all art, or all literature, is essentially ironic – or the view that all good literature must be ironic. In short, irony in literature is a statement or action whose apparent meaning is underlain by a contrary meaning. *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines the term irony as, [t]he amusing or strange aspect of a situation that is very different from what you expect; a situation like this: the use of words that say opposite of what you really mean. Likewise, *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* defines the term irony from the point of view of its literal implication. It defines irony as, "Either speech (verbal irony) in which the real meaning is concealed or contradicted by the literal meanings of the words, or a situation (dramatic irony) in which there is an incongruity between what is expected occurs.

The general definition of irony leads to the very basic meaning of irony as a situation in which 'what really is' always differs from 'what appears to be'. The creative writers use irony as a literary device to show the gap between what is expressed and what is intended. The expressed meaning is for the concerned person or whom it is addressed and intended meaning is for the privileged reader. Thus, irony,

in its simplest form can be defined as a mode of speech, which brings a meaning contrary to the words. This concept of irony would be a fitting one in Greek comedies, however, such a simplified definition itself sounds ironical since irony in its concept and function is quite varied, dynamic and broad in its present uses. Now, irony has got a permanent seat in literature as a prominent tool for writers even to reveal existence, life and death.

As has been already discussed that all good literature entails irony as a device, every work of art can be valued from ironical perspective though it may have more or less ironic instances. The major writers in whose work irony is significantly present are: Sophocles, Euripides, Plato, Aristotle, Chaucer, Swift, Pope, Austin, Narayan and many others. Such a list implies the impossibility of separating an interest in irony as an art from an interest in great literature, one leads directly to the other.

A Historical Study of Irony

'Irony' has always been a very subtle and widely used critical term in social and intellectual area. In fact our life as a whole is full of irony. Thus it is imperative to have a brief glimpse on the historical development of it. In spite of the great complexities, several attempts have already been made to define and classify the concept of irony right from the time of ancient Greek and Roman philosophers like Aristotle and Cicero. There were even in Homer's *Odyssey* situations and utterances, which could be termed ironic. But no one seems to have called it irony until the late eighteenth century.

The word irony is derived from the Greek word 'eiron' which means a dissembler in speech. "In Greek comedy the character called Eiron was a dissembler, who characteristically pretended to be less intelligent than he was, yet triumphed over the *alazon* – the self-deceiving and stupid braggart" (Abrams 135). The word 'eiron',

in a sense of irony is first recorded in Plato's *Republic*. The term irony, then, indicates a technique of appearing to be less than one is, which in literature becomes the most common technique of saying little meaning more as far as possible. In most of the modern critical uses the term 'irony', remains the root sense of dissembling or hiding what is actually the case; not, however in order to deceive, but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects. Today 'eironia' is used as a figure in rhetoric. One can be blamed by ironical praise and praised by ironical blame. The Roman word *ironia* does not have the abusive meaning of the Greek word. Cicero explains it simply as 'saying one thing and meaning another'. Though the term is applied early in ancient Greek comedy, it took a long period of time to make a permanent space in literature. J.A.K. Thomson in his book *Irony* views the reason about its slow entrance:

As we saw, it was long in fighting its way into literature, and even then got in only by the back door of comedy. It was a 'vulgar' word. so, when the thing it denoted had become anything but vulgar, the name for it appeared no longer suitable and that is one main reason why we have no adequate treatment in antiquity of 'Irony' as such. (4)

In England as in rest of the Europe, the concept of irony developed very slowly. We do not get the use of irony in English literature till 1950s. Spenser had used the term irony for the first time in English literature in *Shephard's Calender* and was followed by Dryden. The term irony however, was not employed up to the seventeenth century. It was gradually introduced in literary texts with the beginning of eighteenth century onwards with broader meanings. Dryden, Pope, Swift became the successful users of irony in literature. Though the concept of irony developed late in Europe, authors and thinkers used it frequently and gradually supported it with various new meanings. The more important of the new meanings that the word 'irony'

took, emerged out of the ferment of philosophical and aesthetic speculation that made Germany for many years the intellectual leader of Europe. The principal 'ironist' of this period was Friedrich Schlegel, but no less contribution was donated by other thinkers and writers as like August Wilhelm, Ludwig Tieck and Karl Solgar.

The next stage was a universalization of these local and particular ironies. The use and purpose of irony became wider. Nineteenth century provided many terms for this generalization of ironies of events, of fate, of circumstances, of time and of life. Other German thinkers introduced the concept of irony arguing that the true irony begins with the contemplation of the fate of the world, a concept that goes under the titles of world irony or physical irony. Similarly Schlegel and Solger also used the term irony in relation to the detached and objective point of view of the artist.

As we come through history, we find that a new one has frequently replaced the earlier definition of irony, though the basic meaning remained the same. From the point of view of the historical development of irony Soren Kierkegaard's essay *The Concept of Irony*, is significant one. He opines it differently. He does not believe that irony tries to establish anything. According to him, "that which is to be established lies behind it" (278). There is yet another view highlighted in New Criticism, especially by I.A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks and Kenneth Burke, who view irony as dialectic of paradoxes. For them, a paradoxical irony is the outcome of multiple impulses and experiences that are likely to be subverted by another. So, for them, literature is the representation of this fact of paradox, which shows how human beings maintain poise over such contradictions. I. A. Richards therefore defines irony in a similar way, "the bringing in of the opposite, and the complementary impulses in order to achieve a balanced poise" (qtd. in Muecke 26). All of these three prominent

proponents of New Criticism supported the paradoxical nature of irony as it balances the opposite experiences and attitudes. From the above quote, it becomes clear that: “every literary context is ironic because it provides a weighting or qualification on every word in it, thus requiring the reader to infer meanings which are in a sense not in the words themselves: all literary meanings in this view become a form of covert irony, whether intended or not” (Booth 7). Here, Kenneth Burke's claim that language is essentially ironic gets justified since ultimately the words are representations of such paradoxical human impulses; so each word is condemned to be rhetorical.

