CHAPTER II

MYTH

2.1. General

Indian mythology is not merely an object of entertaining but is a part and parcel of the country’s cultural heritage. India, being an ancient country, is rich in the mythological component of its culture. For an Indian, Mythology is not merely a series of long winding and exciting stories, but is his way of life. Myths, in general, are said to be imaginary stories teaching morals to the masses. But in India, the so-called myths do not take this angle of understanding. They are believed to be real incidents that took place in distant past carrying universal messages for the moral, ethical and emotional betterment of the people. Hence for a native of this land calling these profound stories as myths is to a certain extent demeaning. It forms a part of the great Vedic gamut. Notwithstanding the impact of science and technology, this Vedic branch of India constitutes to occupy a part of India’s mass consciousness. It is not merely that certain sections of Indian society continue to believe in them, but nearly the entire population of India is conversant with them and encounters them in their actual life. R.K. Narayan in his novels makes good use of these stories. But, for the benefit of this particular study, which is drawing cross-reference from various criticisms of myth, one may still use the word ‘Myth’ in reference to Vedic stories and any study of Narayan’s cultural descriptions will be incomplete without a study of the numerous myths his novels are interspersed with.
Human beings began asking questions the moment they started wondering at the different phenomena in nature, which were frightening as well as thought-provoking. They asked questions like 'why does the sun rise in the morning and set in the evening?' 'How is that land is somewhere flat, somewhere hilly, sometimes fertile and sometimes not so?' They also asked questions about the secret behind the echo, for they were always startled by the experience of the echo calling back to them.

At present there are innumerable books on astronomy, which provide authoritative information to the effect that the sunrise is not a real rising of the sun, but is caused by the turning of the earth on its axis. There are also books on geology describing the structure of the earth, which answer the questions like 'why land is sometimes flat, sometimes hilly, sometimes productive and sometimes barren? One may get plenty of books on physics too which solve the mystery behind the echo explaining that it is not an answering voice, but just the same sound thrown back. In the absence of either the scientists or the books to give answers to their questions, the people of the very distant past made their own answers and wove them into fantastic stories and fancies, which almost everybody believed. They started looking at the sun with reverence and wonder, which finally paved the way to the conclusion that the sun must be a supernatural power and so, a god. That led to a vital question like 'how could the sun cover the great expanse of sky between morning and evening?' This in turn led to the creation of legends, which
provided the sun with a chariot drawn by splendid white horses. In due course plenty of such stories came into existence about various objects in nature. They mistook the rustling of the leaves for the murmuring of goddess who seemed to be living in the trees. The rushing stream was supposed to be a nymph madly hurrying to embrace her lover, the sea. The stars were supposed to be human beings placed in the sky by God by virtue of their being virtuous. That was how the belief called anthropomorphism was born in which the gods and goddesses were thought of as human beings in form and action. The stories, which the people made, are thus called myths. The whole system of such stories is called mythology.

Before coming into a detailed description of the use of myth in R. K. Narayan’s novels, it is essential to give an introduction to the multifarious use of this term. According to Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary, Myth is a "story, presented as historical, dealing with the cosmological and supernatural traditions of people, their gods, culture, heroes, religious beliefs, etc" (1999). Myths can be thought as a reflection of the reality of primitive consciousness. They are a form—a peculiar form—of the worldview of people in ancient society. They are narratives usually employing fantastic images in the early stages of history, and were intended to explain and generalize different phenomena of nature and society. Initially they were embodied in oral folklore.

Northrop Frye is of the opinion that “myth is a form of verbal art since it is basically a kind of story” (1963:31). That means, for him myth is an
essential part of literature. So naturally the idea of a narrative becomes an integral part of the functioning of myth and the stories are to a considerable extent instinctive vehicles for meanings connected with the deep inner nature of the universe and of human life. Myth has therefore a basis in ritual, which in turn begets myth. Myth endows literature with a moral as well as a religious value. For the search for a spectacle that is more realistic than reality itself, myth gets very deeply associated with the creative impulse. Myth indeed gives literature shape and design. As Northrop Frye points out, “Literature is reconstructed mythology with its structural principles derived from those of myth” (1963:38). It gives the creative writer a readymade skeleton that could be exploited for an original reworking of a primary design. Myth gives coherence to theme, plot and characterization, when it is employed as a structural device. It impregnates the action and pushes the plot. It scans the changes of the human psyche in the development of character at the psychological level. The characters can be subjected to close examination and study as archetypes. The greatest merit of myth lies in its universality that could be exploited by the writer of fiction, when it is employed as a structural device in their writings. According to Chitra Sankaran,

In the west, in the language current during the nineteenth century for instance, “myth” meant anything that was opposed to “reality” or the Christian world view, and was almost synonymous with “something untrue”. With the turn of the century however, psychoanalysts like Freud changed the status
of myth acclaiming it to be the Great Primordial Truth, the precipitate of the unconscious. Jung in turn, identified myth as the archetype, which was present in the collective unconscious of the entire human race. (1993:1)

The Hindu mythology of India, a country of great antiquity, is as ancient as the country itself. It is a living mythology of great influence and it injects belief into the people and tempts them to follow it religiously. It enjoys a singular position in the world today, for it is a mythology of about one sixth of the world population. Chitra Sankaran observes further: "Perhaps what makes Hindu mythology so singular is that it seems to contain in essence that most vital property of myth—great antiquity combined with perpetual contemporaneity" (1993:2). Myth has been used by the writers quite consciously as well as unconsciously. The conscious use of myth is a well-known literary technique and it is a part of a modern literary current, which Eliot uses in *The Waste Land*, Joyce in *Ulysses* and O'Neil in *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

There are writers who have used mythical situations without being aware of it. But critics have discovered, analyzed and showed how they are operating in them. It is the contention of Meenakshi Mukerjee that "There is the example of *Hamlet* which Gilbert Murray traced to a primitive myth connected with the ritual battle of Summer and Winter, of Life and Death" (1971:129).
It is worthwhile here to probe the various reasons, which prompt the writers to employ myths in their writings. One reason may be its complete absence of historicity. Even if one refers to the oldest possible book about myths one gets the reference to them, as being old. But at the same time myths show an unceasing contemporaneity. This may be another reason. Yet another reason may be that they provide abstract story patterns.

