CHAPTER – IV

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The writers of the psychological novels specialised Single Point of View and Stream of Consciousness techniques and after Henry James, authors started exploring the chances of employing Multiple Points of View to fathom truth without sacrificing unity of effect or impression. Authors like William Faulkner, Katherine Anne Porter, Penn Warren and Flannery O’Connor attempted an approach in which the reader was let to see the truth from various angles as closely as human possibilities of expression and perception could succeed in doing. Presenting reality, they felt, through multiple points of view would bring to surface, truth in greater richness and variety. Hence some of the psychological novels “extended the use of point of view from a unipersonal subjectivism to a multi – personal view of reality”\textsuperscript{1}. 

The use of Multiple Points of View in a novel brings to the reader convincingly and satisfactorily various responses of characters to a common incident experienced collectively. Men and women make and ‘unmake’ human relationships because of the unresolved tension in their psyches. Through Multiple Points of View, the characters are given tremendous scope to explore themselves subjectively with the help of Internal Monologues, Ironic Juxtaposition of characters and the cross lights flashed by several view points. Characters used in the novels of Multiple Points of View are extremely functional and least ornamental. They focus on the chaotic and disorderly condition of human society. The interest of the author is not to involve in an in-depth character study. The various characters are used in the narration to lend their perspective of a total human situation. The narrator deliberately shifts the focus
from one character to another to exhibit different kinds of limitations and inadequacies of the individuals that contribute to the disorder and disruption in the social and the moral set up.

The novels that employ the technique of Multiple Points of View use various characters to exemplify in different ways, the inadequate and limited responses of human beings to an experience. The author offers a motley panorama of human response to certain very crucial instances in life both as individuals and members of a family or group. Though the significance and the narrative focus shifts from character to character, the unity of impression is left undamaged. The readers never lose sight of the central truth of those novels, the central truth is invariably man's self alienation.

The manner of narration in the novels of Multiple Points of View complements and reinforces the episodic nature of the novel. Hence these novels fragment the chronological time and juxtapose stories of the past with stories of the present. Though the characters are controlled by chronological time or the time of their common shared experience, they also vehemently indicate that the human body must exist in chronological time, and mind does not function within the barriers imposed on the body. The effects of the past are ever visible on the present and the events of the past determine what occurs in the present. The human mind fuses past, present and future. The characters of these novels think beyond the clock measured time. The movement of human minds in and out of past, present and future help the novel move from scene to scene and from episode to episode. So the narrative focuses from individual to individual. The total action of the novel is condensed within various scenes and events and the total meaning of the novel is communicated through the diverse responses to these scenes and actions of the characters. The reader
hence enjoys the benefit of being an observer of thoughts and actions of various characters and thus gets a panoramic view of various characters and their responses to rich experience. The reader arrives at an understanding of the inadequacies and limitations of human beings who are responsible for their lives and the lives of others.

The unique technique of Multiple Points of View renders the whole truth embodied in the novel as it carries the weight of the artist's responsibility towards the society. This technique converts the artist's personal experience and understanding into a collective and shared experience as the author maintains aesthetic distance by wearing impersonal masks.

William Faulkner mastered the craft of using multiple narrators in his novels. His novels place considerable burden upon the reader by not making the theme of the novel explicit. Faulkner structured his novels in such a way that they do tell a story, but at the same time they probe into the social, psychological and moral significance of that story. The narrative structuring is deliberately made complex and difficult compelling the reader to sensitively respond and remain consciously close to the author. Faulkner frequently used, like Henry James, third person narration as it provided him a great deal of freedom in the development of the story. By choosing to tell the story through the mind of one character, the author was also limiting his own freedom. As Faulkner was a novelist whose major interest was in the inner world of his characters, he found it affordable to pay comparatively little attention to external events. In reality, human mind does not register events themselves. They register only one's reaction to and reception of the incident. As a result, a reader invariably witnesses in the novel not the events but the impression of the event as registered in a particular mind. Faulkner was aware of this psychological aspect of human mind that
he adopted this as a technique and developed his own variations of it. He conveniently moved away from his characters, and his character, either one directly involved in the action or a witness or a hearer of it, is heard telling the story and not the narrator himself.

Faulkner used multiple narrators and their employment as narrators, gave him tremendous scope for telling stories within a story. Each character while reacting to the main central episode helps for the development of the narration through narrating certain personal episodes also. For example, if the narrator is recounting his relationship with the central consciousness or the main character, he has a chance to constitute another story, thereby expanding the significance of the central story. Faulkner was able to freeze time, though this contributed to the flux or fluid state of time. When a character standing in the present narrates the past, for him past and present becomes synonyms, they become one. This paradox of time baffles every reader because he fails to know where one should be present to be in the ‘present’. When the mind lives in the past allowing the body to be in the present, both are present to their own concepts of the ‘present’.

In his Multiple Points of View novels, Faulkner was able to stay away from his novel because the readers knew that none of his narrators can be considered the voice of the author. Hence no account can be taken as authoritative. Thus the removal of the author presents a story completely dramatized with the author refusing to come for help. In this situation, there can be no certainty. As the author does not enter the story the reader must keep the game of speculation going, by exploring the thoughts of the narrators. The reader draws his conclusion which is affected by his own
experience and personality. This kind of Multiple Points of View propounded by
William Faulkner helped him in two ways.

Two interesting effects are achieved with this type of narration. First,
Faulkner skilfully explores what the mind does with external events by
the senses and thereby explores the nature of reality. Second, by
involving the reader in this process of philosophical speculation and
investigation, Faulkner broadens the meaning of his story. The reader
is forced to contribute his own meaning, to join in the search for truth
in this epistemological novels.2

In the year 1972, M.T brought out a travelogue titled “Aalkoottathil Thaniye”
(Alone in the crowd) in which he makes an elaborate and specific mention of his visit
to the little town of Oxford, Mississippi. The travelogue records M.T’s impressions on
William Faulkner as a writer as well as a man. M.T had been to Faulkner’s library, to
the places where Faulkner’s worked and lived and even to his cemetery. M.T had
discussions with persons who were close to William Faulkner including Faulkner’s
nephew.3 M.T like Faulkner is also known for local colour writing in the sense that
there is a vivid portrayal of the people and life of a geographical setting in the novels
of both these artists. Both the artists have expressed in literature those aspects of
character and destiny common to all people in all ages and places and yet have
maintained regionalism in their works.