By the end of the nineteenth century, almost all the major forms and modes of irony were introduced. It is even defined in terms of its aesthetic, linguistic and psychoanalytical implications. S.B. Srivastava observes irony as a 'characteristic style' of poets. He thinks poets prefer to communicate their visions of truth in guesses and conjectures by making optimum use of language resources. Vasant A. Shahne makes the following comments on the aesthetics of irony as:

The aesthetics of irony implies that it is primarily an art of expression – allied with a sense of beauty and generating two levels of meaning. It is also a means of contrasting reality from appearance, truth from falsehood, Subtlety from shallowness. Aesthetics of irony primarily arises from verbal irony of a profoundest kind, since it is through words, the tools for conveying the beauty of paradox that irony operates. (qtd. in Nair 31)

However, the linguist of our time Noam Chomsky comments on irony differently. He thinks, since the indirect or deep level meaning that lies below the surface meaning of words and sentences plays a vital part in literature, it prepares the ground for contradiction and juxtaposition which in its turn generates irony. According to him,

"[t]he syntactic component of a grammar must specify, for each sentence, a deep structure that determines its phonetic interpretation. The first of these is interpreted by the semantic component and the second by the phonological component" (qtd. in Nair 31). Likewise, there is another dominant thinker of irony, Allan Rodway, who views irony not only as a technique to drag out 'true' meaning but as a technique to expose double meaning. He says that "irony is not merely a matter of seeing a 'true' meaning beneath a 'false', but of seeing a double exposé . . . on one plate" (qtd. in Muecke 45).

The history of irony goes all the way to the ancient philosophers: Aeschylus, Sophocles, Plato etc. to the modern authors. With the passing of time, we come to sense the complex nature of irony. Wayne C. Booth, realizing the complexity of the mobility of irony, has categorized all types of irony into two distinct categories, namely 'Stable' and 'unstable' in his book, *A Rhetoric of Irony*. He is of the opinion that, "The act of reconstruction and all that it entails about the author and his picture of the reader become an inseparable part of what is said, and that act cannot really be said, it must be performed". (39)

For him, stable irony shares the ironic intention of the speaker with the reader, offering some patent clues in the established circumstances by the writer. In such an irony, the ironic writers provide 'literary fixity' which automatically promotes unequivocal, absolute and fixed ironic interpretation. Thus, stable irony, therefore covers all intentional ironies, which say one thing and give to understand the opposite. On the other hand, the unstable irony does not promote unequivocal interpretation since it is not finite, absolute and fixed as one interpretation essentially undercuts another. Unstable irony, therefore, is a mode of reflecting the paradoxes in the structure of universe and in our existence.

Irony in this latest sense is a way of writing designed to leave open the question of what the literal meaning might signify. The old definition of irony – saying one thing and giving to understand the contrary – is superseded. Thus the latest sense of irony says something, in a way, that activates not one but an endless series of subversive interpretations of any text or discourse.

Types of Irony

As the term 'irony' has been defined and redefined from its original meaning till today, irony is categorized differently according to its nature. Among the most important categories of irony the following three are prominent and easily distinguishable: verbal, dramatic and situational.

Verbal irony is a disparity of expression and intention: when a speaker says one thing but means another, or when a literal meaning is contrary to its intended effect. An example of this is sarcasm. This kind of irony is used to strengthen a statement by forcing the listener or reader to seek its true meaning. Abrams defines it as, "verbal irony is a statement in which the implicit meaning intended by the speaker differs from that which he ostensibly asserts" (135). Thus, verbal irony comes out from the ostensible use of language intending a sharp contrast between the expressed meaning and the implied ironic meaning. It is a figure of speech in which the meaning of a statement is different and opposed to the meaning intended. It brings a straight forward case of an ironic reversal.

When the team coach of a certain cricket team praises the stroke of a batsman who has performed poorly, makes a smart example of verbal irony bringing a quick and clear reversal. This is well supported by D.C Muecke's view in *Irony and the Ironic* as he says, "[t]he simplest form of 'high-relief' verbal irony is the antiphrastic praise for blame, for example the "congratulations!" we offer to the 'Smart Alec' who

has let the side down" (56). So, the verbal irony depends on the ironist's pretension for aiming to achieve maximum plausibility of his ostensible meaning. In this sense, verbal irony can be viewed as:

a game for two players, the ironist, in his role of naif, proffers a text but in such a way or in such a context as will stimulate the reader to reject its expressed literal meaning in favour of an unexpected 'transliteral' meaning of constructing . . . the basic technique is either that going with the ironic butt and placing him in high relief or that of depreciating oneself, which is the countersinking ontaglio method.

(Muecke 35-36)

Dramatic irony, which is also called tragic irony, was successfully practiced in Greek Tragedies. It is a disparity of expression and awareness. When words and actions possess significance that the listener or audience understand and the speaker or character does not, dramatic irony occur. The ironic effect of the dramatic irony depends on the author's ironic intention shared with the audience. Writers of Greek tragedy, who based their plots on legends whose outcome was already known to their audience, made frequent use of this device. Sophocles' Oedipus, for example, is a very complex instance of dramatic irony. Some writers defined it in terms of theatrical performance, but it is not confined to drama only, it can also occur in narrative fictions, "[w]henver an author deliberately asks us to compare what two or more characters say of each other, or what a character says now with what he says or does later" (Booth 63). Similarly Abrams defines the term as:

Dramatic irony involves a situation in a play or a narrative in which the audience or reader shares with the author knowledge of present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant; in that situation,

the character is unknowingly acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances, or expects the opposite of what we know that fate holds in store, or says something that anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the way that the character intends. (137)

Dramatic irony appears whenever the audience sees a character confidently unaware of his ignorance. The Greek Tragedy *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, for instance presents a dramatic irony when Oedipus quarrels with Laius and kills him. But he does not know the man whom he killed is his own father. Oedipus then puts a curse on the slayer of Laius. The capital stroke of irony here is that Oedipus has unknowingly cursed himself as he says:

As for the criminal, I pray to God—
 Whether it be a lurking thief, or one of a number—
 I pray that man's life be consumed in evil and wretchedness
 And as for me, this curse applies no less
 If it should turn out that the culprit is my guest here,
 Sharing my hearth. (812)

Therefore, dramatic irony is a situation in which the reader or audience knows more about the immediate circumstances or future events of which a character is ignorant. We come to know that Oedipus has married his own mother, but he is ignorant about the fact as he says, "[a] man should live only for the present day. Have no more fear of sleeping with your mother" (831).