The tendency of the western writers to be concerned with myth is reflected in Indian literature just as most European trends are echoed in India either immediately or belatedly. But here the Indian writers in English face a basic problem that they cannot draw their material from the European mythical framework just as they could utilize the technical experiments of their European models, namely following the stream of consciousness method or sharing their existentialist philosophy. It is mainly because one has to embrace the mythology of one's own culture to create expressive patterns of fiction. It comes very handy to the Indian writers in English, for the Indians are "still closer to their mythology than the modern Irish or British people are to Celtic folk-lore or Greek legends" (1971:131). The consciousness of myth is in the blood of every Indian, for children in India still grow up imbibing the legends of their country. The public oration of tales from the epics and the puranas indicating their contemporary relevance is a healthy surviving tradition in India even now. And above all, the epics and the puranas serve as a binding link in a country of great diversity like India, the culture and tradition of which are highly valued throughout the world. This factor has played a very
significant role in attracting the Indian writers in English towards this popular as well as rich material.

The main storehouse of the Hindu Myths has been two great epics *The Ramayana, The Mahabharata, The Puranas* (which are eighteen in number) and the five principal tantrams. The characters and incidents of these have been regarded as an enormous source of narrative possibility for the works of plenty of creative writers and saints. Rajagopalachari views that the great epics "are the records of the mind and spirit of our forefathers who cared for the good, ever so much more than for the pleasant and who saw more of the mystery of life than we can do in our interminable pursuit for petty and illusory achievements in the material plane." (1975:10)

*The Ramayana* may be the oldest of the Sanskrit epic poems. It is said to have been composed by Valmiki, a sage, around 5\textsuperscript{th} century B.C. and the present form is said to have been written a century or two later. *The Ramayana* consists of seven cantos (sections) and about 50,000 lines.

*The Mahabharata* enjoys the privilege of being the largest epic poem in the world. According to Chitra Sankaran,

It is divided into eighteen parvas (or books) and contains about 220,000 lines. The reputed author is Vyasa, the arranger of the Vedas themselves. The origin of the work is buried in its antiquity. It is believed to have been passed down through the oral tradition for several centuries before it was first written, presumably in the ninth century B.C. This written version was
continuously added to and modified by successive generations
till about 200 A.D. (1993:2)

While going through the novels of R.K.Narayan one may be forced to conclude that he is a writer whose mind has been designed, developed and directed by the heroic deeds in the great epics and his skill as a novelist lies where he has made use of them in a profound manner.

2.2. Pre-Independence Novels

Story telling seems to be a passion with Narayan. It comes to him quite spontaneously and he indeed hypnotizes the readers with his narrative technique. Relying on traditional technique, Narayan recapitulates his Hindu perception of life. Vinaypal Kaur Kripal observes, "Like the Panchatantra Narayan's stories and novels are not conclusive. The conclusion of one could be the beginning of another. The themes, characters and locale of one work follow on to the next until all his works taken together create the effect of a whirlpool"(1983:6). His Pre-Independence novels revolve round the themes of childhood, adolescence, romantic love and marriage and the position of women in a typical and traditional Indian society.

In his novel Swami and Friends, Narayan uses his mythical imagination to make the genuine experience look more real. The manner in which the story is narrated reveals that myth is employed at the level of narrative technique. The blend of illusion and reality, which brings his novels close to mythical tradition, can also be found in Swami and Friends. The
world of Swaminathan and his friends is very near to the world of fantasy, hallucination, adventure, threats, tolerance and half beliefs.

The world of Malgudi in *Swami and Friends* has a synthesis of the east and the west, and the old and the modern. And it is a conspicuous feature of Pre-Independence days. William Walsh has made a very fitting remark about Malgudi: "...the world which begins to be delicately established in *Swami and Friends* is not only Indian and British, not only East and West, but also ancient and modern" (1982:31). 'The Albert Mission School' and the 'Sarayu' river serve as testimony to that. It seems that Narayan has deliberately named Malgudi river after its epic counterpart in *The Ramayana*, for it is the source of life in Malgudi.

The mythic dimension hinted at in *Swami and Friends* does not develop into a technique in his next novel, *The Bachelor of Arts*. In this novel Narayan portrays a young man's search for a place in society, which according to his conviction is his right by virtue of his being a graduate. While developing this quest motif, Narayan reveals some of the autobiographical elements as in *Swami and Friends*. Chandran, the protagonist, falls in love with Malathi at first sight. It is quite interesting to note how Narayan talks about it in the novel. "It was on one of his river ramblings that he met Malathi and thought that he would not have room for anything else in his mind. No one can explain the attraction between two human beings. It happens" (1937:54).
Chandran’s experience echoes that of Narayan’s. In his *My Days* Narayan says:

... I had to pass through a phase of impossible love-sickness. Perhaps the great quantity of fiction I read prepared my mind to fall in love with all and sundry—all one-sided, of course. Any girl who lifted her eyes and seemed to notice me became at once my sweetheart till someone else took her place. (1986:104)

As a result of a havoc caused by his frustration and his disappointment in love, Chandran is engaged in search for a vision more realistic than ordinary reality. This endows the novel with a mythic quality. But it is not fully tapped as Chandran does not succeed in attaining any sign of enlightenment.

While contemplating over the theme of *The Bachelor of Arts*, Narayan would have had in his mind the Hindu idea of the four asramas or spiritual orders namely *Brahmacharya* (celibate studentship), *Grahasta* (householder), *Vanaprastha* (retired life), *Sanyasa* (renounced life), though it is not being followed accurately in the novel. The story can be divided into four parts, each showing the different stages of life of the hero. The first part depicts Chandran as a student at Albert Mission College actively participating in college union debates and organizing functions under the auspices of the History Association as its secretary. The second part portrays him as a graduate facing the problem of finding a job, his meeting Malathi on the bank of the Sarayu river and falling in love with her at first sight, suffering the mental agony due to the frustration caused by his inability to marry her.
consequent to ill-matching of their horoscopes, falling ill being unable to withstand the impact of love sickness and spending several days in bed and leaving for Madras on recovery to visit his uncle for a change. Part three shows how he avoids going to his uncle's house and tries to become an ascetic and wanders in South Indian Villages living on alms alone. In the fourth part Chandran realizes that his total experience as a sanyasi resulting from a silly infatuation is a kind of psychic or emotional death. So he bids farewell to his pseudo-sanyasi role and comes back to the world of reality, where he acknowledges the fact that he is quite romantic at heart still. He has been, in fact, in a world of illusory dream, which is far removed from the world of reality. But he manages to come out of it to be in a world that offers him happiness. So he comes back home after an interval of eight months and settles down to a quiet life after taking the agency of 'Daily Messenger' and marrying a girl of his parents' choice.