M.T has made an extensive use of the technique of Multiple Points of View
perfected by William Faulkner in his novels. As a writer of psychological realism in
Malayalam literature, he found the technique suitable in maintaining artistic
objectivity while narrating the aspects of an extremely subjective area – human
psyche. The setting of a majority of the stories and of the novels of M.T is Kudallor.
He had on occasions in various interviews and on platforms expressed his satisfaction
in working with the setting and the people he was familiar with. Kudallor, his native
village, the young and old who populate that little town, his own kith and kin inhabit
his literary world also. Thanni Kunnu (Thanni hillock), Nila Nadi (Nila River), the
flora and fauna of the landscape are the closest to M.T’s heart and they are the
reservoir from where he repeatedly drew men and materials for his fiction.

William Faulkner who published nineteen novels and more than seventy five
short stories from 1926-1962 had the American South for his setting of most of his
works. Fifteen novels and many of his short stories are about people from a small
region in Northern Mississippi – Yoknapatawpha County, ‘William Faulkner, Sole
Owner and Proprietor’. Faulkner did not discover this land all of a sudden. But it was
there waiting for him fully peopled.

Faulkner’s greatness as an artist is due to a great extent to what might
be called his stereoscopic vision, his ability to deal with a specific and
universal simultaneously, to make the real symbolic without sacrificing
reality… He is unquestionably the greatest of the American regional
writers. His fiction is as southern as bourbon whisky. Southern history,
climate, geography, natural life, society, customs, traditions,
ideologies, living conditions, speech patterns – everything that
particularizes American South and its inhabitants is rendered
realistically in his writing. But he is far more than a regional writer and
the breath of his achievement is due to, in large measure, to his
narrative structure, narrative techniques and his style.4

Faulkner, a born story teller had a passionate, almost obsessive desire to
understand his fellow human beings. He constantly attempted to portray the human
situations through skilful handling of the Multiple Points of View technique,
demonstrating thereby how a narrative tool can be an effective means of defining,
evoking and illuminating human psyche in all its contrastive and complex forms.
‘The Sound the Fury’ is still considered a challenging novel for the readers because
the four sections of the novel “were arbitrarily and capriciously distorted”.5
The opening of the novel is so deliberately different from anything else that has been
written that the reader can hardly be prepared for the difficulty facing him. A sensible reader will realize that the novel can never be judged by the first reading. Only after subsequent readings of this novel can the reader realize that Faulkner has presented the story in its most effective order.

The narrative style, structure and technique of Faulkner make his prose exasperating. Faulkner is capable of simple straight narrations and the difficulties he creates for the reader are deliberate. As a result, Faulkner's style does not "Provide relaxing reading but forces the reader to participate in the search for understanding and truth". As Hyatt. H. Vaggoner comments on the technique of 'The Sound and the Fury', "we cannot imagine this novel arranged otherwise than it is". In this novel, Faulkner has given the points of view of three brothers to portray the decline of the Compson family. Faulkner attempts to render reality behind the facts though a new narrative way. Hence the novel is not so much about acts and events as it is about the perception of those acts and events.

The sound and the Fury (1929), Faulkner said, began as a story about Caddy Compson. Though the novel expands her story into the story of the Compson family, Caddy remains the focal centre. The three sections present, through the minds of her brothers Caddy's tragic history and its effects upon their own lives. By means of the Interior monologue technique in these sections, the past and the present are juxtaposed, the effects related to the cause.

The facts of this novel are refracted through the consciousness of the Compson brothers, Quentin, Jason and Benjy. The differences among the various points of view are heightened by the differences in sensibility, style and rhetoric. The total effect of the method employed by Faulkner is to comprehend human psychology through implication. To get the grasp of the whole truth, it will have to be perceived from different angles. The first point of view is that of Benjy, a thirty three year old idiot,
the youngest Compson child. He is capable of knowing what happened but not why. His world is fixed and does not admit change. The second section is narrated through Quentin's consciousness. Though Quentin's world is as close as that of Benjy, he is more vocal about his thoughts. He has been greatly influenced by his father in his fascination for abstractions. Like his father, his attitude is one of evasion of life. Through his point of view, he communicates to the reader his inability to actively participate in the flow of life. It lays emphasis on a non-stop debate in his mind on moral and intellectual issues. He projects an attitude of an imbalance sensibility which instead of encouraging one to face life successfully, attempts to make one a cripple. This attitude of Quentin results in intellectual confusion that leads to suicide which is the natural consequence of such a stance.

Jason's point of view shows the way of responding to an experience by practical and social reality of the present. Unlike Quentin whose point of view is theoretical and abstract, Jason's is practical and concrete. His sensibility is without any complexity in thought and reason. Hence Jason's narrative is the simplest section to follow in the novel. His thought pattern is logical and simple but directness of thought can also be an outcome of superficiality and ignorance. Jason is not tormented by the past and no traditional ethical system guides his thought and action. His point of view presents the sensibility of a man who is devoid of all human emotions like love, pity, forgiveness and humility.

The final section is narrated in the third person in contrast to the first three sections of the novel. Dilsey occupies the central position but she is surrounded by the Compsons. She is a humble servant who is one of those people for the sake of love will endure weakness and tribulations. Her strength is her humanity and she is
incapable of thinking in abstractions. She is genuinely responsive to life and individuals. “Dilsey’s morality is her heart, her compassionate response to human beings”. She is the only person in the novel who seems to be capable of dealing with life.

