Chapter 4
CHAPTER IV
DIDACTICISM

4.1. General

The word ‘didactic’ is from the Greek ‘didaktikos’, which means ‘apt at teaching’. In simple words anything intended to teach is didactic. “The word is often used to refer to texts that are overburdened with instructive or factual matter to the exclusion of graceful and pleasing details so that they are pompously dull and erudite” (Encyclopedia Britannica 2005). According to Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz, “When the primary aim of a work of literature is to expound some moral, political or other teaching, it is called didactic” (1961:50). In this sense Narayan’s novels may not be didactic. But at the same time, some literature can be both entertaining and didactic. Narayan’s novels may fall under this category. So it may be fully justified if one comes forward with the view that the didactic elements form a part of the aesthetic experience in his novels, especially the novels under study. In other words, the novels of Narayan seem to be didactic in intent.

R.K. Narayan who has got such a strong religious background and perfect understanding of the Vedic thoughts may automatically be prompted to educate his readers through his characters. It is clearly stated in The Bhagavad-Gita that a person who tries to preach the spiritual wisdom in it is the dearest to the Lord.

na ca tasman manusyesu

kascin me priya-krttamah
bhavita na ca me tasmad
anyah priyatara bhuvi
(There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear.) (Prabhupada, Bhagavad-Gita1972:854-855). Perhaps Narayan might have been motivated by this vital information to make it a point to impart to his readers the philosophy of life evolved from the Vedic thoughts.

4.2. Srinivas and the Old Landlord

In most of the Post-Independence novels of Narayan, there will be one or two characters who seem to have been designed to advocate the Vedic thoughts either in a serious fashion as in the case of Srinivas, or in a comic vein as in the case of the old landlord, both of whom figure in Mr. Sampath. Commenting on The Banner, a Malgudi weekly, Srinivas, who is the editor, says: ‘The Banner has nothing special to note about any war, past or future. It is only concerned with the war that is always going on—between man's inside and outside. Till the forces are equalized the struggle will always go on’ (Sampath 1949:6). Srinivas' words are very thought-provoking. Here he does not mean a world war, which the papers were full of anticipation in 1938. He might have meant the war, which goes on perpetually in the mind of the human beings against the temptation of sense gratification, or the war between the individual concept of what is right and what is wrong? Narayan gives a sort of comic relief when he introduces an old landlord who declares himself to be an ascetic and claims to be leading a very simple life by bathing at the street tap and feeding himself on cooked rice given as a charity in a
nearby temple. He always says: 'The true Sanyasi has no need to live on anything more than leavings of God' (1949:7). The irony is that immediately after this, the author says: 'He collected the rent on the second of each month, took away the entire amount and placed it in Sarayu Street Post-Office bank.' (1949:7-8). Another anecdote that may reveal the true nature of the landlord is that when Srinivas approaches him (a self styled sadhu) for a house, he laughs and says: 'I have no home. Didn't I tell you that I am a Sanyasi, though I don't wear ochre robes?' (1949:9). But immediately after saying this he takes him to his house in order to make arrangements to rent him a house. After reaching his house the old man gets ready to do pooja as if he would like to start the day with a good karma in the name of a pooja. But when he closes his eyes and starts praying, it proves to be an apology for a prayer, for in between his prayer he is worried about the children around and tells Srinivas: 'If you are a lover of children you have plenty to watch. All children of the town seem to be concentrated in this street' (1949:10). It is a true description of a situation where the human beings are caught in between a crisis of irresistible temptations towards the pleasures of the material world and a very faint desire to go to spiritual habits, about the benefits of which they are not sure. But immediately after this, the author describes the thought waves of Srinivas, who indulges in a deep meditation over the passage of time and the short life span of a living entity, which he may waste without attaining any kind of realization about the true purpose behind human birth. "All around he felt there were signs that a vast inundation was moving
onward, carrying the individual before it, and before knowing where one was, one would find oneself senile or in the grave, with so little understood or realized" (1949:11).

Narayan portrays Srinivas as one, who is immensely interested in the Vedic scriptures like *The Upanishads*. *The Upanishads* are a collection of 108 philosophical dissertations out of which only thirty-eight are available today. In other words they are philosophical discussions on the Vedas between a spiritual master and a disciple. Though Srinivas is thirty-seven years old, he lives at the mercy of his elder brother despite the fact that he has his wife and a child to be looked after. One day his elder brother questions him about the purpose of his life and reminds him that he has a wife and a child to be taken care of. Though his brother's interrogation agitates his mind, he at once realizes that the quest for self-realization is far more a serious problem than family, children, responsibilities and prestige. He is motivated to come to such a conclusion by virtue of having a copy of *The Upanishad* before him, which prompts him to come in terms with: "Knowing the self as without body among the embodied, the abiding among the transitory, great and all-pervading--" (1949:12). But still he leaves his hometown (Talapare) for Malgudi after leaving his wife and child to the care of his wife's parents. At this point of time, one may be induced to think that Narayan is grooming his character, Srinivas, as a person who can offer comments on life in a spiritual perspective. When Srinivas meditates over such transcendental aspects of the Hindu puranic scriptures, he appears to be a person who is educated in
the realm of spirituality and his goal rests on spiritual realization. As the novel advances, this assumption gets strengthened.

When the old landlord observes: ‘I have not seen a single house in our country without a picture of Krishna, Lakshmi and Saraswathi on it—’ (1949:15), Srinivas responds: ‘Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, must patronize every home, Saraswathi, the goddess of intelligence and learning, must also be there. Well, don’t you talk so lightly of these; you would get no rent or not have the wit to collect it, if it were not for the two goddesses. So be careful—’ (1949:16). It is very clear from the way Srinivas responds to a very casual observation made by a man quite advanced in age that he is very anxious to impart his philosophy of life, which is evolved from the Vedic thoughts. Urged by this observation if one comes to a conclusion that it is the intention of the author, one may be fully justified.

Srinivas too begins the day with a prayer “before a small image of Nataraj which his grand mother has given him when he was a boy. This was one of the possessions he had valued most for years” (1949:19). One may be in a position to assess the personality of Srinivas from his prayer. He prays: ‘Oh, God, you are trampling a demon under your foot, and you show us a rhythm, though you appear to be still. I grasp the symbol but vaguely. You hold a flare in your hand. May a ray of that light illumine my mind!’ (1949:19). He does not ask for any material benefit from the Lord. What he needs is only a ray of light from the Lord that may illumine his mind and lead to self-realization. This is exactly the difference between an ordinary
person like the landlord and the one like Srinivas who is well acquainted with
the Hindu puranic scriptures like *The Upanishads*. Narayan does not describe
the prayer made by the landlord. He is so money-minded that his prayer
might be for material things. One may infer this from his indifference towards
the requests, which his tenants have been making for a very long time for
another water tap. Srinivas tries to utilize the opportunity of owning a weekly
magazine namely, *The Banner*, all to himself to educate his readers by
imparting the message he has imbibed from *The Upanishads*. “He had tried
to summarize, in terms of modern living, some of the messages he had
imbibed from the *Upanishads* on the conduct of life, a restatement of
subjective value in relation to a social outlook” (1949:30). As a matter of fact,
he starts asking himself: ‘Life and the world and all this is passing — why
bother about anything? The perfect and the imperfect are all the same. Why
really bother?’ (1949:30). Immediately after listening to the lamentation made
by his wife for his being indifferent towards her and their child, he broods over
a vital aspect of life just like any other spiritual aspirant who is anxious to
make advancement in the field of spiritual realization. ‘Family duties come
before any other duty. Is it an absolute law? What if I don’t accept the
position? I am sure, if I stick to my deeper conviction, other things like this will
adjust themselves’ (1949:33).

Though the reality that he does not know the art of family life agitates
Srinivas at times, he fails to mend it. The nagging feeling that something is
lacking in his journal (*The Banner*) always torments his mind. But, still, to
amend his lapses once as a family man, he decides to relax at home in the company of his wife and child the next day after *The Banner* of the week was despatched. While relaxing at home in the morning, he is greatly excited by the

Mixed sounds reached him—his wife in the kitchen, his son's voice far off, arguing with a friend, the clamour of assertions and appeals at the water-tap, a pedlar woman crying "Brinjals and greens" in the street—all these sounds mingled and wove into each other. Following each one to its root and source, one could trace it to a human aspiration and outlook. (1949:49)

He finds the "multitudinousness and vastness of the whole picture of life" (1949:49) in it. It appears to be too heavy for him to contemplate. Being stimulated by it so heavily, he concludes: '...it is in that total picture we perceive God. Nothing else in creation can ever assume such proportions and diversity. This indeed ought to be religion' (1949:49-50). He adds: '...Alas, how I wish I could convey a particle of this experience to my readers'. (1949:50). From this one can infer how anxious Srinivas is to pass on his philosophy of life to the people. This may be exactly what Narayan too would like to do for his readers.

