CHAPTER - II

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

The children in our Indian social context are considered the hub around which a civilization revolves. The children, have been accorded a significant place, in Hindu thought, especially the male child. Male children are considered significant in the Indian traditional family system. They are considered the actual heir in a family. Even the historians and the sociologists in their different works write about the status of a male child as the actual heir. One of the sociologists Hans Nagpaul says;

The child is considered as living evidence of the successful continuation of the family; religious traditions favour the presence of at least one male child in the family, but girls are loved nonetheless.

The teaching of the individual duties with regard to the family’s cohesion starts early, but at the same time the child grows in an atmosphere of protection, security and affection. The traditional position of woman in the Indian family system has been portrayed as that of ‘obedience, sacrifice and service’. The women played an important role for the up-bringing of the children in the family. Paul Welty says;

The wife has a great deal to say about the up-bringing of the children, their work and play, and their future employment and marriage and she exerts a strong influence in the management of the house. It is the women of India who transmit to the
It was generally believed that the woman played an important role in the upbringing of the children and cared for their playful activities. Not only this the woman also played an important role in shaping their future life and making serious efforts for their employment as well. It is the woman, whether she happens to be the mother or the grandmother, who equip their sons and grandsons with the old legends of India and also provide them the religious beliefs and instructions. Thus the children grow under the strict guidance and care from the family members, especially the mother and the grandmother, who exert themselves for the betterment and welfare of their children.

R.K. Narayan projects the consciousness of these particular features of the Indian scene. The mothers and the grandmothers looked after their children's interests and this was the primary duty of the mothers and grandmothers since only the male child was considered as the legal heir in the traditional Indian social set up. The families which had no male children, such families had no hopes in their furtherance or continuation of the families and their plight was pathetic one. However, in the traditional social
set up, the females were not considered fit as males for the continuity of their social obligations.

In the Traditional Indian family system the children are looked after not by the fathers but by the mothers and the grand mothers. The mother of the child plays a vital role in the upbringing of the child and she is very much concerned about the health, care and education of her son. She is fully conscious towards her social responsibility of caring for her son. She not only ensures the basic needs of her children but also she is also very much concerned about the future prospectus of her son. It is not the mother of the child alone that plays a vital role in the upbringing of her child but the grandmother too is very much concerned for the grand sons in the house. She teaches moral lessons to her grand sons. In the traditional family system the grand mothers used to tell stories of bravery and honesty of the kings to equip their grandsons for the proper knowledge of the social heritage of the ancient Indian social milieu. On the other hand, the children too had a special place for their grandmothers and they even slept with the grand mothers. They had a deep rooted love and affection for their grandmothers. Thus in the proper guidance of the mother and the grandmother a child grows in the society having the full knowledge about the moral teachings and the social heritage of the Indian social milieu. These
moral teachings provided a basic structure to the children at the early stage. In the second phase, the mother and the grand mother had a shaping effect on the development of the child. When the child grows up and when he is fully aware about the social milieu, the female sex had also a liking that their son or the grandson gets married to a girl who is beautiful and fulfils all the requisite conditions to become a successful bride keeping in view the social norms.

R.K.Narayan in most of his novels depicts and reflects the folk wisdom that the children and the elderly women in the house have been closest to each other. Even in today's life, psychologists have proved that the young and the old put together complement each other's needs. This truth has also been depicted by R.K.Narayan in *Swami and Friends*. Both the granny and Swami are closest to each other and this reflects the consciousness of the traditional grand mother and her liking of her grandchildren depicts that the granny had a deep rooted love towards Swaminathan and on the other hand, Swaminathan too had a special place in his heart for his granny.

In *Swami and Friends* we notice that the mother is exclusively and particularly devoted to the well being of the male members especially the children in the family. She takes every care for the better future and career
of Swaminathan and when Swaminathan loafs in the afternoons, she reports the matter to her husband. She is afraid that her son will die of sun stroke if he keeps on roaming like this in the afternoons. Thus she ensures by making a complaint to her son that Swaminathan shall not roam in the afternoons and will do his home work. The mother also reflects her consciousness towards the upbringing and welfare of her son through another instance. At one time Swaminathan was not feeling well and was suffering from fever. She requested her husband not to send Swaminathan to school, since he was not feeling well. For the sake of the welfare of her son, she is even ready to swear for her son’s betterment. Thus we notice that the children are considered as hub in the traditional Indian family and almost every member especially the mothers have a deep attachment for looking after their son. Even when Swaminathan is in an improved state of health, the mother does not like to permit her son to go outside the house but Swaminathan made a strong request to permit him to go. Here R.K.Narayan projects fact that the mother had a deep sense of dedication of service and sacrifice for the welfare of her children.