So, there can be no dramatic irony, by definition, unless the author and audience (reader) can somehow share knowledge which the characters do not hold. Dramatic irony becomes tragic when the demystification of the real situation leads to

a “typical case involving a victim with certain fears, hopes or expectations who, acting on the basis of these, takes steps to avoid a foreseen evil or profit from a foreseen good, but his actions serve only to lock him into a casual chain that leads inevitably to his downfall” (Muecke 69). In other words, a dark and inflexible fate of a man gets a room for the exhibition of tragic irony when he comes in contrast with his hopes, fears and wishes.

Situational irony is the disparity of intention and result when the result of an action is contrary to the desired or expected effect. Irony of situation consists in the discrepancy between appearance and reality, expectation and fulfillment or the outcome of events and its consequences. According to Kierkegaard, “[s]ituational irony is not present in nature for one who is too natural and too naive, but only exhibits itself for one who is himself ironically developed” (271). A sense of irony involves not only the ability to see ironic contrasts but also the power to shape them in one's mind.

The above statement makes it clear that a sense of irony involves not only the ability to see ironic contrasts but also the power to process and shape them using one's mental faculties. The observer's power of imagination, recalls of experience and the ability to find out something which offers an ironic contrast to the thing concerned. An imaginative reader will not fail to perceive this type of irony in the works of ironical writers.

The term 'irony' is used in a number of specialized senses also, qualifying it by certain adjectives or prepositional phrases. Thus we come across expressions such as structural irony, cosmic irony, romantic irony and the like.

Structural irony is also a widely used rhetorical weapon of enforcement, which in a sense looks closer to verbal irony. But, the basic distinction between verbal irony

and structural irony is that; verbal irony depends on knowledge of the fictional speaker's ironic intention, which is shared both by the speaker and the reader; structural irony depends on knowledge of the author's ironic intention, which is shared by the reader but is not intended by the fictional speaker. Abrams defines, "[s]ome literary works exhibit structural irony; that is, the author, instead of using an occasional verbal irony, introduces a structural feature that serves to sustain a duplex meaning and evaluation throughout the work" (135).

Invention of a naive hero, or else a naive narrator or spokesman is one of the common literary devices of this sort. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is a typical example for the invention of a 'naive hero' for the purpose generating structural irony. Here narrator himself is the main participant in the story. When the knowing reader dives deep into the implicit point of view of the author who conceals himself behind the hero, the sustained irony resulting from the exposé of human vanity and frailty comes to light.

Cosmic irony or the irony of fate characterizes works in which a character's fate seems perversely manipulated by forces beyond human control. The character's efforts seem only to 'tighten the noose' already prepared by destiny. In the words of Muecke, the cosmic irony is, "irony of the universe with man or the individual as victim" (23). Cosmic irony or the irony of fate is attributed to literary works in which a "deity, or else fate, is represented as though deliberately manipulating events so as to lead the protagonist to false hopes, only to frustrate and mock them" (Abrams 137). Where the expressed meaning is that human beings are like toys in the hands of destiny and unseen forces, while the ironic meaning is often critical causing people to question God and see the universe as hostile.

R.K. Narayan, in some of his works, has used this type of irony. His novel *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* portrays a typical example of cosmic irony or the irony of fate. Vasu is depicted as a modern rakshas or demon. He violates all the rules of social morality, disturbs the peaceful life of Natraj and his friends, entertains Rangi, the temple prostitute and even tries to kill kumar, the temple elephant. The irony of fate operates when he meets his sudden death. This also exemplifies that a man (though he may be powerful) is predestined. He is manipulated by forces beyond human control.

Romantic irony occurs when speakers or writers ridicule their own seriousness. They well balance the two opposites of human nature and bring forth it together. The major credit for the elaboration of the concept 'romantic irony' goes to the German thinker Friedrich Schlegel. Schlegel declared that irony was nothing to joke about, "That's true of course; and of course, it isn't true . . . Affirm and deny in one sentence, and you too can be a romantic ironist" (qtd. in Enright 15). Similarly D.J. Enright in *An Alluring Problem* writes "Most of us are, in our more modest ways, divided souls. Perhaps 'romantic irony' is simply having it both ways - infinity/finiteness, angel/ape, passion/reason, power/impotence, praise/lament, all those ancient dichotomies - on a grander than usual scale" (14). In this connection he further writes, "Keats mixed ardour with reasoned scepticism: he found life both beautiful and painful" (14). Thus, Romantic irony emerged out of the philosophical and aesthetic speculations about the paradoxical relationship between Nature and human beings. This type of irony implies itself in the incessant paradoxes of success and failure or even of life and death. Abrams defines Romantic irony as:

a term introduced by Friedrich Schlegel and other German writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to designate a mode of dramatic or narrative writing in which the author builds up the

illusion of representing reality, only to shatter it by revealing that the author, as artist, is the creator and arbitrary manipulator of the characters and their actions. (137)

Byron's great narrative poem *Don Juan* persistently uses this device for ironic and comic effect, letting the reader into the narrator's confidence, and so revealing the latter to be a fabricator of fiction who is often at a loss for matter to sustain his story and undecided about how to continue it.

Hence, one can find romantic irony in constant dialectic interplay of objectivity and subjectivity. In many works, the authors may not use direct irony but we discover rather ironic tone and temper. The writers may remain aloof as a vantage point, a quest of god like figure viewing his own creation with a smile. The author can study the contrast in human experiences tragically and comically. Nevertheless there is a general view that the combination of humor and irony makes expression effective. E. G. Saintburry argues that an ironist without humor is inconceivable. Thus irony lies in sequence between the pretence and actuality. An ironist can be identified and characterized by the recognitions of human antithesis in human experience. He is thus, detached but not indifferent and withdrawn but not removed. An ironist simply becomes observer of the human psychology. He does comparison, provokes laughter and sympathy.