Immediately after making Srinivas contemplate such metaphysical aspects, Narayan makes the old landlord pass comments on the glory of the past. He says: '... but people have lost all neighbourliness in these days, that is all' (1949:50-51). Then commenting on the authors of Shastras, he says:
'They knew more science than any of us to-day...'(1949:51). Here it appears as if Narayan would like to remind his readers about the glory of the past and reiterate the point that the state of affairs is not in order at present and a recovery of faith is the need of the time. It is a very glaring feature in Narayan's novels that he refers to Lord Krishna and *The Bhagavad-Gita* more frequently than he refers to the demigods and scriptures glorifying them. In *Mr. Sampath*, while considering a suitable subject for the maiden film of 'Sunrise Pictures', Somu, the producer, suggests with immense enthusiasm and excitement 'Krishna Leela—the boyhood of Krishna and his friends up to his killing of the demon Kamsa—'(1949:100). The other stories suggested by him are the burning of Lanka by Hanuman, the disrobing of Draupadi, the battle of Kurukshetra, the teaching of *The Bhagavad-Gita* and the pricking of the vanity of Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu. He claims that he got all these stories from his grand aunt. Then he adds with pride: "The grand aunt, like all grand aunts, was really a treasure house ..." (1949:100). It is quite obvious that every other subject suggested by Somu is associated with Lord Krishna, Vishnu and Rama—all are one. It is also revealed that India is a land where the old women in particular are a treasure house of stories connected with the ancient Hindu puranic thoughts.

Sampath, the protagonist, who is a powerful and domineering personality, dismisses each one of them by stating that 'This subject is not new. Already been done by others; this story has been produced three times over ...' (1949:100). But at the same time no one is in a position to choose a
subject outside the Hindu puranas sacrificing the speculation of making the film a box-office hit. When Somu suggests 'The Burning of Ashes of Kama--God of Love', Sampath readily accepts it. Somu is of the opinion that the greatest merit of that story is that there is a great amount of love in the story. One may be justified if one comes to a conclusion from this that the consciousness of the Indian mass is so much associated with the Hindu puranic thoughts that the people may be in a position to appreciate and be moved by a subject taken from the puranas. That may be one of the reasons why Narayan has chosen a number of themes related to the Hindu puranic thoughts and referred to them very frequently.

Narayan shows a tendency to associate with mythical characters while giving a piece of advice. It is a very effective device employed by him in his novels, for the readers may receive it readily. When Ravi pesters Srinivas to show him the incomplete sketch of Shanti to have another glimpse of it, he says: 'Like Shiva, open your third eye and burn up Love, so that all its grossness and contrary elements are cleared away and only its essence remains: that is the way to attain peace, my boy. I don’t know how long you are going to suffer in this manner; you have to pull yourself together' (1949:103).

Narayan portrays Srinivas and the old landlord in such a way that Srinivas shines very much by contrast. He presents the landlord in a humorous and ironic fashion. He is just like any other ordinary being who shows a natural tendency to talk about spirituality even if he does not practise
what he says. When the old landlord visits the house of Srinivas for the second time and when coffee is offered to him, he says: ‘You forget, sir, that I am a very old man and a Sanyasi, at that; I should never indulge in all this, though I’m inclined that way. It is not good for my soul’ (1949:119). But the irony is that when Srinivas says that it is not alcohol and only coffee, he says: ‘What if it were alcohol? Does a man’s salvation depend upon what he drinks? No, no—it depends upon...’ (1949:119). The old man does not commit on what the salvation of a person depends. When Srinivas urges him to commit, he ‘... looked very puzzled and said, with his fingers fondly curling round the coffee tumbler: shall I drink this off before it gets cold?’(1949:119). It becomes further ironic when he raises his voice in a song to quote an Upanishad, which says: ‘Food is Brahman...’ (1949:120) and he informs Srinivas that Mr. Sampath has approached him with a request that he should teach him a few things in The Bhagavad-Gita and The Upanishads. He boasts that ‘Somebody seems to have told him that I have perused these things, and he wanted to clear some doubts’. (1949:121). It becomes quite humorous too when he quotes another scripture to prove that any learning without Guru Dakshina [master’s fees] ‘is like water held in a vessel without a bottom’ (1949:121). This is a classic example, which is applicable to most of the people in the society. One cannot embrace materialism and spiritualism simultaneously. Here one may find Narayan lampooning the hypocrites in the society. It also seems that he takes the opportunity here to remind and educate the readers through the example of the old landlord that the path
towards the realm of spiritualism is very hazardous, though it is not impossible to proceed through.

One may come across a person like Srinivas very rarely. The greatest merit of Srinivas is that he tries to practise what he preaches and what he would like to be. Here he differs fundamentally from the old landlord. But at the same time one has to acknowledge the truth that the old landlord too talks sense regarding the spiritual realization though he does not practise it. He says quite sensibly: 'There is no loneliness for a Sanyasi like me. If I keep repeating 'Om', I have the best companion on a lonely way' (1949:124). But the irony is that the readers may not take him seriously, for there is not even a slightest possible attempt from his part to practise what he says.

Whenever and wherever Narayan gets an opportunity to refer to the Indian epics and glorify them, he may grab the opportunity. In the switching-on ceremony of 'The Burning of Kama' of 'Sunrise Pictures', the chief guest says:

Our epics undoubtedly are a veritable storehouse of wisdom and spirituality. They contain messages which are of eternal value and applicable to all times and climes, irrespective of age, race, sex and so on. The thing is that they must be well done. India has a lesson to teach the rest of the world. Let us show the world a sample of our ancient culture and wisdom and civilization. (1949:134-135)
Sampath is very much impressed by the scholarship of the old landlord. He is of the opinion that he is very well versed in Sanskrit and listening to him is a pleasure. He is capable of giving six different interpretations for the same stanza. After commenting on the mastery of the landlord over Sanskrit, Sampath raises his voice and recites a sloka, which means, "the boy is immersed in play; the youth, in the youthful damsel; the old, in anxiety; (but) none in the Supreme Being!" (1949:146). What is stated in this stanza may not be refuted by anybody, for it is one of the greatest realities prevailing in the material world. But the incongruity is that the old landlord may be well versed in Sanskrit but it remains just as a piece of knowledge. So his mastery over Sanskrit is undoubtedly a waste.

When Srinivas comes to know that the old landlord died, he rushes to see the dead body. But a constable stops him. Since he is very anxious to have a last look at him, he tells the constable that he is his only nephew. But instantly he starts feeling guilty for having said a lie to the constable and prays to God to forgive him. 'I can't help it at this horrible moment', he explained to God' (1949:148). It is evident from this how far Srinivas is deep in his piety. Telling a lie is undoubtedly a grave offence and a sin. It is stated in Srimad Bhagavatam, First canto, "One cannot enter into the kingdom of God unless one is perfectly cleared of all his sins" (Prabhupada 1980:114).

Ravi is so much infatuated with Shanti that he loses his balance of mind. When he sees his dream girl being embraced by Sampath, who plays the role of Shiva in the climatic scene of the film 'The Burning of Kama', he forgets
himself and wrecks the scene by trying to carry her away. Shanti wriggles out of his grip with great difficulty. Ravi becomes insane and remains to be a source of immense worry to his dear and near ones. When Ravi is landed in the jail, Srinivas is the only person who sympathizes with him sincerely and goes after him. He is so much concerned about him that he makes Mr. Sampath withdraw the case against him and get him released from the prison. At this point of time, Srinivas is bewildered by the behaviour of the living entities around him and finds it difficult to understand their plight. 'He felt he had been involved in a chaos of human relationship and activities. He kept saying to himself: ‘I am searching for something, trying to make a meaning out of things' (Sampath1949:196). Perhaps, here, Narayan may be trying to drive home the point that the existence in the material world is absolutely meaningless.

4.3. Chandran, Raju and Master

Narayan has been a keen observer of people and life around. May be because he is well acquainted with the Hindu puranic scriptures, he shows a tendency to portray different kinds of Sanyasis in his fiction – an escapist just like Chandran in The Bachelor of Arts, Raju in The Guide, who is a fake Sadhu in the beginning, but becomes genuine in the end, and Master in A Tiger for Malgudi, who is a genuine saint.

If one analyses the people in the society, one may come across so many people who run away from the realities of life and shield their worries or disappointments under the cover of saffron clothes as Chandran does in The
Bachelor of Arts when he is unable to marry Malathi, his dream girl for astrological reasons. Being a fake sadhu, he returns to normal life very soon and marries a girl of the choice of his parents and lives happily. It is to be borne in mind that sanyasa is a very difficult exercise to be practised, though not impossible. One may be in a position to realize it at least to some extent when one follows the track of development of Raju from fake sainthood to a genuine one.