In the traditional Indian social system the children were considered as the centre of attraction and the whole of the family revolved round the activities of the children. Almost every member had a sense of deep
attachment for the children especially the mother and the grandmothers. The atmosphere of the house turns gloomy when Swaminathan disappears from the house all of a sudden. As a result of this, the mother lost her senses since Swaminathan was the apple of their eyes and Swaminathan too had a deep rooted love for his mother and his mother too could not pull on without Swaminathan. She makes a request to her husband to bring back Swaminathan;

..... The only tranquil being in the house was the youngest member of the family, whose soft breathings came from the cradle, defying the gloom and the heaviness in the house 6.

The place of Swaminathan in the family was considered very important and the very presence of Swami in the house had vanished the gloom and the darkness in the house. By leaving the house, Swaminathan had created a vacuum in the house, which could not be filled unless Swaminathan was restored. Thus the mother of Swami, who had a deep attachment to Swaminathan makes humble requests to her husband to restore Swami and otherwise, it would not be possible for her to pull on further because Swami had filled a gap of tranquillity in the house by taking birth in the family and Swaminathan had become a part of their lives and hence the departure of Swaminathan from the house was unbearable for the mother.
At last, we notice that when Swaminathan returns back to the house the gloomy and shady atmosphere of the house is turned into laughter and happiness.

We also notice that R.K. Narayan projects beautifully the deep relationships between a traditional Indian mother and her son. Swaminathan has also deep love for his mother. A new baby is yet to come in the Swaminathan's house and Swaminathan's mother was not in a position to attend to him in the last days of her delivery and due to this, Swaminathan felt uncomfortable;

Mother had been abed for two days past. Swaminathan missed her very much in the kitchen, and felt uncomfortable without her attentions. He was taken to her room, where he saw her disheveled and pale on her bed. She asked him to come nearer. She asked him why he was looking emaciated and if he was not eating and sleeping well. Her appearance depressed him. He wriggled himself from her grasp and ran out.

Swaminathan without his mother's presence in the kitchen feels uncomfortable and he does not receive her attentions at this stage. After seeing the condition of his mother, he feels unhappy. The mother of Swaminathan at this stage feels that Swaminathan is not properly looked after and she feels concerned for it. Thus the place of child in the traditional Indian society is like a nucleus and without the presence of the child, the house is gloomy and the family members are put in a pathetic condition and
without a child they feel degraded in the society from another point of view as well. Hence the presence of a child in the house is utmost necessary and plays a vital role in the Indian traditional family system.

Thus although having been bed ridden the mother of Swaminathan is worried about the health care and the other issues related to Swaminathan. Not only this when a new baby takes birth in the family, she tries to ensure that proper care is taken of her son, Swaminathan. She wants to keep her son close to her so that Swaminathan is not ignored on the arrival of a new baby in the house. The mother of Swaminathan is not running away from her moral duties and takes no chance in the proper upbringing of her child inspite of the fact that she was bed ridden. Thus we notice that the child plays a vital role in the functioning of a traditional Indian family and the child especially the male is looked after with utmost care and brought up in such a manner that he is rendered credible to shoulder the responsibilities the household duties at his entry into the grahsthya ashram. Moreover, the male child in the family in the Indian social milieu was considered the sole legal heir of the father in the early Thirties in the Indian social system. Thus the novel reflects the consciousness of the traditional mother in the Indian social milieu, who has too sole objective to look after her husband and her children. In the character of Swaminathan’s mother, R.K.Narayan
has depicted the traditional mother, who can not be separated from her children and at the time of leaving of the house by Swaminathan, she does not take food and the house is turned gloomy and she makes every effort to get her son restored and makes strong requests to her husband to get her son back in any case and it is only when Swaminathan comes back, the house is full of laughter and so is the case with Swaminathan that he feels happy in the company of his mother and the grand mother.

The novel also projects consciousness of the place of grand mother 'granny' in Swami and Friends. Swaminathan has a deep love for his granny and the granny too has deep love for her grand son Swaminathan. Like a traditional grand mother, granny used to tell the stories from the past social life. Like traditional grannies her exclusive job seems to relate stories from religious books to Swami. The grand children like Swaminathan in the traditional Indian social system had also a deep rooted love and even found solace in the company of the granny;

.... with his head on his granny's lap, nestling close to her, Swaminathan felt very snug and safe in the faint atmosphere of cardamom and cloves.