Irony is the feat of style. To be more specific, the stylistic technique or reversal is taken as one of the aspects of irony. Here, at last the transformation of the literal meaning of a text is primary issue. But sometimes it is possible to employ the techniques without being ironic too and it can be done through the use of satire. Satire is an artistic or literary expression, which generally aims to correct or reform either an

individual or a society by means of ridicule showing the foolishness of an idea, manner, custom or tradition. Abrams defines it as:

the literary of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation. It differs from the comic in that comedy evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire derides; that is, it uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt that exists outside the work itself. The butt may be an individual, or a type of person, a class, an institution, a nation, or even the entire human race. (275)

Thus, satire can be defined as a sacred weapon of writers, which is intended for amusement and for the defense of truth. A number of writers like Chaucer, Dryden, Pope, and Swift successfully used it ridiculing the character, intentions, or behaviour of a person or a society. Swift, for example, in his *Modest Proposal* simply buttresses his unambiguous moral indignation by use of it in such a way that the readers are required to reverse its meaning. He writes:

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old or a most delicious, nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, baked or boiled and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee, or a ragout. (44)

Here, the irony is rather bound up with Swift's bland assumption of brutality and inhumanity in his readers. Swift's main concern is the dealings of English people with the Irish people. That is to say to understand the implication of irony; we have to go far from its literal meaning of words and to the meaning only sensed beyond the pages. Sometimes there can be only simple reversal of meaning. Suppose, as you are

in a pretty sight; or as in the daily routine pleasantries of every day. The real meaning sometimes is not an exact reversal of what actually is said. In such situation, the irony may lie somewhere between the literal meaning and its logical opposite. In the meantime, irony does not relate only the events but also the temperament and personality of person who observes the events. Its colouring may result from the passing moods or from a deep-rooted habit of mind and its directions may obey the logic of particular chain of events. It may originate in a vision of the universe that the particular events are selected to either identify or represent.

Sarcasm is yet another type of irony which comes close to satire, but unlike satire it involves the use of ridicule or mockery often harshly and contemptuously intended to wound the feelings. It is a common form of irony which the writers such as Swift, Hardy and Austen mostly used. Abrams observes that sarcasm is used for all irony in ordinary cases. Sarcasm use language so harshly and sarcastically that Abrams writes, "[a]n added clue to Sarcasm is the exaggerated inflection of the speakers voice" (136). So, Sarcasm is bitter and harsh in tone. It consists of sneering remarks which is always jeering and always intended to hurt.

Comic irony has long been a staple of comic strips, in which the action is free to be unrealistic. An example is a notable cartoon in which a hapless cat is trapped against an inside house window, having to watch the once-in-a-lifetime consequences of a collision outside between a truck labeled "Al's Rodents" and another labeled "Ernie's Small Flightless Birds".

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* begins with the proposition, "[i]t is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" (1). In fact, it soon becomes clear that Austen means the other way round: women (or their mothers) are always in search of, and desperately on the

lookout for, a rich single man to make a husband. The irony deepens as the story promotes his romance and ends in a double wedding.

Comic irony from television sketch-comedy has the distinction over literary comic irony in that it often incorporates elements of absurdity. A classic example is where a shark tries to impress his shark friends by learning to surf. He then surfs so well that his friends mistake him for an actual surfer and eat him.

Every irony is comic in its general uses because irony in general aims to prick and create laughter for the audience. It is in direct contrast with the other type of high-profiled ironies as it does not bring any significant losses to the concerned characters. Comic irony makes audience laugh gently at the unusual and petty dealings and actions of character. This type of irony is mostly used in the works of Narayan. Raju, an ex-jailbird, the protagonist of his novel *The Guide*, comically becomes a sage, where as many delightful examples of comic irony is provided in his another novel *The English Teacher*.

The irony of simple incongruity results when two or more highly incongruous or incompatible phenomena, contradictory statements or incongruous images are juxtaposed together without any direct comment. The heroine, Belinda, keeps various incompatible articles on her dressing table which offers a classical example of this kind of irony in Alexander pope's mock epic *Rape of the Lock*. The insignificant and worthless items of cosmetics and cheap, vulgar and insincere love-letters are put side by side with the Holy Bible as, "Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, Billett-doux" (138), gives rise to irony of simple Incongruity.

Finally, the brief introduction of irony and its literal implication, it is relevant to discuss the stylistic devices, understatement or antiphrasis. This is one of the major aspects of irony that is almost always used for negation. Though both understatement

and antiphrasis are used for negation, one finds reasonable contradictions in meaning between the two. Using irony in an artistic manner which serves as a stylistic technique is called antiphrasis whereas understatement refers to the direct negation of a statement. Here in the context of negation, Samuel Johnson's definition seems even more effective. He views irony as a mode of speech which brings a contrary meaning to the words. In short, writers use irony to say more in little. It makes the weaker argument stronger. Writers use irony for a rhetorical enforcement, as a Kaleidoscope which exposes the hidden meaning of a statement.

The whole range of ideas regarding 'irony' that is discussed above; finds its best expression in Narayan's novel, *Talkative Man* where Dr. Rann, the chief protagonist is at the receiving end of irony. In the following chapter, I will be discussing thoroughly how these ideas are presented in *Talkative Man*.

III. Textual Analysis

Narayan's Use of Irony in the Text

Narayan is said to be a great master of comic irony. Human foibles have always been the bunch of attack for Narayan. His ironies are mildly pricking and gently tickling. He uses irony neither for offence nor defense in his writings but uses it to pin point and clarify his vision. It is no more a vision of life, a potent instrument to portray the complexities of life. It makes the story spicy and renders it a delightful reading. Many ironic illustrations become necessary to exhibit its surface comic elements. Like in other works irony, in *Talkative Man* has been used in a sporadic fashion, and comic irony profusely.

Narayan's characters in *Talkative Man* are engaged in creating fiction about themselves and their lives. One of the major characters, the narrator whose real name is Madhu, but widely known as the "Talkative Man" relates a story about another pretensions and hypocrite, who describes self as Dr. Rann. Moreover, the woman who follows Dr. Rann in Malgudi claims to be his wife, though the narrator has doubts about her claims. Narayan delves into the details of the pretentious activities of the characters as he exposes and satirizes the fictional world they are living in. By doing so, Narayan shows his quest for moral and spiritual values in the twentieth century India.