Faulkner uses multiple narrators to represent a limitation in awareness contributing to the downfall of the Compsons. The technique explores and defines the theme by underscoring the fact that the whole truth can be comprehended only when we transcend our limiting sensibilities, obsessions and predilections. Ultimately Faulkner leaves it to the reader to respond to the various viewpoints which yield in size to the story of the Compson family. Faulkner uses a specific narrative technique not to display his technical skill but to project the inner world of human psychology.

Faulkner uses Multiple Points of View in his other great novel ‘Absalom, Absalom!’ Although the ‘Sound and the Fury’ and ‘Absalom, Absalom!’ employ Multiple Points of View technique, the way in which it has been used in the two novels differ considerably. The difference in method was due to the difference in the nature of subjects explored.

‘Absalom, Absalom!’ is a novel of man thinking, not man doing. The characteristics of human thought determine its form. The narrators are seeking meaning. Thomas Sutpen’s crime again using Quentin’s image, is a pebble thrown into the water that sets up the current of even widening ripples. Each of the narration represents one of those circles – of a different molecularity and tone... The actual narrative movement of the novel, however, is centrifugal rather than centripetal as the image would indicate. We move ever closer to the centre until we finally understand what Sutpen did. His crime, any crime, is the pebble thrown into stream of human life, and the inexorable moral consequences of the crime form the umbilical between the even widening surface.9
Faulkner’s concern in ‘Absalom, Absalom!’ seems to be the gradual revelation and reconstruction of truth about Sutpen through several points of view. Each of the nine chapters of ‘Absalom, Absalom!’ moves in a focussed fashion forward to climactic surprise. Hence the novel’s success lies in its suspended motion and withheld meaning. The first narrator of the novel is Miss Rosa Coldfield, who is the most connected character in the story of Thomas Sutpen. She tells Quentin about Sutpen’s life on one September evening in 1909. She narrates how Sutpen, a sixty year old, after his return from civil war proposed to marry his twenty one year old sister- in-law, Rosa Coldfield. He also shocked her with the suggestion that she should prove herself capable of bearing him a male child before their marriage. This immoral and outrageous suggestion ruins her opinion about Sutpen and she decides to dress in black and live a lonely life.

The second point of view in the novel is that of Quentin’s father, Mr. Compson. Though his narration is not first hand information of Sutpen’s life, he too is an interested narrator of the facts because he came to know of Sutpen’s life through his own father, General Compson. General Compson was a close and only friend of Thomas Sutpen. The narrative view points move from Miss Rosa to Mr. Compson, and further on to Quentin and Shreve. Quentin and Shreve probe beyond and behind appearances. Shreve’s point of view, the fourth and the last perspective on the story of Sutpen provides a contrast to that of Rosa Coldfield, the first view point. The novel through the use of Multiple Points of View draws our attention to the difference between facts and their reconstruction. Through the Multiple Points of View technique, the novel attempts to emphasize the need to understand the past in terms of its relevance to the present. It attempts to capture the ‘presentness’ in the past.
The technique of Multiple Points of View is highly conducive in the achievement of the aim of the novel. It becomes the "sustaining medium of the action and the chief vehicle of meaning"\textsuperscript{10}. The technique focuses on the principle of simultaneity of vision. The absence of the author's voice puts a tremendous responsibility on the reader participation, but the reader is duly rewarded in the end. The technique makes the novel a genuine representation of complex human motives and desires. The technique becomes an integral part of the novel's theme and Faulkner tells the story of Thomas Sutpen through multiple narrators who correlate facts, guess the possibilities and arrive at certain plausible findings. The technique of multiple narrators separated by time and relationship with Thomas Sutpen succeeds in the dramatic recreation of the past.

There are actually few instances in modern fiction of a more perfect adaptation of form to matter and of an intricacy that justifies itself at every point through the significance and intensity which makes it possible.\textsuperscript{11}

Like Faulkner, M.T also has made a judicial use of the technique of Multiple Points of View to help the reader perceive and resolve the incongruities and contradictions of human attitudes and endeavours. The only method which could explore and portray the varied and complex responses of many individuals was to employ multiple points of view, filtering human experience in all its variety. M.T's \textit{Vilapayatra} uses the Multiple Points of View to record the responses of individuals to an incident of common concern. \textit{Vilapayatra} meaning the 'funeral journey' was published in the year 1978. The story revolves round the incident of one Narayanan Nair's death. His four sons assemble to attend his funeral from various places, and
perform the last rites of their deceased father. The story is narrated by the four sons, each one looking at his relationship with his father from his own peculiar point of view.

Narayanan Nair started his career as a school teacher and later became a clerk in a rubber estate in Plappalli. He also worked as a part time post master in the local post-office. There he led a peaceful life. One day he was waylaid and he lost the money he brought home from the post office. Hence he had to sell away his wife's jewels to reimburse the sum and he resigned the post. Later he moved his family to Colombo and Adigannava in Ceylon. His life saw various trials and tribulations and separation from his family which came back to live in his native place in Kerala. After many years he too joined his family.

Vilapayatra is an assessment of the life and personality of Narayanan Nair from the view point of his four sons Kuttettan, Rajan, Appu and Unni. Each one of his adult sons attempt to recollect their past in terms of their relationship with their father and by doing so, make an assessment of him as an individual, a husband, a father and so on. The eldest son Kuttettan is a teacher in a school and happens to reside closer to his father's tharawad. As the novel commences the readers get to know that Narayanan Nair was seriously ill and his eldest son had sent communication to his three younger brothers to start immediately.