After the time of evening meal, Swaminathan used to sleep in the bed of his granny and the granny not only told her grand son moral stories but she also enriched the knowledge of her grand son of the past heritage of the
Indian social milieu. The male child was not only looked after by the mother but he was also cared by the grand mother too. Granny too ensured that her grand son did not waste time in the useless activities outside the house and she tried to keep her grandson in the house so that he may not loaf in the afternoons and even offered him three paisa on this account. But too much care taken by the grand mother and the mother had given a long rope to Swaminathan, at times he did not even listen to them;

Granny was sitting up in her bed. ‘Come here, boy’, she cried as soon as she saw him. ‘I can’t. No time now’. ‘Please I will give you three paise’, she cried. Swaminathan ignored the offer and dashed away... ‘Are you going to loaf about in the sun?’

The granny as well as the mother were much concerned about the health of Swaminathan but at any of the times, Swami did not pay any heed to their requests and ran away from the house without any permission either from the parents or the granny. At another instance too, Swaminathan ignores the request of his grandmother for bringing a lemon;

Without condescending to say yes or no, Swaminathan held out his hand for the coins and took them. Granny said, ‘You must come before I count ten’... This imposition of a time-limit irritated him. He threw down the coins and said, ‘If you want it so urgently, you had better go and get it yourself’.

But after giving a second thought to the rejection of the request of the granny, Swaminathan feels that by rejecting the request of his granny, he
has not done a good thing since she cared very much for him but he has
gone against the wishes of his grand mother and he should not have rejected
the request;

But now, all the excitement and exhilaration of the play being
over, and having bidden the last 'good night', he stood in the
Grove and Vinayaka Mudali Street junction, as it were face to
face with his soul. He thought of his grand mother and felt
guilty.

Here we notice that in the beginning Swaminathan was behaving like
an impulsive child when he rejected the request of his grand mother for
bringing a glass of lemon juice when she had even offered three paise on
this account. But we notice that since Swaminathan had a deep attachment
to his granny, he feels that he had not done a good thing in rejecting the
request of the granny and feels guilty of at the end of the match and this
depicts the consciousness of a child who has deep rooted love for his
grandmother, who had equally left no efforts to look after the proper
educating and upbringing of Swaminathan.

This novel also projects consciousness of the general impression that
the school teachers discriminated on the basis of caste and religion. The
Hindu students were not properly treated by the Christians as equal to them
and they had even called abuses against the Hindu Gods. Since
Swaminathan was a Hindu student and as a result of this, he was
discriminated against by the Christian teachers. The Scripture teacher Ebenezer had called Hindus as idiots and said:

‘Oh wretched idiots!’ the teacher said, clenching his fists. ‘Why do you worship dirty, lifeless, wooden idols and stone images? Can they talk? No. Can they see? No. Can they bless you? No. Can they take you to heaven? No. Why? Because they have no life. What did your gods do when Muhammad of Gazni smashed them to pieces, trod upon them, and constructed out of them steps for his lavatory? If those idols and images had life, why did they not parry Muhammad’s onslaughts?’

Here we notice projection of the consciousness that in the pre-independence period, the society was discriminated on the caste and religion basis. Even the schools were infected with this disease. The teachers also discriminated on these lines with the students. Swaminathan being a Hindu was discriminated against by the teachers. The Christian teacher hurled abuses on Hindu gods and considered them inferior. For them the Christianity was the only important religion and on this Scripture master says:

“Now see our Lord Jesus. He could cure the sick, relieve the poor, and take us to heaven. He was a real God. Trust him and he will take you to heaven; the kingdom of heaven is within us’. Tears rolled down Ebenezer’s cheeks when he pictured Jesus before him.... Did our Jesus go gadding about with dancing girls like your Krishna?... Did our Jesus practise dark tricks on those around him?”
As per the views expressed by the Scripture master, it is the Christianity which can cure the sick people and Jesus was the only real God who can help the people by granting them nirvana and Ebenezar had a deep rooted love and respect for their God. In the character of Swaminathan R.K.Narayan reflects the child psychology who is deeply rooted to the religious beliefs and customs. Swaminathan could not tolerate the insults of the Hindu Gods. When Ebenezar criticized the Hindu Gods, Swaminathan could not keep himself mum for the insults of the Christian teachers;

Swaminathan's blood boiled. He got up and asked, 'If he did not, why was he crucified?' Swaminathan put to him another question, 'If he was a god, why did he eat flesh and fish and drink wine?' As a brahmin boy it was inconceivable to him that a god should be a non-vegetarian.