The narrator, "Talkative Man" is so famous in the Kabir Street in Malgudi area that many people just know him as "TM" for the talkative man (1). Narayan even ironically compares TM with one of the Hindu legendary character, Sage Narada, who is known to all as the most talkative person. TM cannot live in peace unless he finds something to share with others. He says:

I can not contain myself. My impulse to share an experience with others is irresistible, even if they sheer at my back. I don't care. I'd choke if I didn't talk, perhaps like sage Narada of our epics, who for all his brilliance and accomplishment carried a curse on his back that unless he spread a gossip a day, his skull would burst. (1)

So, like the sage Narada who was notorious for spreading rumors and causing know and conflict among different gods and goddesses, TM in the novel wants recognition and fame without regard to any moral or ethical values. This shows that Narayan, by exposing such negative activities, is in favour of retaining good and moral values in society.

TM frequently visits his friend, Varma's The Boardless Hotel so as to share his jokes and stories that he invents to impress others. Though the hotel owner does not get any benefit from TM, from the business point of view, he is held in high esteem by the owner as he keeps "a chair for TM so as to prevent others from occupying it" (1). This proves that how clever and pretentious people impress others through their immoral behaviours in society. But such people are the evils of ours society which Narayan exposes by bringing a demonic and evil symbol in the very first page of the novel. TM is portrayed as the demon Mahishasura with whose portrait, TM's chair is set facing TM himself as he comments:

My chair was generally set facing a calendar portrait of that impossible demon Mahishasura with serpents entwining his neck and arms, holy ash splashed on his forehead and eyeballs bulging out through enormous side-whiskers, holding a left a scimitar, ready to strike. I never liked that picture . . . too disturbing. (2)

It is a great irony that the TM does not like the picture because it reflects his nature and it mocks him. But the reality is that such people are there in the society. People like them as they manage to mislead them so Varma says they "adorn walls and homes" and are regarded as gods in the present day. In other words, hypocrites are worshipped these days, which Narayan attacks.

The TM who comes from a feudal family on the Kabir Street is a conceited fellow. He belongs to "one of those Kabir Street families which flourished on the labours of an earlier generation" (4). He has no intention in having higher education and dedicating his life in social works. He wants to be journalist but ironically does not want to study journalism even though he can afford to study in big cities. It shows that he does not want to work hard; rather he relies on falsity and hypocrisy. He only dreams but does not work. He says, "I liked to be active, had dreams of becoming a journalist, I can't explain why I rarely stayed home" (4). He cannot think of something creative, so he has no option but to rely on cheap and fake things to lead his journalistic career. People make fun of him as they ironically call him Universal correspondent since he has no "authority to represent any particular publication" (3). However, he seems busy from morning till night moving about the Malgudi area. No news-editor sits fidgeting for my copy at the other end; but enjoyed my self-appointed role, and felt pleased even if a few lines appeared in print as a space-filler somewhere.

The story that he relates to Varma concerns a fake fellow, whose real name and origin are Rangan and Southern village named Maniyur respectively. But Rangan is such a hypocrite that he has changed his name as Dr. Rann to sound foreign in wherever he goes in India. How Dr. Rann has been able to deceive people is that he has blonde hair and blue eyes. The reason TM thinks is

that Dr. Rann must have been a bastard born out of rape British, French and Portugese soldiers in Maniyur during the invasion. TM views:

My private view on his ethnic origin might sound naughty, but is quite on historic possibility. A company of British, French, or Portuguese soldiers must have camped at Maniyur or in its vicinity in the days when they were fighting for colonial supremacy and, in the intervals of fighting, relaxed by philandering among the local population (3).

In order to ironically suggest the low and inferior origin of Dr. Rann, Narayan mentions the place of his origin in neglected place in Maniyur where "tiled homesteads and huts clustering around a gold crested temple that towered over an expanse of rice fields and coconut groves; similar to a hundred others, so commonplace that it escapes the notice of map-makers and chroniclers" (3).

The TM first meets Dr. Rann in the Town Library. As TM frequently visits the library, it is through the librarian that Dr. Rann learns about the TM. After their meeting, the title of TM – talkative man – is challenged by Dr. Rann as he turns out to be more talkative than TM. Dr. Rann begins first by praising TM as he says, "You are a journalist, active and familiar with this town, and certainly would know what's what" (9). This wins over TM completely. How both of them are talkative and hypocrites becomes clear through their dialogue:

TM: Where are you from?

Dr. Rann: Timbuctoo, let us say.

TM: Oh, don't joke

Dr. Rann: No, joke. It is real place on the world map,

TM: Oh! Never expected any real person to come out of it. You are the first one. (11)

After this Dr. Rann becomes serious and says: "Tumbuctoo is a real and lovely place on the west coast of Africa. A promising, developing town – motor cars in the streets, skyscrapers coming up – Americans are pouring in a lost of money there" (9). As to his coming in Malgudi, Dr. Rann tells TM that he is "involved in a United National Project" (9). He further tries to deceive TM by saying that

I have to send a report to my headquarters out of the voluminous data I have collected. I am also writing a book on a vital theme. I learnt that this is a quite town, where I may collate my material in peace. Here I have been the last three days, practically living in the little waiting room of you railway station. (10)

The self-named brute who has added Dr. to his name stays at the railway station waiting room illegally, though he claims to be working in the UN project. Moreover, he complains of the bugs in the room. He cannot even manage a proper lodging for himself. Instead he complains about the bugs: "Oh! The bed-bugs there! I sit up all night for fear of them. I say, my friends the bugs are eating me up every night. Tell me, who is the railway minister now, and help me to draft a letter to him" (16). At this, TM adds to his ironic comment a wave of fine humour when he points out: "May be that is the Railway Board's policy to discourage the occupants from staying too long (16). The station master who is not happy with Dr. Rann occupying the waiting room as he ironically retorts, "[h]e can't make the waiting room his father-in-law's house" (17). This shows how false and hypocritical Dr. Rann is. After the couple of days, the station

master, who is afraid of facing Rann, realizes that the grand visitor has no intention of leaving the room, which irritates him. The so-called Dr. goes out in the morning and comes back only at night. It is against the rules to let anyone occupy the waiting room for more than two nights.

Although the TM smells rat in Rann's activities, he does not interfere, rather he helps him so as to further his own journalistic career. He never thinks of reporting anything about Rann to the police. When the station master complains to TM, he gives him the money to buy tickets for Rann so that he would be allowed to stay on in the waiting room. TM says to the station master, holding out twenty rupees, "You will buy him a ticket for Kumbum every morning and punch it for ten days and you will say he arrived by 7 UP or something, waiting to catch the 17 Down or whatever it is" (18). TM is always thinking of creating a good story out of Rann for personal recognition. TM takes him around all over the town. TM helps immoral activities flourish by supporting Rann.