Narayan's next novel *The Dark Room* is a short and simple tale of marital disharmony. In this novel he portrays a very clear picture of the social life of India, which is slowly deteriorating as an outcome of the creeping in of the influence of modernity. Narayan seems to be finding it difficult to digest it and appears to be quite vociferous in upholding the cause of a traditional Indian woman, who is caught between the quest for identity and the inability to get liberated from the social and traditional bindings. It is an irony that Narayan has named the heroine of the novel 'Savitri', which is a mythological name. 'Savitri' in Hindu mythology saved Sathyavan, her husband, from the
hands of Yama. But Narayan’s Savitri leaves her husband, children and home as a protest against suppression and infidelity brought about by the violation of the sanctity of the marriage by her husband’s illicit relationship with Shanta Bai. Narayan’s ingenuity lies where the implication of this contrast is more than just the application of a mythical name. Narayan’s heroine is totally different from her archetype who is an embodiment of all wifely duties. She is a modern woman engaged in a totally different quest for identity as well as recognition, which is denied to her by her tradition and socio-economic conditions of a male chauvinistic society. Savitri’s quest for identity indeed begins in the dark room of her husband’s house. The abstruse experiences, which carry Swami and Chandran through illusion and reality, are echoed here in the darkness of a room. Her attempt to commit suicide is in fact foreshadowed in her retreats into the dark room. Savitri tolerates Ramani, a male chauvinist, for a long time by registering her protest by sulking, and finally she explodes and revolts against Ramani in vain when she realizes that he drifts away from her possession by shamelessly flirting with Shanta Bai, who is a liberated divorcee and one who rejects everything traditional. But it is Savitri, who shines by contrast though she leaves the revolt in the middle and comes back to Ramani.

Returning home, Savitri finds herself again at the starting point. At the material level it may be a defeat, but it is a great victory for her at the spiritual level, for she does not submit to her husband but to her obligations. Savitri’s tragedy lies in the barrenness of her protest and in her husband’s infidelity.
But her triumph lies in the final transcending of self for the sake of her home and children without expectations. Narayan’s skill to fuse tradition and modernity is displayed in Savitri’s coming back home. It is a compromise between the past and the present. She comes back home out of her anxiety for her children, a sense of fear of what would the people in the society think about her, her inability to swim across the current of norms set by her background and also the fear about what is stored for her in the other world. One may be fully justified to conclude that in this novel myth works at the reality of the surface level only. The use is more incidental than functional.

Narayan’s next novel *The English Teacher* is undoubtedly the most personal and autobiographical of all his novels. It is a direct result of the agony of losing his wife. The novel indeed focuses on the necessity of understanding life and death, which are entirely two different states of existence. One is primarily material and the other is all spiritual. While going through the novel one may very easily notice the contrast between the visible bodily world of human beings and the invisible world of the spirit. The first person narration of the protagonist indeed adds genuineness to the deeply felt and sentimental experience of the author. In the second part of the novel there is plenty of description about parapsychology. The circumstances, which force Krishna to make repeated attempts to commune with his wife’s soul and the association of the mystical and spiritual elements with it, all fall very much within a tradition as well as a culture that believes in incarnation.
The power of the human mind is unlimited. It can adjust to any eventuality and to the need of the time. In the first half of the novel Krishna does not show any inclination either to metaphysical investigation or to philosophy. He is very much worldly and materialistic. But he shows a constant tendency towards sentimentality throughout the novel, the intensity of which gets greatly increased in the second half of the novel. Krishna's love towards Susila is not merely physical. It is something more than that. He literally clings to her when she falls sick with typhoid. He says: 'It kept me so close to my wife that it produced an immense satisfaction in my mind. Throughout I acted as her nurse' (1946:81).

But unfortunately nothing, not even the services of an exorcist works. Here Narayan restates the universal truth that the living entities are just puppets in the hands of the Supreme Being. This idea of fatalism as well as helplessness gets more affirmed when the doctor says, 'what can we do? We have done our best....' (1946:94). There is indeed, a mystical exhalation about the wife's spirit that hangs around the husband. It is actually in harmony with the Hindu idea of unity in everything, which originates from Brahma. Just as in the other three novels of Narayan, in The English Teacher too, the use of myth is mellowed and its significance is implied rather than clearly stated.

2.3. Post-Independence Novels

Any artist is bound to improve in his art as he gains experience in his life as well as in his field of activity. Narayan is not an exception to this. While acknowledging this fact with all its intensity, it can be stated that the
realization about the law of nature he gained from loneliness caused by separation from his wife has played a greater role in bringing about a great change in his philosophy of life and his ability in creative writing. This can be confirmed by going through the Post-Independence novels of Narayan namely Mr. Sampath, The Guide, The Man-eater of Malgudi, A Tiger for Malgudi and The Painter of Signs.

2.3.1. Mr. Sampath

It is indeed in Mr. Sampath, that R.K. Narayan makes a complete and conscious attempt to use myth as a technique. By using myth borrowed from the puranas, Narayan not only brings harmony among several discordant elements but also achieves simplicity in the midst of great complexity.

It is Mr. Sampath, the protagonist, who entices Srinivas, a simple man and the editor of a journal, The Banner, into the film world of ‘Sunrise Pictures’ as a scriptwriter. The theme of the film is the burning of Kama by Shiva's third eye. It is a very popular episode from the Siva Purana. But unfortunately the high-class script is changed to give place to cheap elements like vulgar dances and songs, which serve as cheap thrills for the people of popular taste. Srinivas is thrown to utter frustration and confusion when Sampath snatches the role of Shiva from VLG. Ravi, Srinivas' friend, who is infatuated with Shanti, completes the confusion when he forgets himself in love sickness and destroys the most vital and climatic love scene and wrecks the very film itself. Though Sampath flees with Shanti, she leaves him at the
earliest opportune moment. He comes back to his family and leads a normal life. Srinivas too comes back to the old ways and feels very much at home.

Narayan exploits thoroughly the Shiva myth by giving a comic colouring in order to laugh at the foolish glamorising of the ancient traditions by the film world. To Srinivas, the scriptwriter, the climatic scene of the temptation of Shiva, is very important. That is why the author says:

This was one of his favourite scenes. By externalizing emotion, by superimposing feeling in the shape of images, he hoped to express very clearly the substance of this episode: of love and its purification, of austerity and peace. But now they wanted to introduce a dance sequence. Srinivas found himself helpless in this world. (1949:174)

The myth is mishandled here. The film gives an unrefined twist to it. The figure of Shanti ignites an unquenchable conflagration of passion in the mind and the brain of Ravi, which results in the wreck of the most critical and final scene of the film. Here one may find Narayan at the peak of his ability in assessing realistically the Indian society. The people have become so business-minded and greedy that they do not mind misusing the epics and the puranas, which are the genuine treasures of India, that are meant for the spiritual uplift of the people. One can always approach it as a source that would serve ever for a recovery of faith.

There is nothing odd about Ravi's ever-growing fascination for a beautiful female, Shanti. It is quite a natural human feeling. But in the case of
Ravi, it takes him to a point where instead of he controlling his feelings, his feelings control him. And so he becomes a victim of his emotions, which drive him to a point where everything looks meaningless if he does not succeed in possessing his object of beauty. In such a whirlpool of thought he loses his balance of mind.