Here we notice that R.K.Narayan reflects the consciousness of a brahmin boy and he also alleges the God of the Christians by making counter allegations. It is but natural that the Hindus have deep rooted love and affection to their Gods and they can not see that their Gods are lashed with unjustified allegations and reacting to such allegations they also make a retaliation to counter their attacks. Here we also notice that Narayan presents the motivated teachings in the early thirties and the reaction there to through his consciousness towards the happenings in the Indian social milieu.
Swaminathan not only counter attacks the allegations and abuses hurled by the Scripture master but the factual position is also brought to the notice of his father. Thus childhood activities of Swami have been forcefully presented by R.K.Narayan and we get a clear image of the social religious convictions of Hindus as well as Christians. R.K.Narayan has depicted the consciousness of religious differences and people being narrow minded and critical of other's faith.

While depicting the childhood and the adolescence activities, R.K.Narayan seems to be critical of the motivated teachings. Through *Swami and Friends*, R.K.Narayan brings alive picture of the Indian School boys with their day to day life and the behaviour of the teachers. This novel projects the reality of the school boys and their liking and disliking. The relations with other students, parents and others have been summed up by him in this novel. Swami's relations with his doting granny have been specifically elaborated by R.K.Narayan in this novel as discussed earlier. The quarrels, his idleness, his home work, his examinations, his running away from home have all been superbly elaborated by R.K.Narayan. Through the projection of Swami's life of a school boy and his related activities, Narayan has communicated the life of Malgudi.
As may be seen in present society, Swami, a young boy, seeks excitement in the company of his friends around whom revolves the wheel of youth power. The novelist traces the childhood and adolescence activities in Swami and his friends and the aspirations, frustrations of the young school boys as their sensitive minds and hearts encounter oppression, injustice and exploitation at various levels. In particular in Swami and Friends, we notice that the things fascinate the eye of the young, enchant their soul and cast a spell on their vivid imagination.

R.K. Narayan while dealing with the childhood activities of Swami, also brings forward the general perception of discrimination between the Hindu students and the Christian students. The Christian teachers even hurled lot of abuses on the Hindu gods. At the ill treatment of Swami by the Scripture teacher, Swami brings tears in his eyes.

We notice that Swaminathan’s father had also his deep affiliations in the Hindu religion and believed in the Hindu gods and he could not bear the insult meted out by the Scripture master and wrote a letter to the headmaster for further necessary action and query:

..... I hear that he is always most insulting and provoking in his references to the Hindu religion. It is bound to have a bad effect upon the boys. This is not the place for me to dwell upon the necessity for toleration in these matters.... The one conclusion that I can come to is that you do not want non-
Christian boys in your school.... Albert Mission School is not the only school that this town, Malgudi, possesses.¹⁵

Through the depiction of the character of Swaminathan’s father, we notice that R.K.Narayan has projected the consciousness of a traditional father, who has deep regards for the Hindu religion. He does not feel happy by sending his son to this school, since he had already having his notions that the Christian teachers do not regard the students equal. But they are discriminated on the basis of caste and religion. He can not tolerate such type of misbehaviour by the teachers with the students and makes a query whether they want non-Christian boys in their school or not. He further adds that if the Headmaster does not feel inclined to get the matter sorted out, he will certainly not keep Swaminathan at the Albert Mission School and there is no paucity of the schools in Malgudi. Thus we notice that Narayan reflects the consciousness of a father who is very much attentive to such crucial issues and he has deep regards in the Hindu religion. Through this incident, R.K.Narayan wants to depict that the children played a vital role in the traditional family and it was the moral duty of the parents to look after the proper schooling and upbringing of their wards and ensure that their wards are well treated at school too. Swaminathan’s father had to
interfere in the matter when his son was discriminated by the teachers of the school.

Not only through relationships of Swaminathan with the teachers in the school but also reflecting the relations of Swaminathan with his classmates, parents and granny, R.K. Narayan has depicted the social consciousness of a school boy at great length. The reverberations of the school boys, their frustrations, their way of thinking and dealing with other aspects has been presented by R.K. Narayan in *Swami and Friends*. The preparations for the examination and arranging of the pens, inkpots, boards by an ordinary school boy depicts the consciousness of Swaminathan in particular and the average school boy in general.

The consciousness of the folk beliefs of the school boys in the Indian milieu has also been depicted by R.K. Narayan in the novel under reference. The alchemist coachman who could turn copper into silver and even gold has assured Swaminathan:

The coachman's process of minting higher currency was this: he had a special metal pot at home in which he kept all base copper coins together with some mysterious herb (whose name he would not reveal even if he were threatened with torture). He kept the whole thing, he said, buried in the ground\(^{16}\).