Velan and other innocent people of Mangal village thrust sainthood upon Raju. The nature of the circumstances is such that he is forced to accept it and carry on for the sake of his existence. He remains to be a fake Swami till he is forced to make a spiritual sacrifice, though he does not opt for it. But at the same time one may not be in a position to deny the fact that he could carry on the role of a saint admirably well by virtue of his having an overall idea about life and its affairs which he has gained as a Railway-guide by taking people around for sightseeing and getting associated with people of different cultures, interests and social background. It compensates his lack of education. His basic knowledge about Hindu religion and the tradition and culture associated with it too come handy for him to be under the mantle of a saint. As a matter of fact, he lives the role of a saint.

The basic problems of the people in the world are almost the same. So naturally a person who has got a fairly good knowledge about them may find it easy to give solutions to the problems of the people, especially of a village who are very gullible. The people have a general awareness about how
difficult it is to be a saint and follow the austerities attached to sainthood. So if they find some signs of sainthood in a person, they look at him with reverence and jump to a conclusion that a godly person can solve their problems. That is why Raju is mistaken for a saint by Velan, an innocent villager. When Raju starts talking with him he (Velan) tells him: ‘I have a problem, sir’ (Guide 1958:8). It was Raju’s nature to take interest in other people’s affairs and offer solutions. Now he assumes a lot of importance and narrates to him what Buddha had said once. ‘A woman once went wailing to the great Buddha, clasping her dead baby to her bosom. The Buddha said, Go in to every home in this city and find one where death is unknown; if you find such a place fetch me a handful of mustard from there, then I’ll teach you how to conquer death’ (1958:15). After quoting Buddha, Raju gives his suggestion: ‘... If you show me a single home without a problem, I shall show you the way to attain a universal solution to all problems’ (1958:15). The words of Buddha and Raju remind one about the universal truth that every living being in the material world has to face innumerable problems of which the greatest reality is death. The moment Raju is mistaken for a saintly person, he starts preaching, which is supposed to be a prerogative of a saint.

When Velan starts describing his problems caused by his sister, the youngest daughter of his father’s third wife, Raju is in a position to complete sentences for him like ‘The girl shows no gratitude’; ‘And she will not accept your plans for her marriage’; ‘ran away from the whole thing’ (1958:15). And finally he says in a philosophical vein: ‘Such things are common in life. One
should not let oneself be bothered unduly by anything’ (1958:16). When an innocent person like Velan listens to this kind of preaching from Raju, it may be only natural on his part to accept him as a godly person. The credit should go to Raju undoubtedly, for his words and manners befit a godly person. At this point of time “He felt he was attaining the stature of a saint” (1958:16).

When the poor and innocent villagers who mistake Raju for a saint and offer him “bananas, cucumbers, pieces of sugar-cane, fried nuts, and a copper vessel brimming with milk” (1958:17), he makes it a point to offer it to the image of God in the inner sanctum. “It was a tall god with four hands bearing a mace and wheel with a beautifully chiselled head, but abandoned a century ago” (1958:18). Then he says that the offering should go first to God and one should eat only the remnant. It is a very vital piece of instruction that Raju gives to the villagers, for it is categorically stated in The Bhagavad-Gita that if the living entities offer the Lord any foodstuff with love and devotion, he will accept it. Here one may be prompted to conclude that Narayan might have been inspired by the following verse from The Bhagavad-Gita.

\[
\text{patram pushpam phalam toyam} \\
\text{yo me bhaktya prayacchati} \\
\text{tad aham bhakty-upahrtam} \\
\text{asnami prayatatmanah}
\]

(If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I’ll accept it.) (Prabhupada, Bhagavad-Gita1972: 486-487).
When Raju cannot solve the problem of Velan’s sister, he simply says looking at her: “what must happen must happen; no power on earth or in heaven can change its course, just as no one can change the course of that river” (Guide 1958:22). What Raju means here may be the concept that everything is predestined based on one’s karma. If everything is predestined, there is no point in lamenting over any kind of happening in the life of a living entity in the material world.

The moment people accept someone as a godly person, they expect him to perform miracles. And also even if things happen on their own, they associate them with him and glorify him. The perfect example for this is the case of Velan’s sister. Raju does not do anything to change her mind and marry someone chosen by Velan. She decides everything on her own. But she is under an illusion that the very look of Raju changes people. So she says: ‘He doesn’t speak to any one, but if he looks at you, you are changed’. (1958:30). At this stage, the poor villagers start adoring Raju. When the intensity of their reverence is increased considerably, Raju feels very uncomfortable. He even starts thinking seriously about some means of escape from the villagers. So, one evening, before they come, he moves to their backyard of the temple and hides behind a bush. When they do not see him, they start glorifying him. One says: ‘....He has renounced the world; he does nothing but meditate’ (1958:32). Another says: ‘Just sitting there for a few minutes with him – ah, what a change it has brought about in our household!’ (1958:32). Yet another person says: ‘Do you know sometimes
these Yogis can travel to the Himalayas just by a thought?' (1958:32). Such reactions from the people to the absence of Raju, illustrate how deep their devotion to a godly person is. While conversing with the teacher, who is asked to teach the students in the shrine, Raju says: 'I'm but an instrument accepting guidance myself' (1958:46). This single sentence changes the teacher radically and he goes back to the village a changed man. When the teacher is quite apologetic about the fact that he could muster only a dozen of boys and it is because the children are scared of crossing the river, which is supposed to have a crocodile, Raju asks: ‘what can a crocodile do if your mind is clear and your conscience is untroubled?’ (1958:47). Thus he keeps on dropping gems of wisdom among the villagers, though he does not mean what he says. However, it is a great piece of wisdom found in the Vedic literature. Once one’s mind is clear, one’s conscience may not be troubled. Controlling one’s mind may be the most difficult task on the face of the earth. It appears to be more difficult than even conquering empires or powerful elements of nature like the wind. In other words the mind is so obstinate that it can easily overcome the intelligence, though the mind is presumed to be sycophantic to the intelligence. This is a great piece of reality that Lord Krishna himself acknowledges in The Bhagavad-Gita, when Arjuna, one of his dearest devotees, raises doubts about the possibilities of subduing the mind.

_sri-bhagavan uvaca_

_asamsayam maha-bhaho_
(Lord Sri Krishna said: O mighty-armed son of Kunti, it is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by suitable practice and by detachment.) (Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-Gita* 1972:345).

Raju has been a fake sadhu in the true sense of the term ever since he came to Mangal. And it is the hardest stroke of irony of fate that he is mistaken as being promised to Velan’s brother that he will not have food till he brings rain to the famine hit village. Even when he is forced to observe fasting for the sake of bringing rain, he has not been serious about it. To say the truth, his mind has been craving for food. “He sat down behind the pedestal, swallowed his food in three or four large mouthfuls, making as little noise as possible. It was stale rice, dry and stiff and two days old; it tasted awful, but it appeased his hunger” (*Guide* 1958:235). He does not know how to come out of this problem, which has been developing to be a fatal one. A retreat appears to be almost impossible for him. After craving for food for a very long time he gets irritated with the thought of food itself. He tells himself: ‘I’ll chase away all thought of food. For the next ten days I shall eradicate all thoughts of tongue and stomach from my mind’ (1958:237). This proves to be the first step of renunciation and practising detachment in the case of Raju. “He felt suddenly so enthusiastic that it gave him a new strength to go through with the ordeal” (1958:238). Gradually he starts taming his mind.
When his mind cooperates with his desire of serving the fellow beings in a detached bent of mind, he gets more and more involved in what he does and enjoys it. At this point of time he has almost become ready for a spiritual sacrifice. As days pass Raju gets involved more and more in the transcendental experience and he starts believing that he would please God by his spiritual exercise and bring rain. It is evident from his conversation with James J. Malone, who comes from California to India to shoot the whole procedure of fasting.

'Tell me, how do you like it here?'

'I am only doing what I have to do; that's all. My likes and dislikes do not count.'

'How long have you been without food now?'

'Ten days'.

'Do you feel weak?'

'Yes.'

'When will you break your fast?'

'Twelfth day'.

'Do you expect to have the rains by then?'

'Why not?'(1958:243)

On the tenth day itself Raju has become completely exhausted and he finds it difficult to keep up a continuous flow of talk. On the twelfth day at five-thirty in the morning the doctors, deputed by the government, examine him and report that his condition is very grave. Raju not only shows any anxiety about his life
but also declines glucose and saline. When they read out a message from their headquarters to the effect that Swami should not risk his life, give up the fast and resume it later, he simply smiles and asks his associates to take him to the river bed. On the riverbed after telling Velan that he feels it raining and it coming under his feet, he sags down.