Srinivas is the only character, which really understands Ravi and his predicament. He is always sympathetic towards Ravi. It may be because he has a fair amount of knowledge about human psychology. He quite aptly says: “The whole of eternity stretched ahead of one; there was plenty of time to shake off all follies. Madness or sanity, suffering or happiness seemed all the same.... It didn’t make the slightest difference in the long run---in the rush of eternity nothing mattered” (1949:208). It is from the point of view of Srinivas the story is told and the action is evaluated. Narayan has named him appropriately, for ‘Srinivas’ means the ‘abode of grace’. In his words and actions he justifies his name. He is an ardent student of 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.... 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)

One may be prompted to think that he is modelled on Rama, for like Rama he tries to remove fear from the hearts of the people and instil virtue,
justice, peace and gentleness. He plays different epic roles. Sometimes he is like Narada, the sage, who travels all over the world initiating problems and then settling them for a noble end. Yet another time he is like Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana, making a meaning literally out of the trials of life.

While working on the script of the puranic picture 'The Burning of Kama', Srinivas is able to bring to his mind through imagination a very clear vision of what he is about to create and also he gets fully involved in it. It may be because of Narayan’s strong religious background that he is able to do such a marvellous work through his character. The following passage may bear testimony to it.

Day after day Srinivas sat working on his script. He now seemed to be camping in Kailas, the ice-capped home of Lord Shiva and his followers. Srinivas could almost feel the coolness of the place and its iridescent surroundings. He saw, as in a vision, before his eyes Shiva, that mendicant-looking god, his frame ash-smeared, his loin girt with tiger hide, his trident in his hand; he was an austere god; he was the god of destruction. His dance was in the burial ground, his swaying footsteps produced a deluge. (1949:102)

Contrary to Srinivas, the character of Sampath is very domineering and complex. In the very early part of the novel he is known only as a printer. According to P.S.Sundaram, “The novel is called Mr.Sampath but in the first 64 pages out of a total 219, the name is not mentioned, though the man
exists and is going in and out of the pages” (1973:63). He takes a number of roles, which may echo the epic characters of Indra, Sampathi, Shiva and Bhasmasura.

The analogy of Sampathi, the eagle warrior-king and son of Anura, the charioteer of the sun god, is perhaps the most outstanding. While soaring to Heaven, he was charred to death. Ultimately a sage, in the name of Rama, saves him. Overpowered by ego, lust and arrogance, along with aspiration for power and wealth Sampath also forgets his limitations and usurps VLG’s role as Shiva, which in the long run brings his downfall. It echoes to some extent the experience of Bhasmasura, who brings his own destruction by touching his forehead with his palm when he forgets his own limitations by being fascinated by ‘Mohini’, who is none other than Vishnu Himself and who assumes that form just to see the end of Bhasmasura.

Like Indra, who conquered Vrita, Sampath overrules the landlord immediately after his death and obtains enough water for the long-suffering tenants. Sampath is susceptible to flattery exactly like Indra. Both are brash, adulterous and showy. They both share several characteristics.

The camera lens, which represents the film world, and Ravi, whose name suggests sun god, serve as the instruments of Sampath’s ruin. As a matter of fact, the camera lens is worshipped in the world of celluloid. That is why Srinivas remarks to himself: ‘They are initiating a new religion, and that camera decked with flowers is their new god, who must be propitiated. To him
Srinivas comforts and consoles Sampath when he is thoroughly disillusioned and makes him return to his family. His original role is thus restored by the efforts of a god in the form of Srinivas and he decides to give up his infatuation for Shanti and look after his wife and children.

Though there is more or less a perfect similarity between Ravi’s lunatic infatuation for Shanti and Ravana’s desire for Sita, Ravi cannot be completely analogized with Ravana, for Ravana is born of a saintly father and a demon mother. And also he is a lover of beauty and a great patron of arts. And above all these he is one who is noted for having got a number of boons by doing intensive tapas. At the same time he has got the demoniac nature in plenty, which serves as a tragic flaw in his character. He is the archetype of a villain. Verily speaking, ego as well as lust preponderates in him. Ravi is an ordinary person. He is an ardent lover of beauty and a good son. But his mad infatuation for Shanti brings him almost to the verge of destruction. But Ravana is totally destroyed. In the case of Ravi, it is only his passion that is burned out completely.

In the climatic film scene Ravi snatches and wrecks everything he could lay his hands at. Shanti wriggles out of the situation by scratching and biting him. Ravi is imprisoned and he regrets his past deeds. A note of redemption creeps into his self. Ravi’s action may remind one about two of Ravana’s actions namely attacking mount Kailash and kidnapping Sita.
Narayan portrays Shanti almost as a synonym of beauty. 'What a pleasure to watch her feature! Srinivas thought. No wonder it has played such havoc with Ravi’s life’ (1949:157). Her presence disturbs even Srinivas, who is virtuous enough to the extent of being compared to Rama. Here Srinivas finds himself placed in a similar situation as that of Shiva. "It seemed a familiar situation; he recollected that in the story Shiva himself was in a similar plight, before he discovered the god of the sugar-cane bow taking him’(1949:139-140). When he finds almost impossible to resist the temptation, he prays 'Oh, God, open your third eye and do some burning up here also' (1949:140). Such a beautiful being restores peace to Malgudi once the creeping influence of the ‘Sunrise Film Company’ and its associates disappears from the scene. Therefore she may be considered as the restorer of innocence and the destroyer of illness. Shanti means peace. She is instrumental in destroying the demon of lust in Sampath and Ravi. It is more or less like the epic divinities taking the human form to destroy demons or to test rishis and warriors.

The comedy reaches uproarious heights through the use of myth. The opening ceremony of Sunrise Pictures is a striking piece of comedy. Another quite strikingly interesting source of hilarity is that all the characters, who act in ‘The Burning of Kama’, are money-minded. In other words, the modern representatives of mythical characters like Shiva, Parvathy, Rama are all absolutely worldly. When the characters are asked to rehearse the same scene again and again, VLG who does the role of Shiva gets fed up with the
whole thing and remarks: 'I've borne this with patience: five or six days of continuous rehearsals. Do you want to kill us with rehearsals? And yet you are not satisfied' (1949:183).

And when he is forced to take another rehearsal, he demands the contract to be revised and grows highly critical of being unfair to him. And he says: 'If you pay me another five thousand rupees I'm prepared to go through this act, rehearsals and all, otherwise no' (1949:183). When Sampath and Somu cry in one voice that it is unthinkable, he cries, 'Not unthinkable in her case, I suppose?'... Pointing at Parvathi, sitting on her chair and fanning herself. Aren't you giving her five thousand extra? Do you think I don't know all that?' (1949:183-184).