While presenting such type of activities, R.K. Narayan brings forward that people had great faith in the black art. This novel also presents the
consciousness of people's faith in superstitions. This faith also influenced the children too. Swaminathan in this novel is eager to use magic when his request for some money is not granted by the parents. He asks money from his granny and subsequently from his father but all in vain and thus he had been left with no other alternative but had a belief in the magic and yearned for the money he required for himself:

He sometimes believed that he could perform magic, if only he set about it with sufficient earnestness. He also remembered Ebenezar's saying in the class that God would readily help those that prayed to him.¹⁷

Thus for the fulfilment of his needs, he even wishes to adopt magic to get some money to meet his personal requirements. We, through Swaminathan, have an insight into the rhythms of the young consciousness through this novel. The boy's psychological quickness, the cool, untroubled child's nature and the adolescence have been projected by R.K.Narayan in this novel.

R.K.Narayan in Swami and Friends projects the consciousness of religious convictions of the people in general and children in particular. Since the Christian teacher Ebenezar had totally discarded the Hindu gods and their importance in society, the Hindu pupils had a great faith in the Hindu gods and they were quite in different at the treatment of Hindu gods
by the Christian teachers and when Ebenezar says that Hindu gods are nothing and only made of clay they make a protest against such unjustified views expressed by the teachers.

In the traditional Indian culture, there existed caste system and on the basis of that the lower caste people were discriminated against by the upper caste people who considered themselves superior. Social historians and scholars have substantiated that there existed caste system in India. Hans Nagpaul says;

..... the old values still persist and influence the lives of the people; caste is still an important factor in how people deal with each other various taboos, prohibitions, and ideas of pollution still maintain a wide social distance between certain castes.

We feel that there is some autobiographical element in Swami & Friends. P.S.Sundaram contends that Swami's experiences in Albert Mission School reflect the experiences of R.K.Narayan himself as a school boy.

Swami & Friends also projects the consciousness of the people who participated in the Freedom Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi in a peaceful way. The people of India displayed their courage in seeking freedom for their country. The young played a vital role in the freedom movement. School boys like Swaminathan and his friends reflect another
significant component of the social consciousness of the age. They are much influenced by the speakers, who inspire the Indians to participate in the struggle movement for the attainment of the independence. The patriotic feelings are generated in all sections of the society in general but the young in particular;

To Swaminathan, as to Mani, this part of the speech was incomprehensible. But five minutes later the speaker said something that seemed practicable: 'Just think for a while.... Let every Indian spit on England, and the quantity of saliva will be enough to drown England....‘Gandhi Ki Jai’, shouted Swaminathan involuntarily deeply stirred by the speaker’s eloquence at this point.19

Thus, R.K.Narayan has depicted the patriotic enthusiasm in the younger generation for the attainment of the freedom struggle. For the successful implementation of their campaign against the Englishmen, they staged demonstrations and even they decided to boycott the English goods;

For the rest of the evening Swaminathan was caught in the lecturer’s eloquence; so was Mani. With the lecturer they wept over the plight of the Indian peasant; resolved to boycott English goods, especially Lancashire and Manchester cloth, as the owners of those mills had cut off the thumbs of the weavers of Dacca muslin, for which India was famous at one time..... And Swaminathan was going to mete it out by wearing only Khaddar, the rough homespun.19(a)
This obviously reflects the keenness and the enthusiasm with which the young jumped to the cauldron of action for the cause of the nation and R.K.Narayan has depicted the feelings of the young children through the projection of Swaminathan and Mani. Since they are having their deep respect for the mother land and try to get their mother land free from the clutches of these people. For this they adopt the path of non-violence by boycotting the English made cloth. They like their home made cloths although it was rough, yet they felt proud of wearing the clothes made of cottonyarn. Cruelty of the English people have been depicted by R.K.Narayan and they have been projected as such a sort of person who can even cut the thumbs of the Indian weavers, for their petty interests. Resultantly Swaminathan and his friends make a strong protest against such cruel people by adhering to the path of non-violence shown by Mahatma Gandhi. Swaminathan was so patriotic that for the motherland he threw the cap which was not Indian and somebody asked him;

‘Young man, do you want our country to remain in eternal slavery?’ ‘No, no’, Swaminathan replied. ‘But you are wearing a foreign cap’. Swaminathan quailed with shame. ‘Oh, I did not notice’, he said, and removing his cap flung it into the fire with a feeling that he was saving the country.20

Here we notice that Swaminathan has now turned purely as a true Indian, who respects the Indian made goods and discards the foreign made
articles. In the feelings of Swaminathan and his friends, R.K. Narayan depicts the consciousness of a true Gandhian and the consciousness of young generation.