Whether it rained or not or Raju died or not, one may not be in a position to deny that there was a very sincere effort from Raju even to lay down his life for the sake of bringing rain in order to save the poor villagers from the deadly drought. One has to acknowledge also that Raju went through the actual procedures of a spiritual sacrifice like a full-fledged yogi.

It appears as if the intention of Narayan was to inform the readers that a fallen soul can always go back to godhead, if he mends his ways and becomes God-conscious. It is said in *The Bhagavad-Gita* that at the time of death if one thinks about the Supreme Lord, he may be delivered from all his sins and is back to godhead.

\[
\text{anta-kale ca mam eva} \\
\text{smaran muktva kalevaram} \\
\text{yah prayati sa mad-bhavam} \\
\text{yati nasty atra samsayah}
\]

(And whoever, at the end of his life, quits his body remembering Me alone at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt.) (Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-*)
So if Raju had died, perhaps his soul would have left his body in the course of his prayer.

After portraying Raju as a scoundrel, a fake Swami and one who tries sincerely to become God-conscious finally, Narayan paints a genuine sanyasi in *A Tiger for Malgudi*. This sanyasi (Master) is totally different from Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts* and Raju in *The Guide*. According to R.K.Narayan,

A sanyasi is one who renounces everything and undergoes a complete change of personality. Why one would become a sanyasi is not easily answered – a personal tragedy or frustration, a deeply compelling philosophy of life, or a flash of illumination may drive one to seek a change .... A sanyasi is to be taken as he is at the moment. You can never ask a sanyasi about his earlier life. He will never refer to it. It would be a crass, inconsiderate act even to ask a sanyasi his name. He assumes a new name, bearing no mark of his ancestry or class, but indicative of some general beatitude. He has freed himself from all possessions and human ties. Among certain sects, the man will even perform his own funeral ritualistically before becoming a sanyasi. A sanyasi is a wanderer living on alms, never rooted to any place except when he seeks the seclusion of a cave or forest at some stage for prolonged meditation. (*Tiger* 1986:9)

Narayan seems to be very keen on educating the readers about who a genuine sanyasi is. That may be the reason why he gives information about
the supernatural powers which a yogi may attain during his yogic practices. He says:

During certain yogic practices, eight kinds of supernatural powers may be roused: one could become invisible, levitate, transmute metals, travel in space, control animals and men, live on air, and so on and so forth .... incidental powers acquired on the way, to be ignored and not exercised for profit or self-promotion, except to mitigate pain or suffering in others.

(1986:9)

When one applies the above said canons to Master, one can easily come to the conclusion that he is a bona fide sanyasi. At the same time Narayan warns the people about the danger that there are fake sanyasis who exploit the public in the attire of godly men misusing their supernatural powers, which they gain during their yogic practices.

Narayan is a writer, who knows the human psychology perfectly well. Master performs supernatural deeds at times. For instance, he appears from nowhere when the tiger is about to be harmed. And then he subdues the animal by moving invisibly in the air and walks away through the busy streets of Malgudi with a deadly tiger mutely following. It seems that Narayan wants to prepare his readers to accept the supernatural activities of Master as realistic. In other words, from the description he has given about an authentic sanyasi, one may infer that he does not want any reader to reject any
supernatural activity, performed by Master, as incredible. That may be the reason why he says:

... In my story the "Tiger Hermit" employs his powers to save the tiger and transform it inwardly-working on the basis that, deep within, the core of personality is the same in spite of differing appearances and categories, and with the right approach you could expect the same response from a tiger as from any normal human being. (1986:9-10)

Just like the human beings, the animals are also spirit souls. And they too get into new bodies based on their past karmas. So one should not condemn or reject any animal. A person, who has attained self-realization like Master may understand it well. That may be the reason why he reacts very sharply when a teacher from the crowd refers to the tiger as 'brute'. He admonishes him saying, 'Never use the words beast or brute. They're ugly words coined by man in his arrogance. The human being thinks all other creatures are 'beasts'. Awful word!' (1986:118). When Alphonse refers to the tiger as beast, Master comes forward and says: 'Beast is an ugly, uncharitable expression' (1986:125). Again, when Alphonse refers to the tiger as 'brute' while getting ready to shoot the tiger, Master shouts from the crowd 'He is no brute ... No more than any of us here' (1986:130). What Master means here may be that there may not be any difference between the animals and the human beings so long as they lead a life style of eating,
sleeping, mating and defending, which normally the animals do, for they are devoid of the faculty of reasoning.

When the chairman, who has the powers vested in him as the Second Honorary Magistrate of the town, tells Master that the law does not permit anyone to risk one's life, Master says:

Life or death is in no one's hands; you can't die by willing or escape death by determination. A great power has determined the number of breaths for each individual, who can neither stop them nor prolong...That's why God says in the Gita, 'I'm life and death, I'm the killer and the killed...Those enemies you see before you, O Arjuna, are already dead, whether you aim your arrows at them or not!' (1986:142)

Here, Narayan not only imparts a great piece of wisdom to the readers, but also acknowledges that it is derived from The Bhagavad-Gita.

Master, being a self-realized person, knows for certain who the tiger is. So when the tiger tries to attack him, he tells him: 'Understand that you are not a tiger, don't hurt yourself. I am your friend...' (1986:144). The very fact that the tiger understands the speech of Master remains to be a mystery to the animal itself. The presence of Master brings hypnotic effect on the tiger and after a series of attempts to attack Master, the tiger surrenders to him and after giving the most vital instruction that the tiger should not look at the crowd and it should proceed looking down in to the nose and nothing beyond,
Master leads him to Mempi Hills, where they together spend their time indulging in discourse and spiritual culture and advancement.

When Master leads the tiger along the busy streets of Malgudi, the people are amazed. At the same time it is not incredible to them. That is why one comments, ‘That hermit must have come from the Himalayas. I have heard that there are many extraordinary souls residing in the ice caves, capable of travelling any distance at will, and able to control anything by their yogic powers’ (1986:151). As a matter of fact the crowd is so confused of the whole thing that they cannot come to a very definite conclusion. So they conclude: ‘Don’t probe too far into the origin of a river or a saint! You will never reach the end’ (1986:154).

Master stays with the tiger at the foot of the Mempi Hills and transforms him gradually. There, Master gives him a perfect idea about what God is. He says: ‘... He may be everything we imagine and more. In Bhagavad-Gita He reveals himself in a mighty terrifying form which pervades the whole universe in every form of life and action. Remember also He is within every one of us and we derive our strengths from Him...’ (1986:158).

The personality of Master is such that his presence and regular preaching are appreciated and acknowledged by the tiger. It is worth observing that Master does not impose any restriction on the tiger about his food habits. But the tiger is always aware of the fact that hunting and eating flesh is an offence. That is why the tiger says: ‘... nowadays, the moment I
had eaten my fill I'd be seized with remorse. And so, when I returned from the jungle I'd lie low, out of sight of my Master” (1986:159).

After getting associated with Master, whom the tiger has accepted as guru, the tiger has been conducting in such a way as if not to offend him even unknowingly. He has been so careful that he selects another stream even for drinking water believing that the water of the spring, which is used by Master will be contaminated otherwise. In order to attain advancement in spirituality he reduces the frequency of hunting for food. Now, the most predominating desire in the mind of the tiger is to please his Master and get his grace. That is why he says: “I suffered hunger for consecutive days before seeking food again, but felt nobler for it. I felt I had attained merit through penance, making myself worthy of my Master’s grace” (1986:159).

When the tiger wished he had learned the art of living on vegetables, shed the frightening physical encasement God has given him, lived on air or dry leaves, Master understands the turmoil which goes on in his mind. So he says: ‘Do not crave for the unattainable. It’s enough you have realization. All in good time. We cannot understand God’s intentions. All growth takes place in its own time. If you brood on your improvements rather than your shortcomings, you will be happier’ (1986:160). Then he makes it very clear to the tiger that for a self-realized person sense of time and art of reckoning are of no avail. Further, he says that the human beings are in a miserable situation because they have lost the faculty of appreciating the present moment in which they actually exist. He goes on further saying ‘Knowledge,
like food, must be taken within limits…. All the thousands of human beings you have encountered since leaving the shelter of your forest life suffer from minds overburdened with knowledge, facts and information—fetters and shackles for the rising soul’(1986:161).