The first narrator of Vilapayatra is Rajan, Narayanan Nair's second son. He is also the main narrator. Rajan, past forty, was working as a 'writer boy' in the office of Chamanlal and Sons Tobacco Company, the whole sale Tobacco merchants.
The proprietor was a north Indian and is referred to by Rajan as Sait. Rajan’s work was to maintain accounts and letter communication with dealers and retail buyers. He was a widower leading a monotonous life rather by choice. Rajan received a trunk call from his elder brother reporting that his father was seriously ill. Though Rajan was well in anticipation of this kind of a message, he was not very sure what exactly his brother meant by the statement ‘seriously ill’. Rajan was in Sait’s good books. Sait granted Rajan not only monetary help but also allowed him to use his personal taxi to travel to his native town. Rajan was also asked by his elder brother Kuttettan to collect his younger brother Appu’s family on his way.

Rajan’s narration describes every detail about his employer and his wife ‘Saittamma’ who liked the ‘writer boy’ very much. He even recounts how she was concerned about his remaining alone without thinking of a remarriage. She, like her husband, did not seem to regret for remaining Childless. She did not discourage her husband from arriving home late and little drunk from the club, as long as he could win money in gambling.

Rajan’s narration highlights the ‘presentness’ of the past. Seated in the taxi, he travels in to his memory, returning to the present as and when the situation warranted. All the four brothers were in anticipation of their father’s demise. As Kuttettan lived closer to his father, he took charge of the situation. The brothers had taken their father to Madras, got him hospitalised and offered him good treatment. The care and concern with which the four sons looked after their father, was often appreciated by the visitors who came to see Narayanan Nair in the hospital. The brothers had even appointed an attendant, Sankaran, to stay with their father during his stay in the
hospital. The doctors asked them to take their father back home as there was no chance of his recovery. Appu the third son made adequate arrangements for the train to stop at the station of their native town for a longer time, so that their father could be taken in a stretcher back home. Appu was with the Indian Railways. Rajan wondered if Unni would make it for his father’s funeral. Unni was the last of the four brothers who was a writer by profession. He had always been different from his three elder brothers.

Rajan looked at himself as the comedian of the family. He felt that if like Unni he too were a writer, he would have written the story of a man who became a comedian because he forgot to cry. Rajan recollected how his mother commented on his nature, “Everything is a joke for Rajan”.

Rajan was brought to reality as his taxi slowed down because of a blockade on the road due to a political procession. This gave Rajan an opportunity to make another quick trip to his past while waiting for the procession to move and go past. He recollected Appu’s role in bringing their father back home and Unni’s role in fetching a car for his transportation. But Unni did not stay for a longer time with the family and the brothers. He was always in a hurry. Appu also wanted to leave immediately stating that his children would be waiting for him. Rajan wondered if the blanket term ‘children’ was inclusive of Appu’s wife also. On that occasion, Rajan too along with his brothers insisted on leaving immediately because his work as a ‘writer boy’ was waiting for his early return.
Rajan reminisces about his elder brother’s love affair. He found it extremely difficult to believe that his docile and quite brother was capable of carrying on a secret affair. The time Rajan had borrowed from the past to live in the memories got over as the procession cleared off the road. Rajan’s thoughts rush forward, making a hasty peep into the future. He still was not sure whether the phrase ‘seriously ill’ meant ‘dead’. He, in his mental eye could see himself and his brother standing near his father in his death bed, being directed by some elderly uncle to perform the last rites.

As the taxi climbed down a hillock, Rajan recollected how the people of his town had humorously nicknamed a prostitute in the neighbourhood as ‘Circle Inspector Nani’. Amidst the crowded thoughts, Rajan did not fail to remember Unni who was known for embarrassing people through his writing. Appu’s family, his wife and two daughters had also been informed that they would be collected by Rajan on his way. Rajan felt personally ashamed that he could not recollect the names of his nieces when he collected them in his taxi. As they drove past another procession, Rajan experienced helpless embarrassment as people in the procession used obscene language while singing songs on a local deity. Instinctively he could feel that the procession had embarrassed his brother’s wife too. Rajan felt acutely conscious of his own discomfort while talking loudly, vainly attempting to submerge the vulgar songs sung by the people in the procession. Minutes later, he urged the taxi driver Nanu to drive fast. Effortlessly his mind went on recollecting various episodes about his youngest brother Unni. Unni, the writer, was the odd man out of the family. He had never taken seriously the gossip of people regarding his drinking habits. Unni
had an astounding memory. He could recall even the story of a movie which he saw in his very tender days. Rajan’s mind lingered over a comment made by his school master who said that Rajan with his sense of humour would become a comedy star. From some remote point of his memory, Rajan got the name of his brother’s daughter which so long evaded him – Sujatha.

On reaching his father’s tharawad, Rajan found Unni already there who stated that he reached just in time. Rajan, as he had expected, learnt that his father passed away just a few minutes ago. Mixed were his emotions. He felt sad but relieved. Even during his journey, his mind constantly brought to surface the picture of his father lying in the bed with tubes connected to his mouth and nose, a man in his seventies desperately fighting death.

M.T’s Vilapayatra has much in common with Faulkner’s novel ‘As I Lay Dying’. It is not only the technique but also the theme that warrants comparison between Vilapayatra and Faulkner’s work. ‘As I lay dying’ is the story of a family on a funeral journey. This novel presents human existence as an absurd joke. Like Vilapayatra, the subject of the novel is also death, and the central image is the human cause which generates furious passions and activity. Faulkner’s work is in the form of fifty nine short interior monologues that are used to tell the story. The author does not identity himself with any single character. This helps the reader to remain detached throughout. The interior monologues help the reader to travel from mind to mind so that he realises the disparity between reality and individual’s perception of it.
The striking similarity between *Vilapayatra* and 'As I lay Dying' is the absence of a hero or a Villain. The complexities and the contradictions of human personality are exposed and explored, and the ultimate result is the awareness of the reader of the comic and the tragic incongruities of individual’s life in particular and human life in general. M.T is at his descriptive best as has been mentioned elsewhere; he is keen on projecting visual pictures through verbal mastery. Through the choice of words, phrases and picturesque expressions, the reader is made to view life from Rajan’s point of view. The reader is compelled to take up the twin assignment of exploring Rajan’s personality as well as exposing the personality of other characters.