R.K. Narayan has also revealed another important facet of the social consciousness in *Swami and Friends*. The people like Rajam’s father has an urge to cloak their economic status from others. He is the Superintendent of Police and also he belongs to the Indian social milieu. But he has no Indianness in his heart and when there is protest against the Englishmen, he is shown as heading the police force irrespective of the fact that he is part and parcel of the Indian nation. Although he belongs to the same social stratum, yet for his petty gains, he tries to foil the freedom struggle. But Swami felt a stroke when he finds that the police force is headed by his friend’s father and Swami felt that his friend’s father was a traitor, who was helping the Britishers to curb the agitation moved by the Indians to free their country from the clutches of the foreign people. The father of Swaminathan’s friend was head of the traitors, as Swami found to his shock;

When he turned his head Swaminathan saw to his horror that it was Rajam’s father! Swaminathan could not help feeling sorry that it should be Rajam’s father. Rajam’s father to be at the head of those traitors.\textsuperscript{21}
After seeing that Rajam’s father was heading the police force, Swami had gathered a bad impression that our own country men are helping the Britishers to curb the agitation being moved by the Indians in a peaceful manner and he could not imagine and expect his own friend Rajam’s father is one of those traitors who are trying to curb the peaceful agitation. In the case of Swaminathan, we notice that he is supported by his parents for his actively participating in the freedom struggle. His father also believes in Swadeshi:

‘You should have knocked him down. I bought the cap and the cloth for your coat on the same day in the Khaddar Stores. If any man says that they are not khaddar, he must be blind’.... And you may also tell them that I won’t have a paisa of mine sent to foreign countries. I know my duty.’

The parents not only approve the involvement of their son in the sacred task of getting their motherland freed from the foreigners but they also repose full faith in the cloth ‘khaddar’ made in their own country. But purchasing the foreign cloth, they are no more interested to waste their hard earned money and give the money to the foreigners. Here we notice that there is a strong feeling in the Indians for their mother land, yet there are some persons who have ignored their moral responsibility towards their nation. They give much weight to their economic status rather than the patriotic feelings towards their country. Rajam’s father is one of such
people who have gone against the expectations of the people. Swaminathan
is strongly against such people and he tells his father;

‘The Deputy Superintendent is a butcher’, he said as he went
into change... as he recollected the picture of Rajam’s father
looking at his watch, grimly ticking off seconds before giving
orders for massacre23.
Not only this, the consciousness of a young child is depicted by
R.K.Narayan through certain other incidents too. The childish feelings have
been projected by R.K.Narayan in detail. For example, we notice that when
Swami is apprehensive of his standard of living, at the time when Rajam is
to visit him. To conceal his actual standard of living, he sought his father’s
room, which was comparatively neatly arranged. This was all due to
welcome his extra ordinary friend;

He went to his father and said : ‘Father, I want to ask
something’. Father looked up from the papers over which he
was bent. ‘Father, I want your room’. ‘What for?’ ‘I have to
receive a friend’, Swaminathan replied. ‘You have your own
room’, Father said. ‘I can’t show it to Rajam’. ‘Who is this
Rajam, such a big man?’ ‘He is the Police Superintendent’s
son’. He is - he is not ordinary.24

The instinct to do well in examinations whether one has worked for
them or not has existed perhaps in all times and climes. Students coming
even from families with impeccable credentials betray this weakness.
R.K.Narayan conveys social consciousness of this in his own inimitable
Mani approaches the school Clerk with a bundle of fresh brinjals a week before his examination because;

There was a general belief in the school that the clerk was omniscient and knew all the question papers of all classes.²⁵

But when the school clerk denied having any knowledge of the question papers, Mani used flattery. Narayan, whose view of boyhood is by no means rosy eyed, equally brings to light juvenile self centredness, vanity, snobbery, insensitivity, callousness and cruelty, at several places. Narayan not only enjoyed his own childhood but he has also watched the childhood of his daughter as he took care of her after his wife’s death. After the death of his wife Rajam, R.K.Narayan was placed in a state of gloom. In a letter written to Graham Greene he has indicated his state of mind;

My wife passed away a fortnight ago, having been laid up for weeks and weeks with typhoid. With the best medical help and nursing she could not be saved. The world appears very vacant and vague now and I too feel dead. My child is a little over three years and she is only my link with life: I am looking after her with the help of my mother and brothers.²⁶