Even the old landlord, one of the minor characters, in spite of his oft-repeated vow to be a Sanayasi, proves to be very money-minded.

2.3.2. Novels Succeeding Mr. Sampath

_The Financial Expert, Waiting for The Mahatma_ and _The Guide_ are the novels that immediately follow _Mr. Sampath_. Though they have the features of the early novels, they clearly indicate a development in technique. _The Guide_ can be considered as the most outstanding example of Narayan's more successful experiments in fictional technique. The mythic dimension is present at a mere indistinct and moderate level of indirect suggestion. It does not exist as a structural device. It not only operates at the level of surface reality, but also intermittently. But in _The Man-eater of Malgudi_ Narayan takes
up the mythic dimension again and improves on the structural concepts he has used in *Mr. Sampath*.

### 2.3.3. The Man-eater of Malgudi

*The Man-eater of Malgudi* is regarded as one of the mature works of Narayan. Though there arose initially mixed reactions about the validity of the aforesaid statement, great stalwarts of critical thought on the Indian novel in English such as Meenakshi Mukherjee, P.S. Sundaram, Edwin Gerow, William Walsh, M.K. Naik and A.V. Krishna Rao confirmed the maturity of his fictional skill employed in the novel. He has consciously used the mythical technique in the manner of western writers like T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, Eugiene O'Neill and James Joyce. It is for the first time he tries a re-enactment of age-old ethical canons through a dramatization of the archetype clash between good and evil.

*The Man-eater of Malgudi* is a modern myth in the sense that the ancient canons are admirably implanted in a realistic narration of modern South Indian life. In other words he uses myth as a blending agent and brings modernity in line with tradition and looks at both as two sides of the same coin. The encounter is enacted and solved through the interaction of theme, plot and character. A natural result of this is the amalgamation of myth and reality. Narayan tries to reiterate here that the belief in the ancient ways is still possible and can provide enough ways to keep the balance in the midst of confusing modernity. It is quite interesting to note that in this novel the episodic nature of the early novels has been replaced by a tighter structure
attained through the use of various techniques such as foreshadowing, back
grounding, parallelism and contrast and the use of symbols. These devices
are used in the twentieth century novels in the west. Krishna Rao is of the
opinion that *The Man-eater of Malgudi* depicts "... a complete picture of the
reality and the psychology of the national tradition both in its permanent and
transitional aspects"(1972:68). In *Mr.Sampath* the mythic parallel radiates
from a single incident and from the names of a few characters. But in *The
Man-eater of Malgudi*, it controls plots and character at all levels.

In this novel, Nataraj, a printer of Malgudi, narrates the story in the first
person. It is simple in outline, but complex in content. Vasu, a taxidermist,
destroyed the smooth and congenial life of Malgudi temporarily. He has a
pretty strong physical frame and he is rough and aggressive. He "was a large
man, about six feet tall. He looked quite slim, but his bull-neck and hammer-
fist revealed his true stature"(1963:13). He is so aggressive and domineering
that he takes possession of the attic of Nataraj's press without waiting for any
kind of permission from him and lives there indulging in all kinds of shady
activities such as robbing Mempi forest of its wild life and collecting carcasses
in his room for stuffing them and bringing there a number of prostitutes—one
among them is Rangi, a temple woman, who plays a very vital part in the
novel towards the end. He is a bully of highly self-centred and aggressive
nature. He succeeds to a considerable extent because of his boldness to
impose things on others. But he fails miserably and gets defeated when he
plots to make umbrella stands from the feet of a sacred temple elephant
named Kumar. In Hindu tradition elephants are looked upon as sacred and
divine, for they resemble Vinayaka, a demi-god, whom the people remember
and worship before they start anything and everything including the
worshipping of other gods. But the irony is that he is defeated by his own
strength and unreasonableness.

*The Man-eater of Malgudi* may be called as a great allegorical fable of
the modern age. The universal truth that violence begets violence is
reiterated in this novel. The story is based on the Hindu myth of Bhasmasura.
Through the austerities of his tapas, he got a boon from Lord Shiva that
whomsoever he touched would be immediately reduced to ashes. The irony
was that after having got the boon, he tried to test it with Lord Shiva himself.
Lord Shiva did not have any option other than running to Lord Vishnu, who is
believed to be the supreme proprietor of everything. Lord Vishnu took the
form of an enchanting woman (Mohini) whose appeal was simply irresistible
to the Rakshasa. The very objective of Vishnu's incarnation as a dancer was
to annihilate Bhasmasura.

She promised to yield to him only if he imitated all the gestures
and movements of her own dancing. At one point in the dance
Mohini placed her palms on her head, and the demon followed
this gesture in complete forgetfulness and was reduced to
ashes that very second, the blighting touch becoming active on
his own head. (1962:96-97)
It is actually an amazing experience to learn how Narayan employs mystical episodes quite artistically to reveal character and push the narrative forward. He handles the mythological figures in such a way that they give psychological efficiency to Vasu and Nataraj. The polarities in their character are transferred into action and inaction, and the theme is thus universalised. The struggle reveals the most forceful attractiveness of evil and guides towards the merits of right action, which brings the universal dictum on par with Indian philosophy.

Nataraj is perhaps at his best intelligence when he calls Vasu quite appropriately a 'Man-eater'. It indeed suits beyond any doubt his excessive appetite and his verbal annihilation of anyone who tries to contradict him. He enjoys enormous physical strength by virtue of having done very rigorous physical exercise under the guidance of a Circus Phaelwan. He is so selfish and heartless that he showed his true colour by knocking him down the moment his business was over with him. He is not only conscious of his strength, but also very proud of it. His confidence in his strength makes him quite arrogant and that is revealed when he breaks his bedstead by a single blow of his fist in front of a Police inspector. He thinks that he is simply invincible. But the irony is that his own strength finally proves to be Yama to him. He kills himself when he tries to smite a mosquito sitting on his head. One may find that the comic implications in the mock-heroic rendering become deliberately absurd here. But from another angle it can be perceived that the mosquito quite ironically acts as nature's agent of destruction.
prompted by some supernatural force, which always establishes dharma. Here one may find that Sastri quite appropriately equates Vasu with a Rakshasa and says: "... a demoniac creature who possessed enormous strength, strange powers, and genius, but recognized no sort of restraints of man or God... Every rakshasa gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something or other will destroy him" (1962:95-96). His shooting the pet dog of a small boy and a garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu, prompts one to conclude that Vasu is the personification of beastliness. He becomes worse when he suggests that stuffed garudas can be kept in the puja room. He hurts Nataraj's sentiments greatly when he utters the following words foolishly: 'I want to try and make Vishnu use his feet now and then' (1962:64). This indeed brings out the demoniac nature of Vasu. The sublime qualities like love, mercy, generosity and humility are alien to him. He crosses every limit when he kills the neighbourhood cat for a preliminary experiment in stuffing a dead-tiger. He hates children and to him women are use-and-throw commodities. The demoniac nature in his character is further brought out when he forcibly takes over the collection of the temple festival and misappropriates the entire amount gained mostly through coercion and threats.