Realizing the identity of Master, his wife comes to the foot of the Mempi Hills and insists on his going along with her. Then he tells her: ‘My past does not exist for me, nor a future. I live for the moment, and that awareness is enough for me ….It would be unthinkable to slide back. You must live your own life and leave me to live mine and end it my own way’ (1986:171). Finally when old age creeps in, Master gets ready for his samadhi and leaves the tiger in a zoo. At the moment of parting, though the tiger does it with a heavy heart, it does not affect Master in any manner. He simply whispers that some times they may meet again in the next birth.

Thus in this novel too Narayan spreads the gospel of the Vedic thoughts through the character of Master and the tiger. So it may be only natural on the part of a reader to conclude that Narayan has succeeded to a very great extent to educate the readers about who a genuine swami is and how he is capable of guiding even an animal to its spiritual evolution.

4.4. Nataraj and Sastri

If it is Srinivas and the old landlord in Mr.Sampath, it is Nataraj and Sastri in The Man-eater of Malgudi through whom Narayan tries to advocate the cause of Vedic thoughts. In this novel Narayan discusses dharma and adharma and shows how dharma wins over adharma. He bases his novel in
the concept of the Indian philosophy of *karma*. In order to achieve this he employs the myth of Bhasmasura in modern form. This feature of the novel has already been dealt with in the chapter entitled 'Myth' (Section no:2.3.3).

While the protagonist, Vasu, is an embodiment of the elements of *adharma*, Nataraj tries his best to embrace the values of a cherished tradition and culture. According to William Walsh,

> The crisis of consciousness which extricates Nataraj from the protection of his daily routine, and from the deeper, impersonal passivity of his Indian past, is precipitated by the presence of the violent taxidermist-hunter, Vasu, who is not only a character, but an oppressive and destructive force. He not only takes advantage of Nataraj, but shows him a motiveless enmity which leaves Nataraj, who cannot tolerate strain or hostility, distraught. (1982:137-138)

The difference in the character of Nataraj and Vasu is analyzed and brought out to a very great extent by Narayan by contrasting their relationship to animal life. Nataraj was brought up in a family where everyone was taught not to kill. The members of the family were scared to swat even flies in the presence of the elders. His grand uncle used to give him a coin every morning to buy sugar for the ants. But whenever Vasu returned from the Mempi forest, his jeep was loaded with dead animals. He went to the extent of killing a pet cat in order to do research on the smaller feline species. The most devastating aspect of Vasu's character is that he does not even pause
for a moment and think whether what he does is right or wrong. When Vasu
shoots the golden bird Garuda, Vishnu's vehicle, Nataraj is greatly distressed.
But Vasu celebrates it. It is evident from the conversation between Nataraj
and Vasu.

'Don't you see that it is a garuda?'

'What if it is?'

'Don't you realize that it's sacred? That it's the messenger of God Vishnu?'

'I want to try and make Vishnu use his feet now and then' (Man-eater 1962:
64). Vasu behaves as if he had taken birth exclusively to kill the animals.
When he sets his eyes on Kumar, the temple elephant, Nataraj is very much
agitated. He is very religious and always attributes his prosperity to the grace
of Goddess Lakshmi, whose picture he has hung in the parlour. The very fact
that he is very deeply interested in devotional service is revealed from the
way he admires and encourages the poet whose ambition in life is to write the
life history of Lord Krishna in monosyllabic verse. Nataraj says: "His ambition
was to compose a grand epic, and he came almost every day to recite to me
his latest lines. My admiration for him was unbounded. I was thrilled to hear
such clear lines as 'Girls with girls did dance in trance' " (1962:2). And,
further, when the first part of the poet's epic on the life of Krishna is
completed, he takes overwhelming interest in the consecration ceremony
arranged at the temple along with a glorious procession organized as a part
of it with the temple elephant, Kumar, heading the whole procession.
One has to acknowledge that Nataraj's approach to mythology is different from that of the general mass. To him the myth forms the only possible version of reality. When he is apprehensive that Vasu might shoot Kumar, the temple elephant, his firm faith that Lord Krishna would rescue the elephant just like he did in the case of Gajendra, gives him hope. Nataraj is literally excited to see the idol of god, which is marvellously decorated. "He wore a rose garland, and a diamond pendant sparkled on his chest. He had been draped in silk and gold lace, and he held a flute in his hand; and his little bride, a golden image draped in blue silk and sparkling with diamonds, was at his side, the shy bride"(1962:181). Nataraj enjoys the decoration to his heart's content, for he believes very firmly that everything associated with the Lord is a reality and not a myth. It is precisely what Narayan is trying to establish in his Post-Independence novels.

Perhaps, it may be because of his unshaken faith in divinity, Nataraj is not agitated though every one starts looking at him as if he is a murderer. He is such a simple person that he starts doubting whether he actually committed the murder or not. At the same time it is very difficult for him to come to such a conclusion. So he keeps on recollecting what had happened in that particular night when he went to the attic to persuade Vasu from committing the most irreligious offence of shooting down a temple elephant. He recalls: "while I sat in my press all alone I caught myself reconstructing again and again that midnight visit to the attic, trying to gain a clear picture of the whole scene, but each time I found it more confounding"(1962:235-236). All his
friends deserted him. There was no one with whom he could discuss and prove his innocence. His own son thinks that he (Nataraj) has performed a heroic act. That is why his wife tells him: 'He was too excited about everything. I managed to send him to sleep by saying that it is all false and so forth. But he is terribly excited about everything...and, and, feels proud that you have killed a *rakshasa* single-handed! At least you have Babu to admire you' (1962:234). To make things worse his wife tells him that so many people suspect him. At this point of time, he sees himself as others see him and he is revolted by that picture of him as a murderer. But he does not allow that thought to prolong and wins over himself. Similarly, when Sastri explains as heard from Rangi, the temple dancer, how Vasu used his hammer-fist on a couple of mosquitoes that had settled on his fore-head and thus killed himself with his own hammer blow, he is not excited. Though Vasu has caused a lot of miseries to him, he appreciates him saying that he had never hit anyone with his hand whatever might be the provocation. This is, in fact, a yogic attitude on the part of Nataraj, who looks at only the positive aspects of the character of Vasu irrespective of the fact that he had been making his life miserable ever since he landed at Malgudi.

Sastri, an orthodox minded Sanskrit semi-scholar, assists Nataraj in his spiritual evolution too. He narrates him many stories, myths and legends. Whenever he refers to Vasu, he associates him with *rakshasas*. He says: "...to deal with a *rakshasa* one must possess the marksmanship of a hunter, the
wit of a pundit, and the guile of a harlot" (1962:95). He displays great versatility and knowledge. And his talks are enlightening too.

In the end it is only Sastri, who clears the mystery behind Vasu's death. He narrates again the story of Bhasmasura, "... who scorched everything he touched and finally reduced himself to ashes by placing the tips of his fingers on his own head"(1962:243), in order to draw a parallel between Bhasmasura's death and Vasu's death. Thus Narayan closes the novel causing, perhaps, an overwhelming impact on the readers reminding them of some of the principles which are reflected in the Vedic literature. These principles are "The destruction of evil, the law of karma, specific stylized roles of gods and demons ..." (qtd. in Kul Bhushan, 1983:86). The didactic tone employed by Narayan may be quite vivid here.

4.5. Daisy, Savitri and Rosie

Through the character of Daisy Narayan may be acknowledging the indispensable truth that the world of Malgudi is affected enormously by the effect of modernity. The kind of freedom with which she is moving around in the city is a little hard to be digested by the people. She is totally different from Savitri, the heroine of *The Dark Room*. Savitri is a devoted, transcendental and orthodox Hindu woman whose activities centre on her husband, children and home. Despite the fact that her husband is disloyal to her and flirts around with another woman, she proves to be always true to her duties as a wife. But when she reaches a stage where she cannot tolerate the infidelity of her husband and the mental agony associated with it, she starts
revolting against it, which in the long run culminates in her leaving the house itself. After an abortive attempt to commit suicide she struggles for her daily bread. At this juncture she realizes that she has nothing of her own except her body. Everything else belongs to her father, her husband or her sons.