After the death of Rajam, the wife of R.K.Narayan, the novelist had to shoulder the responsibility of bringing up his daughter. In the absence of his wife, R.K.Narayan had to devote more and more time for the upbringing of his daughter. By this close association of the novelist with his daughter, we notice that R.K.Narayan is well aware of child psychology and as a
result of this, he deals with child psychology in a penetrating way and unfold the hidden instincts of the child psychology in his different works of art especially *Swami and Friends*. He not only devoted a great length of time to his daughter but also amused her so that she may not remember her mother. Thus having the practical knowledge about the psychology of children and their adolescence activities, we find the playing, giggling, mischief making children itching to come out of his pages. In *Swami and Friends*, Swami a young teenager, Somu, the monitor, Mani mighty Good For Nothing; Sankar, the most brilliant boy of the class; Samuel, the Pea, Rajam, the fresh arrival all these children win the hearts of the readers for their childhood and adolescence activities. Narayan, with his characteristic empathy, puts himself into their personalities, understand them fully and delineates them exquisitely.

Swaminathan believes that by praying to Gods, a cardboard box full of pebbles could be converted into coins and gets disappointed when nothing happens, it is the same wild imagination gone astray, untouched by decision or reality, in the to-day’s life also we can see such type of thinking in the school going children. The simplicity of the school going children and then the awareness of sense of reality maturing them in the process.
Thus we notice that Narayan has closely seen and read child psychology after the death of his wife and he has devoted a large amount of time in the company of his daughter Hema. Hence he has developed an insight into the behaviour of children, thinking and their frustrations. His consciousness has been enriched by the company of his daughter and by using this experience, R.K.Narayan depicts the child psychology in clearer terms in his novels. This novel is full of perceptions about children which are so convincingly believed in by the people that they have become a sort of folk wisdom: the young are simple, gullible, credulous, imaginative. Thus we notice that Swaminathan played a vital role in the family and every member of the family was very much concerned about his well being and a great fuss is made over the education of Swaminathan. Every member in the family feels that Swaminathan should acquire good education and he should not loaf in the afternoons rather he should do his home work while in the house. Every care is being taken for fulfilling the needs of Swami. In our social set up, we notice that for the well being and proper education of the children, a great fuss is made by the parents and they get their wards admitted to schools of high repute. Thus R.K.Narayan through his consciousness towards the children world has depicted their likings, wishes, intentions, fears and their frustrations in clearer terms.
R.K. Narayan also depicts the vital role of children in *The Dark Room*. Like every parent, Ramani too is aware that his son acquires proper education and we notice that when Babu is not feeling well and is suffering from fever, he is asked by Ramani to go to school. Savitri, wife of Ramani makes a request to her husband not to send Babu to school. But he does not agree and says:

"You are too ready with your medical certificate. Babu, get up! Don't miss your school on any account"... leave the training of a grown up boy to me.  

Ramani does not compromise at the point of giving education to his son. Although the son is suffering from fever, yet he is asked by his father to go to school. But on the other hand, we notice that Savitri has a deep rooted love with her son Babu and hence she makes a request to her husband not to send his son to school. But he flatly refuses to agree with his wife. He is least interested to compromise on this issue even with his wife. Here we notice that R.K. Narayan has depicted the consciousness of a traditional father, who is very much concerned about the schooling of his son and he does not expect his son to miss the school on any account. We notice that the parents of Babu are very much concerned about the proper upbringing of Babu and they are much concerned that he acquires good education. He even does not agree with his wife to retain Babu even for a single day at
home. The consciousness of parents reflect that they are very much concerned about the education and proper upbringing of their wards.

Savitri had her moral responsibility to look after the children and like most of the people in a society, a great fuss is made by the parents over the education of their children. Savitri gets her son Babu prepared before going to school and after proper dressing he is sent to school by Savitri;

Babu dressed and slunk off to school. Savitri gave him a tumbler of milk and saw him off.28

Savitri is also very much concerned about the proper upbringing of her daughters too and she prepares lunch for her daughters who come to the house during the recess period;

The clatter of the one o'clock bell from the Extension Elementary School reached her drowsing mind and woke her up. It was the recess hour and her two daughters, Sumati and Kamala, would be here presently.... Savitri went to the kitchen to mix curd and rice for the girls. Just as she was opening the kitchen cupboard she heard foot-steps in the hall and almost immediately Kamala, a plump little girl with a springy pigtail, burst into the kitchen... Where is Sumati? "You have got to eat the whole of it. I mixed only a little.29

Savitri is very much concerned about the health care of her children and she does not run away from adhering to her moral duties inspite of the fact that the views of Ramani and his wife are quite opposite to each other.
But still being a traditional mother she is utmost concerned for the welfare of her children.