Vasu is a "great advocate of individual achievement" (Meenakshi Mukherjee, 1971: 146). He is not only an expert taxidermist, but also almost a loner who is bent upon establishing his superiority over nature. He has masters in History, Economics and Literature. It adds further to his superiority
complex. Perhaps, that may be the reason why he says: 'After all we are civilized human beings, educated and cultured, and it is up to us to prove our superiority to nature. Science conquers nature in a new way each day; why not in creation also? That's my philosophy, sir. I challenge any man to contradict me' (The Man-eater of Malgudi (Man-eater) 1962:15). It is only the destructive aspect of science that attracts him and not the constructive one. He thinks that shooting the animals is his birthright. He does not feel any guilt when he plans to shoot the temple elephant. But Nataraj is very much worried about the safety of the elephant, for he has a very definite idea about the nature of Vasu. At this point of time the frustration generated out of his helplessness prompts him to think about the mythic parallel in Gajendra Moksha in The Bhagvata-Purana. He says:

There came to my mind the tale of the elephant Gajendra, the elephant of mythology who stepped into a lake and had his leg caught in the jaws of a mighty crocodile; and the elephant trumpeted helplessly, struggled, and in the end desperately called on Vishnu, who immediately appeared and gave him the strength to come ashore out of the jaws of the crocodile.

(1962:182)

When he keeps on thinking about this tale he gets fully involved in the thought of Vishnu saving the elephant in the same fashion and he lets out a cry: 'Oh, Vishnu! ...Save our elephant and save all the innocent men and
women who are going to pull the chariot. You must come to our rescue now’ (1962:183).

Vasu does not succeed in his wicked plan of shooting the elephant. It is saved quite incredibly exactly like its mythic parallel. It may be saved by the intervention of Vishnu to whom Nataraj appealed quite sincerely. It may sound unbelievable. But that is the way the Supreme Being acts. And the supreme reality is always beyond human perception. According to Meenakshi Mukerjee, “The battle between the gods and the demons, the *sura* and the *asura* is a recurrent motif in Hindu mythology” (1971:147). But whenever the demons overstep, a divine scheme presents itself to save the gods at the most appropriate time. That is more or less what happens in this novel too. The agent through whom the sudden death comes to Vasu is mosquito. Where is a mosquito in comparison with Vasu in physical strength? That may be the will of God. And that will operate at the most appropriate time to save his devotees.

The contrast in character between Vasu and Nataraj strengthens the structural pattern of order-disorder-order, which is the basic structure one finds in almost all the novels of Narayan. If Vasu is accused of evil actions and Nataraj of inaction, Sastri may be complimented for his right actions. He is practical, well balanced, mature and productive. It is he who comes out with such remarks, which indeed bring out the mythical parallel into focus. Since Sastri is a very pious and a good scholar, one may not be amazed when he appropriately comments on both Nataraj and Vasu and describes Vasu in
terms of the *Rakshasa* myth. As his name suggests, Sastri (doctor, learned) always stands for *dharma*. That may be the reason why Edwin Gerow says: "The essence of his action is continuity not enterprise... and is ... the embodiment of the Gitaic doctrine of selfless necessary action"(1977:80).

Normalcy is re-established only when Sastri resumes work after coming back from a pilgrimage that he undertakes during the inquest, which is held at the press. Evidently it is Sastri who gives the information, which he collected from Rangi, to clinch the mystery behind the sudden end of Vasu.

One may be surprised to learn that Nataraj pays a compliment to Vasu even after being put into a lot of misery and hardship by him. He says: 'He had one virtue, he never hit anyone with his hand, whatever the provocation' (*Man-eater* 1962: 242). But Shastri gives an apt reply:

'Because,'...he had to conserve all that might for his own destruction. Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the *rakshasas* that were ever born. Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity? (1962:242)

There will be little exaggeration in stating that Narayan makes multifarious use of myth in this novel. Myths function as a conscious structural parallel as a means of parody in the mock-heroic vein and also give analogies for characterization. It also functions at the level of allegory and symbol. The
allegorical elements find their culmination in the puranic mythical pattern. Narayan builds up a modern fable with Vasu as the incarnation of demoniac power. The allegorical element in this novel makes Narayan’s moral vision very vivid. The creative and the conscious use of mythical elements have enabled Narayan to present his moral vision through a story, which is not very different from Narayan’s other novels. According to William Walsh, “The mode of belief, the pattern of life, the method of thinking and feeling, the historical inheritance and the characteristic reaction to the social and physical environment—all these recur in his novels” (1982: 139).

Narayan’s moral vision objects to anything excess. He seems to suggest that self-glorification leads to headstrong individualism, which, in turn, leads to moral degeneration. He not only acknowledges the socially and morally sensitive individual, but also appreciates the positive values of love, sympathy, humility, piety and co-operation. According to Narayan, “The strong man of evil continues to be reckless until he is destroyed by the tempo of his own misdeeds. Evil has in it, buried subtly, the infallible seeds of its own destruction.” (Gods, Demons and Others, 1964:13). The allegory lies in the proclamation of the principles of classical myth that Narayan values such as the destruction of evil, the law of karma and the establishment of dharma. P S Sundaram is of the opinion that “The Man-eater of Malgudi is thus a great fable or allegory of the modern age....emerging from the collective unconscious of universal humanity. It is the story of Jack the Giant killer and David and Goliath, all over again” (1973:101).
The prominent symbols of the novel are the man-eater, the elephant, the mosquito and the temple. The man-eater is Vasu and the resemblances have been already dealt with. The role of the mosquito and its relevance to the mythic parody has also been examined. Nobody other than Nataraj himself already recalled the fable of the gifted elephant in *The Bhagavat Purana*—the mythical archetype of a Bhaktha with illimitable love for the Supreme Lord. The temple too becomes a symbol of a battlefield where *dharma* is ultimately established. It is the religious ceremony of the dedication of poems in praise of Lord Krishna that leads to a series of events ending in Vasu’s death.