The Station Master is an eccentric fellow. He is proud of his thirty years of unblemished service. He often mentions it and draws a peculiar sense of satisfaction. He talks of unblemished service but ironically he is corrupt at heart. He does not mind pocketing even a five rupee note.

The Station Master is also humorous at heart. He clearly tells Rann that it is not his business to keep the Waiting Room free from mosquitoes and bugs. Rann wishes to lodge a complaint the state of affairs to the Railway Board whereupon the funny fellow satirically says, "[n]o use, the bugs being a part of our Railway Service – they are service bugs actually . . ." (61). The Station Master speaks the language of the Railway whenever he describes the time-table

of incoming and outgoing trains. He is a man seeing off many passengers each day in a cold business like manner. But he becomes maudlin and tears well up in his eyes while seeing off Mrs. Rann. The eccentric fellow impresses us a lot but such a Station Master is not to be found in reality.

So much so that TM takes Rann to his house and lets him stay in one of the rooms. But Rann is so conceited that he is satisfied with the physical facilities and his house. When Rann sees the flushout latrine he says: "This is impossible. I have no practice – I need a European type" (28). Rann is completely taken in by European culture. Here the irony is that he has totally forgotten Eastern social and moral values or he deliberately underrates Indian values, which TM reminds Rann of:

Our ancestors bathed and washed and cleaned themselves at the well and the river. With the river running down our door-step, they didn't have to make special arrangements did not let themselves be obsessed with washing all the time, which is what Western Civilization has taught us. Considering that the river flows almost all the year round, although thinning down a bit in summer"

(29)

TM finds a good material for his story. He begins his article in the following way:

"What does that word Timbuctoo sound like?" I began on article. It is a fairy tale or cock and bull setting. Sometimes a word of disparagement or . . . I went on for about a hundred words in the same strain and finally came down to the statement, Hereafter we must pay more respect to that phrase. For I realize today that

Timbuctoo is very real as real as our Malgudi. I have actually shaken hands with a man from Timbuctoo. (29)

When he shows this article to one of the news-editor, TM is sent a telegraph for the photograph of Dr. Rann. For the first time, TM gets encouragement. He says: "For the first time in my life I was receiving encouragement" (30). TM feels that through Rann, he has been able to get recognized in journalistic field.

The way Rann lives life – dresses himself, eats and behaves with others – mesmerizes TM. This makes him think that Rann is an evasive and illusive person, because TM senses that man would not give his photograph. Rann says "I don't like photos of any sort" (32). Moreover, Rann wears clothes from different countries such as Japanese Kimono. This shows that he is trying to hide his true identity. This reveals the lack of moral and cultural aspect in Indian people who lead a hypocritical life. By exposing all this, Narayan shows his quest for moral and social values in the Hindu society.

Encouraged by the news-editor's telegram, TM now fully devotes him time to taking care of Rann. To entertain Rann's pretensions, TM wants to take him to one Sam's Café:

I'll take you at a time when it is quite. I want you to see a handicrafts shop – a very small one, managed by a chap we call Sam – absolutely a genius, dedicated. He makes lacquer ware and sandalwood stuff which are famous all over the world. So many awards at Leipzig and other international fairs. He has distributors in Africa, Europe, the US and every where. He is well known all over the world mainly foreigners come in search of him and place orders. (38)

In this way, TM flatters Rann to take different places in order to find out what his actual intentions are. After the article about Rann is published in one of the newspaper, a strange woman comes to Malgudi Railway station looking for TM. From the woman, TM learns more about Rann's hypocritical life. When she meets TM, she asks him in an undaunted manner, "if you know where this so-called doctor is you will lead me to him," because "I am his wife – perhaps the only one wedded to him in front of the holy fire at a temple" (39). The woman stares at the journalist who arouses a healthy humour when TM says, "Not in my pocket" (41). This is entirely an Indian way of speech and hence it becomes a spicy dish for the curious reader.

To TM, the whole picture of Rann now assumes a different quality if he is to believe the lady. The station master also looks embarrassed joint, is held by curiosity as to what kind of life Rann is living. When TM tells her that he met Rann at the Town Hall library where he had gone for a reference work, the lady is surprised and she says, "[s]o studious indeed! How marvelous! Good to know that he is still bookish. And she laughed somewhat cynically. All that I want know is where he is at the moment. If you will only give me a hint I will give you any reward. (41). This shows that Rann has been living a fake and pretentious life without regard to any morality and ethics, which Narayan always seeks through his writing.

As TM becomes aware of Rann's pretentious life, he follows Rann whom he has "offered asylum for no reason" (42). But when TM knocks on the door of Rann, he opens the door "with a school on his face" (42). Rann seems to busy all the time. He behaves as if TM were a "hotel steward violating the privacy of a guest" (42). This behaviour irritates TM and he says: "[w]hy don't you hang a

'Don't Disturb' board on your door. I thought you might have brought a Souvenir from one or the other of the hotels in your travels – "I see that you are busy –" I said cynically" (43).

In fact, Rann was not busy. TM could see that he had been lounging on the Canvas easy-chair which TM had let him have out of idiotic kindness. Yet that man dared to shut the door and look too busy to open it. TM could well see that

He must have been lounging and staring at the ceiling and wool-gathering, and he chose to school at me – me, his saviour from bet-bugs. Soon my anger was mitigated as I anticipated the pleasure of shocking him with news I know his flamboyance and foreign style would be punctured. I simply announced, from the door, like the opening lines of a play, 'A lady to see you'. (43)

In the room, TM notices an embroidered corner and spelt out Neville, in which "Hotel in Rhodesia – it's a souvenir" is written. From this TM confirms that Rann must have stolen the towel from the hotel. This shows the real nature and position of Rann who claims to be investigating on the UN project. Later when TM mentions about the towel and the 'Hotel in Rhodesia,' Rann says that he had been there in connection with the project. But as TM tells him it is difficult for coloured people to visit frequently, Rann boastfully says, "Oh, it's all exaggerated. Don't you believe it? For me, no problem, the UN passport can't stop you anywhere" (44).