Child psychology has been dealt with by R.K.Narayan in this novel at great length. The petty matters of jealousy are depicted by the novelist and we come to know that the elder children do not feel inclined to be in the company of the younger ones. Savitri asks Sumati;

By the way, why don't you keep Kamala with you and see that she does not come running through the streets?" "She does not listen to me, Mother". "But she said you would not allow her in your company". "She is such a nuisance to my friends. She keeps asking everyone for pencils and ribbons. It is disgraceful."

Thus we notice that R.K.Narayan reflects the likings and the dislikings of the children and their way of thinking from their own angle. They become self conscious to their image in their class mates and their juniors. The different attitudes of the younger generation towards their friends, brothers, sisters and parents have all been dealt with by R.K.Narayan in this novel. Savitri takes every care of her children and imparts instructions to the servant before going out of the house for a while;

If the children come from school before I return, give them coffee and tiffin. Babu will come in the evening. He is not quite well. Give him coffee. Don't compel him to take tiffin if he does not want it."
Thus Savitri leaves no efforts to ensure the proper upbringing of her children and is very much concerned about their welfare. In the end of the novel, we notice that when Savitri is away from the house, she feels home sickness and she cannot afford to be away from her children and she feels home sickness due to this very reason;

In the morning Savitri went over to the old man’s house and told him, “I am leaving.” “What has happened?” “I cannot keep away from my children and home.”

In the traditional Indian social set up the mother especially had her deep feelings towards her children and resultantly Savitri too has her deep rooted love for her children. She decides to return back to the house irrespective of the fact that her husband, who is domineering and cynical makes no efforts to restore back his wife Savitri. She could not afford departure from her children any more and hence she returns back to the house.

Thus we notice that the children play a vital role in the family in our traditional family system. The parents took every care in upbringing of their children so that they acquire proper education. Thus through his consciousness towards the social milieu, R.K.Narayan reflects the role of the children in the traditional Hindu society and the parents too leave no chance for the better life of their wards.
R.K. Narayan also deals with the child psychology and their place in the family in *The Guide* too. The childhood and the adolescence activities of Raju, the protagonist have been depicted by R.K. Narayan in this novel. For proper education of Raju, every care is being taken by his parents. A great exercise is performed by the family members in sending him to school. Raju is conscious of the efforts made by his mother;

> My mother fed me early and filled up a little aluminium vessel with refreshment for the afternoon. She carefully puts my books and slate into a bag and slung it across my shoulder. I was dressed in clean shorts and shirt; my hair was combed back from the forehead, with all the curls falling on my nape.\(^{33}\)

R.K. Narayan depicts in this novel that the school where Raju was admitted imparts good education and the father of Raju feels proud of sending his son to this school and Raju's father considered this school as one of the best schools;

> Many students who have passed through the hands of this ancient master are now big officials at Madras, Collectors and men like that....' It was what was called a pyol school, because the classes were held on the pyol of the gentleman's house.\(^{34}\)

On the other hand, Raju's father did not wish to send his son to Albert Mission School since they try to convert the boys into Christians and not only this, they also insult the Hindu Gods and this insult was not expected by his father and hence he treats Albert Mission School as an inferior one.
They discriminate between students on the basis of caste and religion.

Being a father who had his deep roots in Hindu mythology he did not want to send his son to such schools. Like an ordinary boy Raju helps his father at a stall at the Railway Station. Like any boy, Raju has curiosity, which takes him to the higher stage and he has the desire to become rich by any means. Like any other village boy, Raju also is poor at Mathematics;

Then followed arithmetic. Two and two, four; four and three, something else. Something into something, more; some more into less. Oh, God, numbers did give me a headache.... My father left me with the remark, 'I have better things to do of a morning than a genius out of a clay head.'

Like a poor boy, Raju did not know the exact calculations of the goods or items sold to the customers at the Railway platform. In the absence of his father he had to look after the stall, but he was unable to calculate the exact amount of the items sold by Raju and at many times he felt an embarrassing position.

Like any average Indian parent who would like his son to be educated, Raju's father took every care for the betterment of his son and he was a man devoted to certain rules and notions of social ethics and morality;

.... my father was a stern disciplinarian perhaps he was a snob who wanted to brag before others that his son was going to a school. He kept an eye on my movements till I was safely on the road each morning.
Raju’s father is feeling proud of in having a school going son and like a father, kept every movement of Raju under his strict instructions and observations.

A study of R.K.Narayan’s novels in general and those specified in particular reveals that the novelist has captured authentically the diverse nuances of the stage of childhood and adolescence, as perceived by the people at large. His novels throw light on the place of children in the family and the society at large, their interaction with other members of the family, their aspirations frustrations, hopes and fears. His novels thus prove to be valuable chronicles of social consciousness in this respect.
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