2.3.4. The Vendor of Sweets

One cannot find sustained mythic structure in Narayan’s next novel, *The Vendor of Sweets*, as one may find in *Mr. Sampath* and *The Man-eater of Malgudi*. But it is full of heterogeneous references and allusions to Hinduism, which is more of a way of life than a religion. In this novel Narayan focuses on non-attachment and *dharma*, which are two cardinal principles that one has to embrace very dearly if he or she wants to follow the Hindu way of life. It is, in fact, loaded with philosophic and religious teachings found in *The Bhagavad-Gita*. There may not be any room for difference if one comes out with the opinion that this novel revolves round *dharma*, a principle, which *The Bhagavad-Gita* upholds. Lord Krishna descends to the earth to establish *dharma* whenever *adharma* is let loose. *The Bhagavad-Gita* confirms this by the following verse.
yada yada hi dharmasya
glanir bhavati bharata
abhyutthanam adharmasya
tadatmanam srjamy aham

(Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion – at that time I descend myself.) (Prabhupada, Bhagavad-Gita1972: 226).

Renunciation of everything in the material world, which tempts one towards sense gratification, is a prerequisite for spiritual advancement. Narayan treats the concept of renunciation in The Vendor of Sweets with a little more intensity than he does in The Bachelor of Arts and The Guide. Many great souls like Sidhartha, Shankara and Mahavira had renounced everything in this world as a result of an inner compulsion they had experienced while going through an unquenchable thirst for the knowledge of the ultimate truth. All the Vedas and the puranas are recommending renunciation. But achieving this overnight is very difficult, though not impossible.

Jagan, the protagonist, first of all renounces the community of Malgudi and then his business and finally his attachment to his son. But the irony is that the attachment to money interferes with his renunciation. This, indeed, serves as a comic undertone. And the seriousness of the theme is equipoised with this.
One may be fully justified in concluding that Jagan's triumph over self is a spiritual feat and it is nothing other than his individual consciousness that holds the theme and plot together. Though Narayan narrates the story in a humorous note, the seriousness becomes quite predominant as a result of his very deep faith in Hinduism, which enables him to fill the novel with references and allusions to the Hindu way of life.

2.3.5. The Painter of Signs

There is no sustained mythic structure in this novel too. The mythic dimension again assumes an interpretative function rather than a sustained technical device. It is parodied through the allusion to the tale of King Santanu and the goddess Ganga that comes in the epic *The Mahabharata*. It is very amusing to note that Narayan does not narrate the story of King Santhanu and the Goddess Ganga. There is just a reference to the story in the novel. It is being referred to in a conversation between Raman and Daisy: ‘... whatever you say, I will never interfere. I won't question you. I will be like the ancient king Santhanu .... You always find some ancient model, she said with a slight sneer. Anyway, who was this Santhanu? Raman narrated the story from *The Mahabharata*’ (1977:159).

The similarity between the story from *The Mahabharata* and the love story of Raman and Daisy in *The Painter of Signs* may be quite close. Santanu was the ruler of an ancient kingdom with Hasthinapura as the capital. One day in the course of hunting he came across a lovely damsel on the bank of a river and fell in love with her at first sight. She was so beautiful
that he could not resist the temptation of proposing to her then and there. She was also attracted to him with the same intensity. When the king asked her whether she was willing to marry him, she said: ‘Yes, but listen carefully to what I say now. When I am married, I must be absolutely free to do what I like. At no stage should you ever question my action. I’ll stay as your wife only as long as you observe this rule’ (Narayan, *The Indian Epics Retold (Epics Retold)* 1995:205). The king readily consented and married her. But he was rudely shocked when she started drowning their children one after another immediately after they were born. As he was bound to the terms and conditions agreed upon before the marriage, he was unable to stop her from such an inhuman behaviour of killing their own children in such a hideous manner. But when she was about to drown the eighth child in the same fashion, he lost the control over himself and questioned her. Since it caused the breach of contract, she revealed herself to be Ganga, the deity of that river. Then she told him about the curse of the sage Vasishtha that ran its usual course safely.

Raman resembles Santanu in the novel. He is terribly infatuated with Daisy and he shows enormous anxiety to possess her. He entertains a lot of erotic thoughts and imagines himself to be enjoying her in that line. This can be understood from his experience. “He lay tossing all night. All kinds of dreams bothered him, every act was mixed up with that woman. She said several times, ‘Come dear, to my side’, and had no clothes on” (*The Painter of Signs (Painter)*, 1977: 44-45).
Raman has a very high opinion about himself and according to him he wants to be scientific in thought and action. That is why he says: 'I want a rational explanation for everything... I'm a rationalist, and I don't do anything unless I see some logic in it' (1977: 5). But his infatuation for Daisy defies all rational explanation. He simply fades out into utter 'Daisy-ism'. He tries his best to discipline his mind against sexual desires, but quite often his mind drifts away from his control and indulges in sexual imagery and wishful speculations. That is why he says: "Till yesterday I was a free man with my mind unfettered. Today I am unable to think of any other subject"(1977:44). Raman is so madly in love with Daisy that he is ready to marry her on any condition. But perhaps he may not know that “reason and love keep little company” (William Shakespeare, 1954:179). He surrenders unconditionally to her. A rationalist may not be one as actually he is. He is indeed a great hypocrite. Sharan is of the opinion that

Raman is a typical product of modern hypocritical society. His edifice of self-discipline is built upon a foundation of sand. His contact with Daisy transforms him into a different kind of person. His life suddenly takes a new turn. In a word, he becomes Daisy-obsessed. He finds it difficult to go against her wish. (1993:279)

Daisy attaches no sentiments to married life. She lays down two conditions before giving consent for the marriage. They are: "One, that they should have no children, and two, if by mischance one was born she would
give the child away and keep herself free to pursue her social work.... On any
day you question why or how, I will leave you. It will be an unhappy thing for
me, but I will leave you..." (Painter 1977:158-159).

Here one may find a very close resemblance between Ganga and
Daisy in their attitude towards their own children. Both have well designed
objective in their mind. Immediately after Santanu breaks his vow Ganga
explains to him, 'Know me now as Ganga, the deity of this river. I took human
form only in order to give birth to these eight babies, as ordained. I married
you because you were the only one worthy of fathering them. The children
are the eight Vasus' (Narayan, Epics Retold 1995:206). Vasus are a class of
deities who are the attendants of Indra. In their previous birth they committed
a sin of stealing Nandini, a rare cow of Sage Vasishta. And so they were
cursed to be born on the earth. Listening to their appeal, seven of them were
permitted to go back to heaven immediately after they were born, but the
eighth one, who had actually stolen the cow in order to satisfy his wife, had to
stay back on the earth and he was condemned to a life of celibacy.