However, Rann's arrogance soon vanishes when TM mentions about the lady who is searching for Rann. Here irony becomes striking when TM faces a volley of question regarding the lady who is haunting Rann. Dr. Rann wants to

know who the lady is, so he asks TM, "How far were you? (45). The comical irony emerges in the brisk reply of TM as he replies, I forgot to take a measuring tape with me" (45-46). When TM proposes him to go out to the Boardless Hotel of Varma, TM's friend "[h]e [Rann] shrank from the idea. He had apparently a fear of being way aid by the women. (46). With the great difficulty, TM succeeds in persuading to go to the hotel. There TM takes Rann to his usual place, the corner, "facing the Mahishasura calendar," where Rann is ironically made to sit, by implication, drawing analogy between the demon and Rann, the earlier symbol which Narayan has associated with TM (46). This symbol stands for evil and immoral nature. The lady's haunting presence at the railway station somehow drives Rann close to TM. He seems to depend on TM in some obscure manner for any information he might supply him (Rann) with, because Rann looks on TM as a "possible harbinger of some good news such as that the lady had left suddenly by some train or that she had thrown herself under the midnight train" (47). But Rann becomes angry when TM tells him that the lady carries his photo. At this Rann says, "[w]hat the hell! He cried in red face" (48).

Later, the lady describes Rann in the following way:

[a] regular lady killer, sir; the only one who could survive was myself. I've been to the capitals of the world, hunting for him with the help of the Interpol and met only the poor wrecks he left behind when he vanished. What does he look like these days? Has he put on weight? (55).

This lady turns out to be such a talker that TM himself feels outweighed by the lady. TM says, "I remained quiet, letting her talk on. It looked as though I'd have to surrender my title of talkative man and take a second place in the world of

talkers" (55). The lady delves into the details of Rann's past in such a way that every detail sounds fictitious. She even boastfully tells about herself that she is an officer in the home of Guards at Delhi. She says:

I always carry a little pistol of course licensed, because I'm an officer in the home of guards at Delhi, thought I have never had to shoot even a fly. I took a rifle training course the police once organized at Madras, and I know which is the right and of a gun. And she laughed. She seemed to be in a benign mood now, having probably got it off her chest in the morning. (60)

Again she bores TM by her tedious details of her relationship with Ran who used to take her away from home and enjoy "caresses, cuddling and fondling without regard to any moral behaviour" (64). She also tells TM that she had developed love with Rann, thus hurting the feelings of her parents. Although the lady tells everything to TM, he does not take her to Rann whom he has let stay at his house. The irony of situation makes TM surrender his title of "talkative man" to the prattle of Mr. Rann. He remarks: "[i]t looked as though I'd have to surrender my title of Talkative Man and take a second place in the world of talkers" (55).

The self-declared Mrs. Rann is a good talker. She invites the jealousy of TM who is compelled to surrender his title of "talkative man". But ironically, she does not know the slightest clue that one day her husband would desert her. As a teller of tale she deftly takes into account the inclination of her listener. The irony of the situation is that the established talker has to play the role of a patient listener. She slowly opens the pages of her past life. Her father had a carpentry shop at Egmore and Rann was an errand boy for a circulating library. His function was to deliver and collect mostly film journals, magazines, and charging

the required fee. He was also a student at Loyala College. Gradually, his familiarity grew and he started coming closer to his lady-love. This exposes the reality of Dr. Rann.

TM wants to evade the grasp of Mrs. Rann at times but he cannot. All his pretexts fail to convince her. She ventures to narrate the tale of woe and suffering to this talker who is constrained to play the role of a patient listener. When the great woman leaves Malgudi for Delhi TM, without loss of time, goes to meet Rann and advises him to celebrate.

After the lady leaves Malgudi, TM follows Rann everywhere and discovers that Rann has succeeded in dragging the town librarian's daughter into his trap. In order to confirm, one day he opens the door of Ram with a duplicate key and rummages every file and envelopes. TM says:

Envelops addressed to different names only two to Rann – and the address was always poster restate in different towns and countries. Like our gods, he seemed Adam, Shankar, Skidhar, Singh and Iqbal and what not. The letters were all from women: imploring, appealing, and accusing and attacking, some of them were intensely passionate from Mary, Rita, Nancy, Manju, Kamala, and so on. (85)

This shows that what a immoral and deceitful life Rann has been living. In another letters there was a note of forgiveness and challenge: "[c]ome back, that's enough for me. I'll forget the money." In another, "You need not come – if you appear at my door, I'll throw you out. Only return the share due to me – at least 20,000 pesos and you may go to the devil. If you ignore this, I'll write an

anonymous letter to the Interpol" (86). This last makes TM wonder if Rann is a "drug trafficker" too (86).

More to TM's shock, TM learns from the Gaffur secret plans of Rann to elope with the librarian's granddaughter, Giriga. This makes TM determined to teach Rann a good lesson and arranges a Club Ceremony where Rann is invited as chief guest to deliver speech on futurism. In the meantime, he telephones the lady, Raja and calls her there on the very day when Rann was delivering speech on futurology. TM is simply astounded to learn about Rann's field of study which is called futurology. Here, the irony is that the man who is prepared to give a speech on futurology is ignorant of his own future. This makes TM change his attitude towards this scholar when he smells his romantic relationship with Baby, who was about seventeen years old. Information culled from various sources confirm his doubts. Now, Rann appears to be the wolf of the fairy tales. The so-called international academician loses his worth in the eye of unfailingly fresh TM. In order to get doubly confirmed about Rann's affairs, he plays the role of a spy, opens his room and in his absence obtains a real picture of the lecherous demon.

There Rann is caught and pushed into Raja's car and taken away. But Rann again runs away from Roja and she again comes to Malgudi looking for Rann. There she tells TM that Rann is a fake and deceiver. She says:

He was an expert in the art of deception. Now I realize that all along he must have lived a parallel secret life while creating the impression of living with me. I can only conclude from the description I got at one of the airline counters that the passenger was you Rann of Malgudi, a special name he seems to have

conjured up for edification. An expert, really, in his own field.

(119)

This passage reveals the nature and intention of Rann who is an evil for society. Such people have really brought decline in the moral and ethical values in society.