Savitri’s predicament may be the same experience of any other woman in a male dominated society. “It is an echo of the emotions and psychological expression faced by women and her dependence on her father, husband or son for her existence”(Meera Bai 1995:139). The fact that she comes back for the sake of prevailing social norms, religious sentiments and above all for her children, reveals how far the people in the Indian society, especially the women, are religious and tradition bound. Commenting on his novel, The Dark Room, Narayan says:

This must have been an early testament of the “Women’s Lib” movement. Man assigned her a secondary place and kept her there with such subtlety and cunning that she herself began to lose all notion of her independence, her individuality, stature, and strength. A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society was an ideal victim of such circumstances. My novel dealt with her, with this philosophy broadly in the background. (My Days 1986:119)

Though Narayan is well aware of the women’s liberation movement, his religious background and mental make-up do not allow him to liberate Savitri from the shackles of the orthodoxy of a tradition-bound society.
In *The English Teacher* Narayan creates an image of the ideal Hindu wife in Susila, Krishnan's wife. According to Rajyalakshmi,

Susila in *The English Teacher* is a lovely Juliet married to a chastened Romeo, growing by the strength of her character and stability of aspirations into a middle class Miranda whose married life is at once a sacrament of love and a song of miraculous innocence. Her love and devotion to her husband makes her home a heaven. (1984:42)

Even after her death she guides and comforts her husband and proves that the body is mortal and the soul is immortal. She establishes the immortal nature of the soul by giving a very clear-cut idea about life after death. This has been already dealt with in the previous chapter (Section no: 3.2).

Rosie, in *The Guide*, violates most of the ideals, which Susila and Savitri uphold. She was born in a family of the despised caste of dancers. She is a born artist. But her mother is very keen on saving her from the taboos of Deva Dasi family of dancers. So she educates her and makes her a postgraduate in Economics. Marco, an archaeologist, marries her. He is straightforward and sincere. He marries her with the good intention of helping her rise in social status, for a daughter of a Deva Dasi may not be married by someone with substantial social status. Marco is so much absorbed in his studies that he does not get time to attend to the physical and emotional needs of his wife. Commenting on their wedded life Sharan rightly says: "The archaeologist remains wedded to the study of paintings in caves and his wife
remains devoted to Bharat Natyam" (1993:214). Rosie, indeed, is thrown to utter frustration by a husband who is insensitive to her individual needs and yearnings. So she comes under the influence of Raju who proves to be ever ready to give her whatever things are denied to her by her husband, especially the moral support and facilities for the fulfilment of her aspirations to become a great dancer. And when Marco comes to know about it he leaves her. The alliance between Rosie and Raju works so magnificently well that she becomes a renowned dancer. But in due course Rosie gets frustrated in the company of Raju, for he tries to commercialise her profession as a glamorous dancer and offend her deep sensibility. She experiences acute mental agony when she fails as a respectable wife to Marco and as an enchanting lover to Raju. Rosie is undoubtedly a representation of the conflict between tradition and modernity so commonly experienced in a conventional society. But the paradox is that despite the craving for liberation the hankering for marital relationship haunts her mind. But unlike Savitri, she does not go back to her husband. It may be because she does not have a strong link between herself and her husband in the form of a child. While acknowledging this, one may not be in a position to ignore the symptoms of eagerness shown by Rosie to go back to her husband and enjoy the bliss of married life. This feature in the character of Rosie, perhaps, might have motivated Rajyalakshmi to say "The refrain 'after all he is my husband' runs through her mind during the years of separation and her
comment "it is better to end one's life on his doorstep" sums up the tradition of centuries lying hidden in her psyche" (1984:43).

Through the character of Rosie, Narayan may be aiming at reiterating the fact that in the conflict of tradition and modernity experienced by many women in a transitional Indian society, tradition has got an edge over modernity, for India has got such a strong and deep rooted tradition which upholds the sanctity of marriage and married life. Narayan has given expression to the concept of archetypal Indian woman through the mouth of Ramani.

He held that India owed its spiritual eminence to the fact that the people here realised that a woman's primary duty (also a divine privilege) was being a wife and a mother, and what woman retained the right of being called a wife who disobeyed her husband? Didn't all the ancient epics and Scriptures enjoin upon woman the strictest identification with her husband? He remembered all the heroines of the epics whose one dominant quality was a blind stubborn following of their husbands, like the shadow following the substance. (The Dark Room (Dark Room) 1938:141)

But, though Ramani's conception of archetypal women may be absolutely right, he does not remember that neither in the ancient epics nor in the scriptures is it stated that one can be unfaithful to one's wife and have illicit
sex. In fact, refraining from illicit sex is one of the regulatory principles prescribed for one's spiritual progress.

Highlighting the concept of traditional archetypal women through Ramani, Narayan might have intended two things. One may be that he would like to educate the readers about the traditional women and another may be to focus on the reality that though people like Ramani in the society are knowledgeable about what is given in the epics and scriptures, they do not take it in the right spirit and use it for self-realization and progress in spirituality.

_The Painter of Signs_ is different from the novels so far discussed in this chapter. In Daisy, Narayan presents an Indian woman totally different from Savitri, Susila and Rosie. She is an Indian woman far ahead of the times. She is in charge of the family planning centre in Malgudi. She is a little too much for a place like Malgudi, for she is a very revolutionary as well as a resilient character. As Usha Bande puts it “She is both cold and warm, feminine and masculine. She has a smiling side to her and a non-smiling one: a talkative and non speaking ...”(1998:110). The most attractive trait in her character is that she is very sure of herself. She is quite unconcerned about the society. To her what she thinks is more important than what others think about her. She is so much committed to her profession that she wants to execute what she intends. Her profession is just a passion for her. She is assertive and adamant. She keeps on asserting in a male dominated society, which does not digest the concept of accepting women on par with men. She
is neither of a type who sulks, rebels and whines and then surrender for religious or social sentiments just like Savitri does, nor one like Rosie who is ready to sacrifice her talents of a dancer for the sake of her husband, who is prejudiced against her caste and their profession and condemns the art of dance as 'street acrobatics'. Commenting on the character of Daisy R.K.Narayan says that she is "a very strong character. All the same when you read the novel you will find she is very feminine also. There is the conflict. That is the whole point" (qtd.in Harshan Ahluwalia Singh, 1990:136). She reminds the readers of Bharati of Waiting for the Mahatma, who is also a dedicated social worker. But when one goes deep into these characters, one may not fail to understand that Daisy is more workaholic and less feminine than Bharati. But she proves to be susceptible to the demands of the flesh and surrenders completely to Raman.

Though The Painter of Signs does not have a powerful theme, the sweet as well as the sour experience of Raman, the protagonist, is admirably depicted in it. Raman does not have grandeur, respectability, knowledge or a philosophic bent of mind of either Srinivas or Nataraj. He does not have the practical knowledge about human life too like Raju. He is simply a product of modern hypocritical society. He wants to establish 'the age of reason' in the world. But his infatuation for Daisy proves that his rational philosophy is built upon a foundation of sand. His conception about himself is simply knocked down by Daisy. His weakness lies where he looks at Daisy as an article of utility, which will satisfy his lust. In fact, he is obsessed with sex. In the initial
stages, he does not understand her fierce spirit of individuality and independence. In spite of the fact that Daisy flirts with him and goes to the extent of having physical communion with him, she maintains these qualities in her character. But once Raman tastes the bliss of physical love with her, he loses his balance completely and is ready for a Gandharva marriage. But ultimately, the family planning campaigner, who has been devoted to her profession entirely, wakes up and renounces him. According to William Walsh, "She carries a furnace of conviction within which burn up all ambiguities, doubts and qualifications. Her passion, of course, is birth control..." (1982:157). So, Raman is left at the same point from where he has started and goes back to his routine life exactly like most of Narayan's protagonists.

Usha Bande assesses the character of Daisy quite rightly. According to her, "Daisy is a not only unlike the traditional Indian woman. She is different from any other woman portrayed so far in Indian English fiction"(1998:110). She appears as if she has been growing up through Savitri, Susila, Bharati and Rosie into Daisy. And one has to acknowledge that "Daisy has not achieved her liberation all of a sudden. She has suffered innumerable hardships since she broke away from her home in her teenage"(Usha Bande 1998:110). Now, she is in her world of action and duty. She proves that she can stand anything in the course of carrying out her duties and renounce anything for the sake of that. Commenting on Daisy's character Marcia Westkott, a psychologist, says that "she is the 'female hero'
who has learnt to fight back as a responsibility to herself” (qtd. in *Usha Bande*, 1998:111).