*Vilapayatra* is a novel of thirteen chapters of which the major narration is done by Rajan, the second son. His narration alone is rendered in direct interior monologue. The rest of the narrators are made to speak through both third person narrative and direct interior monologue. Chapters One, Four, Seven, Ten, Eleven and Thirteen are rendered from Rajan’s point of view; Chapter Two, Five, Nine and Twelve from Unni’s point of view; Chapters Three and Six from Appu’s point of view and Chapter Eight alone from Kuttettan’s point of view. Rajan’s narration reveals not only his personality but also helps the reader to become familiar with the psyche of the other brothers and of course, their father. Rajan’s narrative is clearer, more descriptive and more subjective than those of others. Rajan’s travel through his memory appears to be a psychological need for him to reassess his father’s role in his life and to reaffirm his emotional bondage with his father who maintained a deliberate detachment from him. Rajan’s conscious struggle to retain a positive picture of his father in his memory fails and he could not help but agreeing to Unni’s comment that their father was a hypocrite.
Unni Madhavan, referred to as Unni is the last son of Narayanan Nair. His narration is vivid and objective. The objectivity sometimes touches unsympathetic detachment. Unni was visibly bored with the routine exchange of routine enquiries made by various relatives and neighbours. In his mind he felt distanced from the happenings around him. Despite of his pseudo-spontaneous replies and responses to the queries around, something was frozen and dead around him. His father never had great hopes for him. He rather was sure that Unni had the least inclination in improving his prospects and making something of his life. The last few years of his father were at the *tharawad*, his ancestral house. Father had taken to alcohol, a rather approved and allowed habit of his in the neighbourhood. He even had prompt and regular supply of arrack. Father was also in need of a responsive audience for his recollections regarding his lie at Ceylon. Though his contribution towards the well being of his family was negligible, he did not let go a chance of criticizing his sons. Apart from sending meagre sum for the maintenance of the family, the father never took any active involvement in bringing up his sons in the real sense. Unni recollected how once his father criticized him in the presence of a village revenue officer and mocked at his incapacity to procure a stable means of livelihood. Unni left his house in a fit of fury and had to borrow a petty sum from Porinju, for his travel expenditure. Ironically Porinju was a supplier of liquor to his father. Unni even pondered over the reason for his frequent visits to the *tharawad*. It was not only to see his father but also to keep alive his passionate love for Kochukutty. On such occasions, Unni had often compared his emotional love with that of a hero in a romantic novel. Unni was taken for the black sheep of the family. His mind consciously brought to surface many insignificant episodes in which he had been belittled by his father.
'Vilapayatra' is deliberately packed with seemingly insignificant incidents that have taken place in the lives of four brothers. Most of the incidents are recovered from the memory of the narrators for the sake of the readers as very few incidents occur in the external world. The reader gets a supreme opportunity to learn to arrive at the truth. He adjusts himself to the perspective of each narrator and also stands outside the field of action, as his understanding grows gradually and comprehensively. The reader remains a mediator between the event and its interpretation. Death of the father, by itself does not induce any strong emotion in the minds of the sons. But the collective duty of performing the funeral rites of the father gave each the father had played a crucial role in their lives.

Rajan, Appu and Unni had their personal grievances against their father. They had valid reasons to level charges against him who according to their individual logic, had failed miserably to play the role of a father in totality. Kuttetttan, the eldest of the four brothers is the only one who harboured no grudge against his father. His role as a narrator is the shortest and occurs only once in the novel. He alone had reasons for acknowledging his deceased father's goodness. His regret was that none of his younger brothers had had any chance to appreciate their father whose visit to the native town in Kerala from Ceylon brought along days of prosperity and festivity. His wish was to retain only those memories that filled his heart with genuine warmth for his dead father.

Appu, the third son of the family was employed in the Railways. His recollection renders a vivid picture of the scenic surroundings of his father's tharawad. His narration commences with the four brothers being directed to have a
bath to get ready for the performance of the funeral rites. On his way to the nearby pond along with his brothers, Appu takes up the charge of narration. This pond had been the witness of many important and insignificant incidents in his life. There were many stories about the crocodiles of the pond. Various people of diverse origin had this pond as their rendezvous. Appu along with his elder brothers had visited this pond when ever he came to his father’s tharawad. On those occasions he had met Hema, a niece of his father, who later became his wife. He had even hated meeting her with her friends and wished that he would escape her menace. Appu recollected longingly his evergreen dream of becoming a singer by name – Appu Vadakkedath. He did have a notebook in which he had written down old famous film songs and even was encouraged by one of his teachers to take up music for his future occasions. Father did not give him a chance to realize this dream. If only he had the finance to carry on with his collegiate education for two more years, he would have got a better job, a better position and the dream of becoming a singer would have been realized. Instead he had to discontinue his education, take up a job with the railways, and carried on with the work of receiving trains in their respective platforms signalling for their arrival and departure respectively.

Appu on his way back from the pond even wondered when he would be allowed to eat because his ulcer would not tolerate intake of food at improper times. On reaching home he found his wife’s mother was unhappy about the choice of the mango tree selected for felling for his father’s funeral. He was fully conscious of the arguments and debates that would go on regarding the tree, in subdued tones.
The incidents that are viewed through the consciousness of the narrators in this novel, are not cold and unimaginative episodes. Insignificant they may appear, but they do generate powerful feelings and emotions. A few of the chosen events have already been made a mention of in the other novels or short stories by M.T. For example, Unni’s recollection and description of his job as a teacher in a Tutorial College has been mentioned elsewhere. The reference to the meagre salary, impoverished living condition, and incapacity to buy an additional set of dress, and the fountain head of fertile romantic imagination that compelled him to pose as a romantic hero in spite of poor economic condition – have appeared elsewhere too. M.T’s use of multiple narrators helps the readers mind to find a wholesome and stimulating exercise in bringing together the scattered fragments and forming a whole.