Rann might have duped many women but ironically the self-declared doctor is duped by the tricks of simple villager, TM. He refused to be photographed but TM needs one for onward submission to a newspaper. With great skill, TM manages things in such a way that Rann's photo is caught by Jayraj's efforts and the poor fellow remains innocent of the whole game. His photograph helps the further growth of the intrigue in the novel. He shies away from photographs because he is crooked man.

Here, in the novel, language and modes of construction are both blended to confirm to the experience conveyed to the reader and the experience transmitted by the principal characters about the protagonist. In an effort to visualize the thoughts, streaming forth within the consciousness of the character "talkative man" as a response to external stimulus, Narayan appears highly imaginative and spontaneous effect which opens out remote magic casements, foam of perilous seas and fairy land forlorn. The novelist by the vision of the character makes the prose charged with poetic rhythm. In such a realm no novelist has been so successful in fulfilling what he visualizes as the proper requirement of the art of fiction. This novel attempts to stripe the veil off from the face of the modern man, who is out and out unreal and pretentious. It seems Narayan is set out to bring select specimen of humanity living in a modern world and Dr. Rann is effectively drawn to serve his task. In an outward and material

sense Dr. Rann symbolize the vacuous life of material man. His hunt for lust generates tension, which give dramatic value to the novel. He adds dramatic value to the theme by putting Rann in sharp contrast to the narrator called "talkative man" – the narrator character who aims at the welfare of the people in all possible ways. The novel also asserts the importance of the human act, is not the action but the morality infused. However, the moral is not painted anywhere in black and white but has to be analyzed in between the lines.

The novel is a perfect entertainer and is characterized by a noticeable structural unity. The characters are justified in exposition and no character is over-drawn. The story maintains its pace and the action runs its information. The expressions and gestures create an actual environment for the readers and this enchants them until the close of the novel. R.K. Narayan's work asserts the idea that art is meant for comforting and celebrating along with insisting. Therefore, he emphasizes and celebrates minimal virtues that may add the comfort of those who live around us and strengthen the human bond.

Talkative Man is a perfect entertainer but with one flaw – the abrupt close of the novel. We reader are left wandering as to what becomes of Dr Rann, after having eloped with a nurse from Matilda. Some may wait for Dr Rann's being the major character in the novel disturbs the interest of the readers when dispensed with suddenness still the story maintains its throbs in our mind. *Talkative Man* has a well-defined and concentrated plot. Every single event and character is linked to the main theme. The pace of narration and use of dramatic narration and use of dramatic narrative pattern maintain the flow of the story and accelerate the interest of readers. R.K. Narayan is among the few Indian writers, who have had such an unforced and natural mastery over the language and

narrative technique. Like other writers R.K. Narayan never uses an obscure language and words, which seems to be the most inviting characteristic. His language seems to come from his heart to pen. So his diction and style becomes natural and easy to understand. His descriptions of Malgudi, inhabitants, its landscapes are so life like that he spontaneously conjures the inhabitants of Malgudi as our neighborhood

On the one hand, none of the characters in *Talkative Man* is very likeable or sympathetic; each seems engaged in one kind of selfishness or another. On the other hand, none of them is delineated excessive satire or irony to jar the reader into laughter or recognition. So, Narayan achieves his goal through well-balanced texture. In this way, by exposing the pretentious and immoral life the characters are living, Narayan shows his quest for moral values for the upliftment of Indian society.

As a matter of fact the scattered ironies in the novel make it a delightful reading. Narayan's comic ironies are very palatable here and they go a long way in sustaining our interest in the novel. In this way, by exposing and ironizing the pretentious and immoral life the characters, Narayan shows his quest for moral values so as to promote Indian society.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

This research on R.K. Narayan's much-talked about novel *Talkative Man* concludes with the findings that Narayan shows a quest for moral and ethical values in Indian society during the end of the twentieth century. The narrator of the novel, a very talkative man – known as TM throughout the novel – tries to advance his fledging journalistic career by using a fraud from the southern part of India. This fraud is Rangan who trims his name just Rann to sound foreign so as to deceive people. He even adds Dr. to his self-declared name by exposing and ironizing the false and fictitious world the characters are living in, Narayan shows and stresses on his quest for moral and ethical values.

Narayan's narrator, TM exposes the false and hypocritical life of the so-called Dr. Rann who arrives in Malgudi feigning a UN researcher. Although Rann tries to conceal his mysterious activities from TM, he [TM] follows and keeps an eye on Rann's each and every action. TM even stealthily sneaks into his room and finds different letters from different women addressed to him. The common theme of all letters is the pain of desertion betrayal and treachery. From all this description, TM gathers that Rann is a dangerous womanizer and smuggler in disguise. He succeeds in easily trapping Malgudi Librarian's grand daughter, Girija into his trap. It is at the end that TM hands Rann over to the woman in order to save innocent Girija's life.

In the meantime, a woman who claims that she is Rann's legal wife arrives in Malgudi. This incident puzzles TM more than ever, because TM does not find her trustworthy as she turns out to be more talkative than himself. She seems to him more pretentious and hypocritical. The self-declared Mrs. Rann is a

good talker. She invites the jealousy of TM who is compelled to surrender his title of "talkative man". But ironically, she does not know the slightest clue that one day her husband would desert her. As a teller of tale she deftly takes into account the inclination of her listener. The irony of the situation is that the established talker has to play the role of a patient listener. She slowly opens the pages of her past life.

Another minor character who is not spared by Narayan is the Station Master. He is an eccentric fellow. He is proud of his thirty years of unblemished service. He often mentions it and draws a peculiar sense of satisfaction. He talks of unblemished service but ironically he is corrupt at heart. He does not mind pocketing even a five rupee note.

The Station Master is also humorous at heart. He clearly tells Rann that it is not his business to keep the Waiting Room free from mosquitoes and bugs. The Station Master speaks the language of the Railway whenever he describes the time-table of incoming and outgoing trains. He is a man seeing off many passengers each day in a cold business like manner. The eccentric fellow impresses us a lot with his ironic comments.

In this way, Narayan, through the narrator TM, denounces the immoral activities of the hypocritical character. Narayan even draws analogies between demon, Mahishasura and Rann and TM. Though Narayan shows hope for the likes of Rann who are real evils in the society. Their immorality in society has really brought decadence in society. This is what Narayan exposes through the means of irony.

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