The people of Malgudi may be startled to come across a character like Daisy, who is an embodiment of so many features of modernity, which they may not digest. And at least some of the readers of Narayan too would be wondering how could Narayan create a character like Daisy who throws to the wind the long cherished social institutions and accepted values. But the character of Lakshmi, Raman's aunt, would remind the readers that Narayan remains the same in spite of the fact that his characters are changed according to the trend of the time. As the novel reveals, the time of the story is the year 1972. At that time the little town Malgudi is no longer what it was. The advancement in the field of science and technology is responsible for its topographical change. “... Malgudi was changing in 1972. It was the base for a hydro-electric project somewhere on the Mempi Hills, and jeeps and lorries passed through the Market Road all day” (*Painter* 1977:12). Malgudi faces population problem too. “The town hall veranda and the pavement around the market, the no man's lands of Malgudi, swarmed with children of all sizes...”(1977:30). There is also a family planning centre in Malgudi. While portraying Daisy as a representative of modernity, Narayan depicts Lakshmi as a representative of India's time tested tradition and culture. She is an upholder of orthodox values of life whereas Daisy holds unorthodox cast of mind. She is a childless widow of a constable and she has dedicated her life for the welfare of orphaned Raman. She is very pious and she goes regularly
in the evening to a shrine of Ganesha and also listens to the religious discourse on the epics given by a pundit. She has been very much captivated by this transcendental experience that she makes it a point not to miss it as far as possible, especially certain important episodes in Krishna's life. And it has been also her practice to narrate the story to Raman at dinnertime. 'Do you know when Krishna revealed himself to the maidens, every one of them, thousands of them, felt convinced that Krishna was there dancing with them. How it was achieved the pundit explained, also its inner significance....'(1977:163). It is evident from her words that she has been very deeply attracted to Krishna's pastimes and their significance. It is also obvious that she has been inclined to spirituality. She is also much tradition bound and conventional in her outlook that she finds it extremely difficult to accept a casteless girl with a Christian name as Raman's wife. But at the same time, though her long cherished values are under a great threat, she does not stand against the interest of Raman. Understanding the psychology of the youth, she decides to opt out of the scene in good spirit. She does not complain to anybody or lament over anything. She remains to be completely balanced. She decides to grab the opportunity for her spiritual growth. Lakshmi's exit from Raman's life may remind one about Jagan's exit from Mali's life in *The Vendor of Sweets* and that of Granny's from Sriram's life in *Waiting for the Mahatma*. She decides to go on a pilgrimage along with some of her like-minded acquaintances to holy places like Badrinath, Haridwar and Kasi. She is so happy and resolute that she makes it very clear to Raman that
"A visit to Kasi is the end. I may live for ten days or ten years or twenty, it is
immaterial how long one lives after this stage. It is the ambition of everyone of
my generation to conclude this existence at Kasi, to be finally dissolved in the
Ganges. That is the most auspicious end to one’s life" (1977:152). It is said
that the Ganges is so holy that the water of which is said to be powerful
enough to wash away all the sins the moment one takes a dip in it. It is
because the Ganges is believed to have originated from the lotus feet of Lord
Krishna, who is said to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Prabhupada
glorifies the Ganges and confirms the sanctity of it in the introduction to
_Bhagavad-Gita As It Is_. He brings it on par with _The Bhagavad-Gita_. He says:
"_Bhagavad-Gita_ comes from the mouth of the Supreme Personality of
Godhead, and Ganges is said to emanate from the lotus feet of the Lord. Of
course, there is no difference between the mouth and the feet of the Supreme
Lord, but from an impartial study we can appreciate that Bhagavad-Gita is
even more important than the water of Ganges" (1972:33).

Daisy and Lakshmi are, indeed, poles apart in their mental make-up. Daisy is crazy after modern trends whereas Lakshmi upholds the traditional
values of life. In other words, when Lakshmi tries to embrace the age-old
tradition and culture of this country, Daisy tries to break away from it. And it is
left to the discretion of the readers to evaluate and decide who shines by
contrast. When Raman pleads with his aunt to come back home after her
pilgrimage and be with him, she tells him: ‘I’ve told you what I would do.
Nothing else matters. I have drifted in the ocean of samsara for countless
years, don't you think. (Painter 1977:166). What she means here may be that she has been wasting her time and energy so far by being fully engrossed in the ocean of material world in which everything is an illusion. Perhaps she has been thinking or rather believing that Raman and the house belong to her. But when she is forced to encounter the stark reality that she has been under a delusion, she might have realized that in the material world nothing belongs to anyone and attachment is the cause of misery forever. So at this moment, she is fully convinced that she should do what is required to save her soul from the material entanglement and all sorts of miseries attached to it. The net result of that conviction is her intelligent move to renounce the material pleasures and fix her consciousness upon the Supreme and get liberated from further birth and death. It is categorically stated in The Bhagavad-Gita.

\[
esa brahmi sthitih partha
nainam prapya vimuhyati
sthitvasyam anta-kale pi
brahma-nirvanam rcchati
\]

(That is the way of spiritual and godly life, after attaining which a man is not bewildered. If one is thus situated even at the hour of death, one can enter into the kingdom of God.) (Prabhupada, Bhagavad-Gita1972:160-161). A less intelligent person like a gross materialist may be of the opinion that after the completion of this material life there is nothing other than emptiness. But a
person who is spiritually advanced is absolutely certain that there is another life after this materialistic life.

Daisy goes not only against the interest and wishes of her parents but also against the age-old orthodoxies. To Daisy, a home is "only a retreat from sun and rain and for sleeping, washing and depositing one's trunk" (Painter 1977:167). A marriage, conducted observing tradition and religious sentiments, is just a false formality to her. She is of the opinion that if a man and a woman love and live together, they are as good as married. She agrees to marry Raman on her terms and also in a Gandharva-style. She prefers Gandharva-style of marriage, for it is a type of marriage described in classical literature and according to which "When two souls met in harmony the marriage was consummated perfectly, and no further rite or ceremony was called for" (1977:158). But finally, Daisy renounces Raman and dedicates her life for the sake of the poor masses. She tells him: 'Today I am going to those villages in the forests and may not be free for three years .... five thousand men and women have to be taken care of immediately. After that they move me elsewhere—even to Africa. I cannot afford to have a personal life' (1977:179). Raman is totally disillusioned and reminds her of that they are already married by Gandharva rites. And also they have slept together many nights. Raman is so much attached to her that he pleads shamelessly not to leave him and go away forever. He expresses his readiness to accompany her wherever she goes, if she wants. But she is very resolute and tells him: 'Married life is not for me. I have thought it over. It
frightens me. I am not cut out for the life you imagine. I can't live except alone. It won't work' (1977:178-179).

Daisy is wedded to her work and she dedicates the rest of her life solely for the fulfilment of her goal. But does it really make any sense? Even if she achieves her goal and reduces the population growth to her level of expectation, will she be happy and peaceful? Usha Bande puts it quite sensibly: "One cannot break away from the old traditions symbolized by Lakshmi, Raman's aunt. If we dig the roots, the tree on which we plan to build our 'nest' will fall. What happens to Raman may happen to the society"(1998:101). Is Rosie happy and at peace after reaching the pinnacle of fame as a Bharat Natyam artist and accumulating wealth? Is Savitri happy and contended after joining her husband and children after a brief exit? They are not happy, for they are all completely materialistic. But Srinivas and Nataraj are undisturbed at least to a very great extent by the happenings in the material world, for they are influenced by the Vedic thoughts. It is difficult to comment on Raju, for the author is ambiguous about his end. Lakshmi, Raman's aunt, is in serenity, for she proves to be intelligent enough to be God-conscious and spend the rest of her life at holy places and finally dissolve in the Ganges. Master is in a blissful state of mind, for he is a liberated soul. The tiger advances in spirituality by the grace of his spiritual guru, Master, and is very calm and composed.
4.6. Narayan’s Attitude to Sex

In modern culture sex has almost become an obsession. But in spite of the onslaught of modernism on his way of life, Narayan’s attitude towards women is the conventional Indian attitude. According to Udaya Trivedi, “In the Hindu society the ideal woman is personified as Sita, the heroine of the epic *The Ramayana*. She stands for wifely devotion in the minds of most Hindus regardless of region, caste, social class or education” (1994:132). As it has been already well established, Narayan is very much influenced by the Hindu puranic scriptures. This aspect of his personality is enormously reflected in the portrayal of women characters in his fiction. In all the novels of Narayan chosen for this study, except *A Tiger for Malgudi*, female characters play very prominent roles. And also the themes of these novels are such that if he had wanted he could have exploited the element of sex to a very great extent and made his novels the bestsellers. But in all these novels he maintains a restraint and never describes the sexual relationships of his characters in graphic details. But that does not mean that Narayan does not know the craft of describing sex. He does it magnificently well with simple suggestive strokes in his novels. In other words, while describing sex he brings about maximum effect with minimum words without hurting his religious sentiments.

Most of Narayan’s themes are taken from the Hindu puranic scriptures. The traditional Hindu archetypal women are always looked at with utmost respect and may be because of that Narayan’s treatment of sex is Indian in its restraint. Narayan could have effortlessly exploited the treatment of sex
while describing the affairs like that of Ramani's with Shanta Bai in *The Dark Room*, Sampath's with Shanti in *Mr. Sampath*, Vasu's with various women in *The Man-eater of Malgudi*, Raju's with Rosie in *The Guide* and Raman's with Daisy in *The Painter of Signs* and allowed himself to sink into pornography.