The chief interest of the novelist M.T in Vilapayatra is to reveal the essential self or the personality of each narrator through the use of direct and in direct interior monologues. In each section we hear a different tone and a distinct voice which is characteristic of the narrator. Unni’s recollection of his father’s words of sarcasm and sneer while introducing him to the village revenue officer is thus:

He too has been given education. My last reverent son! He is still unsure of what he is doing. He has no inclination of coming up. Of course there are a few like this. It would have been useful if the money spent on his education has been used to buy a piece of land or two.

(Vilapayatra. p.42)

Appu’s recollection of his father’s words, cause him displeasure and his comfort. He held his father greatly responsible for his present predicament.

“There is no use in continuing with your education, nor do I have money to fund the education of both you and Unni. Try for some job in the neighbourhood”... If only father had allowed me to continue
education for two more years, I would have graduated. A better job, more number of leisure days, a Friends Arts Club nearby, to stage my drama titled ‘The brilliance of the Red Star’. Story, Lyric, Dialogue, Music, Direction- Appu Vadakeppat.  

(Vilapayatra. pp.31-32).

Appu’s words sound heavy with the pain of letting go a cherished dream. His dream of becoming a singer had to die a terrible death because it was unaffordable.

Rajan’s recollection is also as depressing as that of Appu and Unni. Rajan is the main narrator of the whole novel and his unpleasant experiences as an adolescent son who sought help from an emotionally alienated father allow the reader to understand how Rajan still struggles with the residue anger he had for his father.

It was my father who stopped my studies. If only he had uttered a word of recommendation for my sake at Adigannava, I would not have come back from Ceylon. He never said anything even while he was at the hospital at Adayar. Then I felt that father had ever regretted. I have never seen him regretting.  

(Vikapayatra. p.86)

But the views of Kuttettan, the eldest son were in total contrast to the opinion repeatedly and remorsefully vocalized by his three younger brothers. Kuttettan was also conscious of the individual grudges and discontent his brothers harboured in their heart about their father. He even felt for their incapacity to ‘understand’ their father properly.

Father was a great man. Whatever may the impressions of the Children that is the fact. Our grand father was just an attendant in a rich family. He had a son and two daughters. The son pursued education. Amidst starvation, struggled and walked twelve miles daily and passed matriculation. Children, you should remember. It was fifty years ago. He took various jobs. Made money and spent it lavishly. Loved lot of
women. Had both legitimate and illegitimate children. Brought down the hut and built a house. Bought palm grooves. Lived a rich man. Took refuge in old memories even when he fell from grace. Never complained even when he was aware of approaching death. Retained his radiance even in spite of the cobalt treatment. Died at last. They may not remember. When ever father came from Ceylon, it was festivity. Porters carrying huge trunks followed him. Little crowd of countrymen were ready to welcome him. Money for those who dropped in. dresses for the kith and kin. Feast for the local dignitaries...
I retain that image of father of those days. Let that image alone be in my mind for ever. 

(Vilapayatra. pp.58-59)

M.T has enhanced the effectiveness of his interior monologue by a generous use of remembered bits of conversation. Sometimes he retains a whole dialogue. The advantage of this unique device is that some of the minor characters suddenly come alive and continue to live in the minds of the readers. The character of Chattukuttyammaman is one such memorable individual. It was he who repeatedly reminded the four sons the purpose of their assembling together. Their unfamiliarity with the rituals and rites helped Chattukuttyammaman to claim superiority over others as he was thorough with all the rituals. The brothers also found it extremely easy to follow instructions because doing as directed by somebody did not demand any intelligent thinking or retrospective inspection. The brothers thus had enough freedom to indulge in their memories, chewing the cud of pleasant as well as unpleasant reminiscences. Hence the cumulative effect of M.T's narrative technique is that it is capable of much larger application. From psychological revelations the theme moves into sociological aspects also. Thus the novel not only gives us an insight into the consciousness of the narrators but it also juxtaposes the past and present of the deceased Narayanan Nair's family and the lives of the four sons.
There is no author's voice in 'Vilapayatra'. No single character can be designated as the spokesman for the author. Similarly, no single character can be considered an objective recorder of events. Because each of the sons are so individualised, each one's monologues reveals only his personal view of the events. In this aspect, Vilapayatra can be compared to Faulkner's 'As I lay Dying'. Through the short interior monologues, Faulkner also permits his narrators to characterise themselves. Faulkner portrays in his novel, human life as a cruel joke. The novel shows furious passions and frenzied activity of the Bundren family generated by the death and funeral of Addie Bundren. Faulkner builds the novel around several paradoxes – life and death, words and deeds, motion and static, tragedy and comedy, reality and illusion, sanity and insanity. The monologues of fifteen characters contribute towards the action of the story.

Faulkner gives a panorama of human psychology in 'As I Lay Dying' because the individual consciousness of fifteen characters not only relate the events connected with Addie Bundren's death and funeral, but also reveals the mind of the individual from whose point of view the action is unfolded. Like 'As I Lay Dying', Vilapayatra also allows the multiple perspectives work simultaneously on two levels – the level of the immediate external reality – death of the father, and the level of the internal reality where the human psyche is explored in its depths and complexity- the contradictory views of the sons about their father.

Faulkner uses in 'As I Lay Dying' the point of view of a dead person, Addie Bundren. Of the fifteen characters, seven are the members of the Bundren family and the remaining eight are neighbours or strangers who represent the public world as against the private world of the Bundrens. The sections narrated through the
consciousness of the members of the Bundren family reveal their relationship with Addie and with one another.