Raman is very proud of his profession and his calligraphy, in particular.
He is very much sought after in Malgudi. He is not by any means an ordinary
labourer. He has studied in the local college and has the habit of reading
books, especially classics. He belongs to a superior caste and to the middle
class. His profession enables him to come into contact with different kinds of
people and to have confrontation with most of them. They are people like the
newly qualified lawyer, the local eccentric, who sells solutions written on
pieces of paper just for five paise, the bangle seller, the talkative Gupta and also Daisy. It is to be noted that in these encounters Narayan emulates ancient narrative modes, which are episodic in nature. All the epic heroes, without any exception, go through a number of encounters with gods, demons and others. It is through a series of confrontations with evil forces that Sri Rama and Lord Krishna fulfil their transcendental assignments. The actual divine identity of them is revealed only during such confrontations. In *The Painter of Signs*, this technique is caricatured by substituting the epic confrontations with mock serious oral clashes between eccentrics. Raman, though he blows his own trumpet and claims as a great rationalist, is also an eccentric to some extent. He talks about his determination "to establish the Age of Reason in the world" (*Painter* 1977:5). But he loses all his balance when he is infatuated with Daisy. Though Daisy does not talk about any kind of anxiety to establish an age of reason in the world exactly like Raman does, she always communicates on the rational plane. Raman is literally bewildered by her sense of commitment. To him she is just a synonym of determination as well as dedication. And it lifts her to the mystic plane. Though her dedication and commitment to her mission of family planning generated a lot of awe and admiration in him initially, her unappeasable faith in the necessity of the birth control frightens him finally. It drives him to the extent of thinking that "If she were a despotic queen of ancient days, she would have ordered the sawing off the organs of generation" (1977:56-57).
Raman's silent reflections on her campaign and his share of participation give the delightful comic view of the entire proceedings. "Thank god, she is only concerned with births and not death. Otherwise she'll be pestering Yama to take away more people each day, he reflected" (1977:69). But towards the end of the novel the readers may find that Raman is worshipping Daisy by almost equating her with a goddess. "He was struck by the elegance of her form and features, suddenly saw her as an abstraction—perhaps a goddess to be worshipped, ..." (1977:175). He is ready even to sacrifice their yet to be born child to keep her in cheer, echoing very much the sad predicament of Santanu. When they decide to go for the ancient type of Gandharva marriage, she makes her stand clear to Raman and tells him: ‘....If you want to marry me, you must leave me to my own plans even when I am a wife. On any day you question why or how, I will leave you....’ (1977:159).

Raman visualizes Daisy leaving each baby of theirs in an orphanage just like Goddess Ganga throwing her just born babies into the river. It actually serves a comic parody of the ancient myth of Santanu and his wife. Like Santanu, he aspires for an everlasting relationship with her. He goes to the extent of asking her ‘Have you no feeling? Have you no memory?’ (1977:177). But Daisy's commitment to her profession is so deep that everything else appears to be secondary to her. And when Raman insists on her staying with him as his wife, she disappears from the scene and goes to the villages in the forest for a period of three years to take care of about five.
thousand people. Before she leaves, she tells Raman categorically that married life is not for her. Saying this, Daisy leaves the place exactly like the Goddess Ganga leaving Santanu.

So long as Raman and Daisy are concerned, Daisy shines by contrast by virtue of being goddess-like in her dedication. Raman is kingly Santanu only in the sense that he shares the pangs of emotional involvement with his mythic counterpart. This kind of an emotional involvement only makes him more self-reliant. One may be really amazed to see enlightened, yet saddened, Raman finally coming back to normal life with a typical Hindu spirit of tolerance, acceptance and hope that he would be in a position to live together with Daisy at least in the next janma. Narayan reiterates here the piece of truth that, when one is bewildered and disillusioned by the happenings in the material world, one may be motivated to embrace the Vedic thought that the cycle of birth and death continues according to one's Karma.

2.3.6. Novels Succeeding The Painter of Signs

In The Painter of Signs, the village hermit claims that he can talk to the animals and has more confidence in them. While leading Raman to the cave temple, he talks about an old tiger turned man-eater. He tells Raman: 'You see, sometimes an old tiger turned 'man-eater' comes around. He would wait behind a shrub and carry away the villagers' (1977:76). Then he talks about his confrontation with a tiger. 'Once I found a tiger hiding himself in these thickets. He licked his tongue when he heard a human being
approaching, but when he saw who it was he knew he had lost the game. I addressed the universal soul directly: 'O Soul, take that clumsy tiger body of yours off and don't come and trouble the people anymore', and the tiger bolted away in shame' (1977:76). If one draws conclusions from these to the effect that the thought about writing a full length fable focusing on a mystic relationship between an animal and a hermit to expose human vanity and pretensions might have crossed the mind of Narayan even while writing this novel, he may be fully justified. At the same time one has to remember what Narayan has said in the introduction to his novel _A Tiger For Malgudi_ that immediately follows _The Painter of Signs_ about the paper report and photograph. He says:

> During the Kumbh Mela festival, which recurs every twelve years at the confluence of the three rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati in Allahabad, a vast crowd gathers for a holy bath in the rivers. Amidst that ocean of humanity also arrives a hermit with his companion, a tiger. He does not hold the animal on a leash since he claims they were brothers in previous lives. The tiger freely moves about without hurting or scaring anyone.

_(Tiger 1986:7)_

He adds, "Also I came across a few other instances of enduring friendship between tigers and human beings"(1986:7).

In this novel Narayan's fictional mode is moved from myth to fable. Fable is a story, which teaches a moral lesson. Fables often have animals as
the main characters. Fable and myth are different ways of looking at life and have a different attitude towards truth. Fable provides revelations like myth. While myth takes us back to Vyasa, Valmiki and Narada, fable takes us to *Panchatantra* and *Jataka tales*. In *A Tiger For Malgudi* the element of fable is clearly followed as a fictional mode. Since this novel is discussed threadbare in the ensuing chapter (Section No: 3.5), the details are not dealt with here.

Narayan's next novel, *Talkative Man*, reminds the readers of the epic sage Narada who carried a curse to the effect that if he does not spread a gossip a day, his skull would blow up. One may not find mythical analogies in this novel except that there are some casual references to ideal types. This is applicable to his last novels *The World of Nagaraj* and *Grandmother's Tale* too.

2.4. Conclusion

It is evident that Narayan's background has helped him have a definite idea about Hindu culture and its scriptures. And it has enabled him greatly to use myth both technically and thematically in his novels. Though he has restricted himself to the life of the people of 'Malgudi', a typical south Indian town, his horizon encircles the great cultural heritage of India and looks beyond it to the universal. While going through the novels of Narayan, especially those novels that are taken up for the study, one may feel that Narayan touches upon certain fundamental truths about which most of the people are ignorant, though it is reiterated in *The Puranas, The Epics, The*
Vedas and The Upanishads. And even those who are knowledgeable about them hesitate to acknowledge and follow them. But those truths are just a reality and not a myth. And this piece of truth will be focused on in the ensuing chapter.