One may pick up many examples from *The Dark Room* to substantiate Narayan's craftsmanship in delineating women's beauty splendidly in minimum words. In order to comment on the complexion of Shanta Bai, Narayan makes Ramani, the protagonist, reflect: "You could see the blood coursing in her veins" (1938:73). About her dress Narayan makes Ramani wonder: "How well a simple violet sari sat on her! Why couldn't one's wife dress so attractively?" (1938:72). She is such a lovely creature and her presence is so soothing that Ramani further wonders: "What a delightful perfume even after she had gone!. What an impotent, boorish beggar that husband must be who couldn't hold this fair creature!" (1938:73). It is to be noted here that Narayan does not describe the physical beauty of Shanta Bai from top to bottom. But the way he describes the beauty of Shanta Bai in such cute and short sentences may kindle the fire of imagination of any reader. Though it may sound a little odd to compare R.K.Narayan with Christopher Marlowe, who is a genius almost on par with William Shakespeare, while going through such passage mentioned above, one may be reminded of the famous lines of Christopher Marlowe describing the beauty of Helen of Troy.

"Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium? -
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.—" (1976:47).

One day in the evening while coming back from the club on his way home, Ramani gets into the room of Shanta Bai. The room is a temporary accommodation arranged for her by Ramani in the office of the 'Engadia Insurance Company' itself. Suggested by Shanta Bai, Ramani takes her for a film. They come out of the theatre half way through and come back to her room after spending some time on the bank of the river. Though they spend the whole night together, Narayan does not describe in detail how they spend the night except that he makes Shanta Bai utter a few sentences packed with passion, excitement and restlessness. She says: 'I'm rather mad tonight'; 'You have a mad woman beside you tonight'; 'I can't sleep tonight' (Dark Room 1938:91).

In Mr. Sampath too Narayan is very gentle and modest in describing the affair of Mr. Sampath and Shanti. When Mr. Sampath introduces Shanti to Srinivas, Narayan's portrayal of her is quite aesthetic and poetic. “He saw before him a very pretty girl of a height which you wouldn't notice either as too much or too little, a perfect figure, rosy complexion, and arched eyebrows and almond-shaped eyes – everything that should send a man, especially an artist, into hysterics” (1949:139). Srinivas, a pious and balanced person, is greatly enchanted by her charm. “He caught himself growing poetic, caught himself trying to look at a piece of her fair skin which showed below her close-fitting sheeny jacket” (1949:139). Further, one day when Shanti comes after
her costume trials and left alone with Srinivas, he is so much enamoured by her beauty that he thinks "What a pleasure to watch her features!...No wonder it has played such havoc with Ravi's life" (1949:157).

When Ravi, who is abnormally infatuated with Shanti, gets an opportunity to look at her at close quarters in the studio of 'The Sunrise Pictures', Narayan says: " Ravi's eye was caught by the figure of Parvathy and he looked hypnotized" (1949:187). The filmmakers of 'The Sunrise Pictures' want to make a dance sequence of the film 'The Burning of Kama' very sexy in order to attract the crowd. Narayan describes the rehearsal of the dance sequence: " The light flashed out, X-raying the dancer once again....Shiva went forward, step by step; Parvathi advanced, step by step: he was still in a trance with his eyes shut, but his arms were open to receive her. Shanti's brassiere could be seen straining under her thin clothes. She bent back to fit herself into other's arms"(1949:188). Narayan could have utilized the opportunity and made the description of this scene very elaborate thereby exciting the readers sexually. But he maintains the same restraint as it is exhibited in The Dark Room.

In The Guide, it is very interesting to note that how Raju wins over Rosie gradually and gratifies his sensual desires. He recalls: "I sighed deeply, overcome with the sadness of her life. I placed my hand on her shoulder and gently stroked it.... She didn't push away my hand. I let travel and felt the softness of her ear and pushed my fingers through the locks of her hair"(1958:86). Narayan describes very impressively with minimum possible
words how Raju gets into the room of Rosie at Hotel Anand Bhavan in Malgudi in the midnight and spends the night with her blissfully while her husband is far away from her staying at The Park House in the top most cliff on Mempi Hills.

At the door of number 28 I hesitated. She opened the door, passed in, and hesitated, leaving the door half open. She stood looking at me for a moment, as on the first day.

‘Shall I go away?’ I asked in a whisper.

‘Yes. Good night’, She said feebly.

‘May I not come in?’ I asked, trying to look my saddest.

‘No, no, Go away’, She said. But on an impulse I gently pushed her out of the way, and stepped in and locked the door on the world. (1958:89)

In The Man-eater of Malgudi, Narayan describes the beauty of Rangi, a temple dancer, with whom Vasu sleeps quite often in the attic of the press of Nataraj, through the words of Nataraj in sober words. “Although Rangi was black as cinders and looked rugged, there was an irresistible physical attraction about her, and I was afraid that I might succumb to her charms”(1962:157). Nataraj starts appreciating her more when he sees her at close quarters. ‘When I saw her nearer, she wasn’t so rugged. The light touched her high cheekbones and I found myself saying to myself, Not bad, not bad. Her breasts are billowy, like those one sees in temple sculptures. Her lips are also classical’ (1962:157). If Nataraj, who is such an exemplary
character, is disturbed, Rangi should be undoubtedly a very enchantingly sexy and rugged beauty.

In *The Painter of Signs*, Raman suffers from the morbidity of sex obsession and dissipation caused by it. Since he lives on the bank of the river, he makes use of the opportunity of getting entertained very often by the sight of the ‘water-soaked’ female figures. But instantly he feels guilty and finally ends it in self-criticism.

He wanted to get away from sex thoughts, minimize their importance, just as he wished to reduce the importance of money. Money and sex, he reflected, obsessive thoughts, too much everywhere—literature, magazines, drama, or cinema deal with nothing but sex all the time, but the female figure, water-soaked is enchanting. (1977:14)

Though Raman feels quite guilty and indulges in self-criticism, he proves to be very lustful. When Daisy wanted to show him the spot on the roadside wall, where the board of family planning to be hung, “He kept his look strictly where she was pointing, although he wanted to gaze on her in the sunlight and watch her curves straining through her sari as she bent over the parapet”(1977:47). Here it is evident that his mind is always craving for enjoying such sights. But Narayan keeps his pen and Raman under check. Even while describing the scene in which Raman has physical communion with Daisy, Narayan keeps restraint.
He stroked her gently, letting his hand rest on her breasts; as he watched, her face wore a serenity he had not noticed before. Her angularities and self-assertiveness were gone. He was struck by the elegance of her form and features, suddenly saw her as an abstraction – perhaps a goddess to be worshipped, not to be disturbed or defiled with coarse fingers. Very gently he withdrew his hand and edged away. But she suddenly turned over on her side and with her eyes still closed, threw her arms around his neck and drew him nearer and lay unmindful as his fingers fumbled with her clothes. He was overwhelmed by her surrender and essayed to whisper, This is our true moment of consummation....(Painter 1977:175)

Here one has to acknowledge that Narayan is a little elaborate in the description of sex on certain occasions in *The Painter of Signs*. But at the same time it may be noted that in this novel he may be forced to do it, for he deals with a theme that demands such descriptions.

It may be evident from the examples quoted above that though Narayan has had ample scope for indulging in very long narrative passages describing sex and female beauty in his novels, he does it to the bare minimum. It may be because he might have thought that it would be an immoral act on his part to excite his readers with long sex-oriented descriptions.

4.7. Conclusion
Thus, when one journeys through the novels of Narayan, especially the select novels under study, one may realize that almost all his characters, except those who are spiritually inclined, are distressed and disillusioned. So it is self-explanatory in these novels that if one wants to enjoy the eternal bliss of peace and happiness, one has to embrace the spirituality of the Vedic culture. At the same time one may be paying a well-deserved compliment to Narayan if one acknowledges the truth that he does not try to impose his ideas on his readers and instead he simply suggests and educates them through some of his characters, which have been cast in such a way to suit this purpose. So naturally one may be fully justified if one concludes that there is a conscious attempt on the part of Narayan to impart the universally acknowledged and time-tested wisdom of the Hindu Vedic thoughts to his readers. And also it may be acknowledged that Narayan practises what he preaches, which is, in fact, stated in the Vedic scriptures as a prerequisite for a genuine guru. This is very obvious from the way he maintains a restraint while describing female characters and sex in his novels.

At this juncture, it may be only natural if one is prompted to probe into the question of how far Narayan has succeeded in expressing the Indian sensibilities in a western medium like English, which is not his mother tongue. This is dealt with in the following chapter, entitled ‘Language Use’.