Like Faulkner, M.T has also achieved remarkable success in his novel *Vilapayatra* by putting across the incongruities of life through Multiple Points of View. This technique repeatedly stresses upon the need to have a whole vision in the midst of diverse attitudes and responses to life. Anse in ‘As I Lay Dying’ represents a life without any meaningful activity. In contrast, the excessive and uncontrolled action is represented by Addie. Both are unable to maintain a balance between words and deeds and thus fail in establishing a meaningful personal relationship which is essential for marital bliss. Addie’s point of view offers us an insight into her concept of life and her refusal to accept abstractions like sin, fear, pride etc. Her life and death suggest motion and stasis. Anse’s point of view underlines the disparity between words and actions. He lives by words which touch the heart only superficially.

The responses of the Bundren children to the event of her mother’s death and burial are conditioned by the circumstances of their birth. Their points of view portray different attitudes to experience, ranging from the verbal level to that of intense physical activity. The eight non-Bundren characters provide rich humour and irony to the novel. By juxtaposing the Bundrens and the non-Bundrens, Faulkner has introduced the element of ambivalence in human actions and attitudes. The different responses which the event of Addie’s death and funeral elicit from different individuals offer multiple perspectives on the action and meaning of the story. The novel lets us overhear the voices of those variously involved without ever resolving the conflict in the impersonal tones of the author.
M.T has also made use of the Multiple Point of View technique to help the reader perceive and resolve the incongruities and contradictions without making his voice audible. Hence 'Vilapayatra' like 'As I Lay Dying' offers an illusion of genuine experience of intensity, vividness and immediacy. It does not give the impression of M.T making an effort of documentation or cataloguing of physical facts.

Rajan's narrative in 'Vilapayatra' carries the main bulk of the story. The author never interferes in the narration under the pretext of indirect interior monologue; rather the novel begins and closes with the narration of Rajan. It is also true that only through Rajan's narration the character of their father grows into convincing proportions. Rajan is an intensely emotional person whose need for an anchorage is visible in most of his conversations. While waiting outside the house for his father's relatives to arrive to perform their share of funeral rites, Rajan's mind takes him back to an incident which he would consciously attempt to eliminate from his memory. The body of his wife who was admitted in the hospital for delivery surfaces his mind. Rajan unwillingly once again travels through the maze of agonizing past.

The scene of his waiting in the corridors of the hospital spreads before Rajan's mental eye. Sarada, his wife had been admitted there for labour. She was a village bred girl with least knowledge about the bearing and behaviour of the city bred. When Rajan declared her to be his choice, not only his family members but also the members of the neighbourhood wondered what has come of Rajan. He taught her sophisticated manners, to read and write and thereby helped her to overcome her rustic habits. He had always delighted in shaping her to suit his taste and fancy.
He had wished to gift his little born with a coin of gold, and to surprise Sarada through his compassion and care. Unfortunately, he became a mute witness to her unfortunate death due to bleeding.

Rajan was unsure of his own reactions when the nurse who was attending on Sarada hurried past him telling that the bleeding could not be controlled. Rajan felt the ground slipping under his feet because the sight of blood had always upset him. His father’s corpse placed on the ground ready for the last funeral rites disappeared from his mind and was replaced by Sarada’s body covered completely in white linen lying on a stretcher, kept in the corner of a corridor in the hospital. Life had played a cruel joke on him. As his inner self was indulging in a flash back of his painful past, his outer physical self was keenly tuned to his immediate surroundings. He should not sleep, however tired he may be. People in his little native town would gossip generously how the sons were tight asleep when the body of their father was left abandoned waiting for his cremation. Rajan found it extremely difficult to fix his mind in the present as every thought about his father took him into another journey through the maze of memory.

Getting a job in the native town was extremely difficult. Mother and the four sons were heavily dependent on the money sent by father from Adigannava in Ceylon. Father’s letters carried empty enquiries regarding their well being. Equally hollow sounded his words when he expressed his faith that God would do the needful for their well being. He had stopped sending financial help to his family and Rajan wrote a letter to his father asking if he could go over to Adigannava in search of a job. Rajan was certain that if only his father desired he could procure Rajan a decent job.
Rajan was sure that his father was a prosperous business man in an alien soil. But his father wrote him a letter stating that the conditions in Ceylon were unfavourable and hence Rajan may as well search for the job in his native town. Rajan convinced his mother and brother and took leave of them to reach Adigannava, a place in Ceylon.

Rajan’s recollection is of course with utmost bitterness and pain. He had no other option but to leave in search of his father for whom he was an unwelcome guest. A young man in his adolescence aspiring to prove to himself and to those around him his mettle was waiting anxiously to board the ship that would take him to Ceylon. He had nothing to grieve for or anticipate for. The uncertainty about the reception awaiting him at his father’s place left him with discomfort and distress. His reaching Ceylon, his search for his father’s office at Adigannava, his anxious waiting at his father’s office for his arrival rushed past his mind vividly. His father never showed signs of happiness nor was there any great warmth in accommodating Rajan along with him. Rajan was painfully conscious of his father’s lack of compassion. But as a teenager he was too young to venture on his own on a foreign soil. His father had instructed one of his employees, one Mr. Kurup, to take care of Rajan and provide him with financial help as and when he needed. Rajan seldom saw his father and seldom did he experience fatherly love. His father was detached and distant never giving Rajan any scope for building affinity.

Rajan was at a total loss to fathom his father’s feelings towards him. He wandered to various places just to kill his time and his adolescent pride would not let him accept money from Mr. Kurup. Even staying along with the servants and attendants of his father’s office was becoming insufferable. His father was not running as prosperous a business as Rajan imagined. Yet, as a man who had been in
Adigannava for decades, his father could have easily recommended him for some job around. Rajan found it extremely difficult to accept his father's cold and unsupportive attitude that he had no other choice but to return to the little native town in Kerala.

It was during the short stay of twenty three days at Adigannava did Rajan come to know of his father's 'other family'. Though he could not bring himself to spy upon his father, he learned none the less about his father's relationship with another woman and his child through her. Rajan returned with pain and bitterness and could neither forget the reception he received at his father's place nor could ever forgive him till the end. With immense patience, Rajan took care that his unhappy thoughts about his father could never surface. It was this image of his father that kept haunting him recurrently. The indelible unpleasant impressions of his relationship with his father gave him a unique objectivity which enabled him to remain a witness participant. His incapacity to emote passionately for his father's death is a common feeling shared by all the brothers except Kuttettan, the first born.

Their father had failed them individually as well as collectively. He had let them down when they wanted him at his supportive best. He had no great appreciation for his sons even after they had reached adulthood. His personal needs and convenience always occupied his priority list till the end. Rajan found his father in capable of remorse.

Appu and Unni had their own personal complaints and charges against the reception they received at their father's hand. Appu's great desire to become a singer never materialised for the want of a positive gesture from his father. Unni had to leave his house in fury as he found father's words of spite and venom becoming insufferable. His father would not spare him even in the presence of visitors. Through
the Multiple Points of View technique, M.T lends a helping hand to the readers to understand the character of the individual for whose funeral his sons have fathered. Rajan, Appu and Unni like their elder brother Kuttettan have played the roles of dutiful sons in looking after their sick father in the hospital. They were so consciously and visibly dutiful that the visitors for the sick man openly appreciated their compassion. Some even declared that Narayanan Nair, their father, was the most fortunate man to have four sons attending on him in all vigil. But nobody, other than the reader knows how these sons chose to remember their father. The tenth chapter is the only occasion where Kuttettan narrates his point of view. According to him nothing can change the truth that Narayanan Nair was their father and the question what sort of a father was he has no relevance.

Multiple Points of View presents in Vilapayatra an entirely different kind of scenic pattern. The narratives are essentially subjective, thus facilitating the reader to identify the technique to be the chief unifying device. The author employs a unity of action. He has a very strong substantial plot which may be wanting in many of the Stream of Consciousness novels. After Rajan's narration about his stay at Adigannava, the reader could sense the novel rushing with the speed of a rapid. What even the brothers had to share with the reader seem to have been exhausted and what is left behind is only the external activities. The brothers perform the last rites of their father well in accordance with the directions provided by Chathukutty Uncle.

Once the need for showing the reader the reality of inner life of the narrators is satisfied, M.T deliberately records minute and trivial things with more than necessary care. Petty instances that crowd the external world gain significance when the writer feels lesser urge on depicting the inner drama of consciousness. The brothers decide to ransack the belongings of their father to get a clue of his personal life hidden from
their purview. Diaries with addresses, bank pass books or even letters might have helped them to know more about the father whom they have helped them to know more about the father whom they have never known. But they do not find anything of that nature in his box. His personal belongings do not help them in assessing the real personality of their father. Unni, the last of the four brothers alone has enough courage to word their disappointment. He bluntly says “One thing is certain. Father had been a terrible hypocrite. He was a ...” (Vilapayatra p.86)

All the sons except the first of Narayanan Nair harbour in their hearts unpleasant anti-paternal feelings and through each one’s narration the reader gets a glimpse of this. Sigmund Freud observed that in the psychology of the sons there is always an urge to rebel against paternal authority and the joy of being released from such an authority does not go unexpressed. Parental authority is ironically the most respectable as well as the most contemptible. Rajan, Appu and Unni have on several occasions silently rebelled against their father’s hypocrisy, in human detachment he maintained towards them, and they do not mince words in their portrayal of him as 'unfatherly' on many occasions.

M.T finds the Multiple Points of view technique a suitable way to transport the contempt and the hostile stand taken by the sons towards the absolute power enjoyed by the father figure, an authority condoned by the society. The closing chapter of Vilapayatra shows the sons visibly relieved after the death of their father. The novel certainly does not project the grief of the sons towards the loss of their father, but does portray another kind of grief felt by the sons collectively and individually because they have assembled not only to perform the last rites to their departed father, but also to review with merciless objectivity their relationship with a man who was
more of a stranger than of a father to them.

In *Vilapayatra* through the Multiple Points of View technique, M.T presents a device for making it possible to introduce the thoughts of four characters without unduly confusing the reader. What Robert Humphrey states of Faulkner’s ‘As I Lay Dying’ is true of *Vilapayatra* also.

Because there is a coherent plot and because the characters act in an external drama which has a beginning, complications, climax and ending, the absolute need for further unifying devices does not exist.12

M.T has always championed for the cause of a second born, a child who is invariably orphaned emotionally. Consciously or unconsciously, M.T in seen projecting the emotional traumas experienced by a second born son in a family where the father figure is totally absent or minimally present. More painful are the occasions where the second born is compelled to search for the identity of his true biological father. Bhima of the novel *Randamoozham* is seen suffering from his unspeakable doubts regarding his real father. In *Asuravithu*, Govindankutty the protagonist is presented as a second born in a *tharawad* that is on the decline. Govindankutty represents the problem of alienated souls who nourish both elusive private dreams and intimate personal sorrows. He is a second born, when the society was in the process of dehumanisation, and he is a sample from “the smouldering ashes left thickly in the crematorium of the hopes and aspirations of the complacent generation of optimistic idealists in pre-Independent India”.13 Sethu Madhavan of *Kaalam*, Govindankutty of *Asuravithu*, Rajan of *Vilapayatra* and Bhima of *Randamoozham* shoulder the emotional burden projected by the artist. Their narration may be made through Single Point of View or Stream of Consciousness or Multiple Point of View. But M.T necessarily leans heavily on introversion and indulges in deep psychological probe of
the second born. The many-faceted torments and conflicts that Rajan undergoes in *Vilapayatra* is of course shared by his younger brothers Appu and Unni, yet the depressing sense of frustration and fugitive feelings of futility he experienced when he was disowned by his father at Adigannava find a parallel only in the psyche of Sethu, Govindankutty and Bhima. Thus M.T. achieves sublime artistic perfection while presenting his readers insights into the enigmatic inner-selves of the four brothers and also a glimpse of the strange psyche of their father, who was by choice not only aloof but also alone.
NOTES


9. Ibid. 212.


