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4.1 THE HARVEST

4.2 Later Novels

The last phase of Narayan’s literary career ‘The harvest’ includes later novels ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’, ‘The Vendor of Sweets’, ‘The Painter of Signs’ and ‘A Tiger for Malgudi.’ It reflects religious and cultural glory of Hindu society not only of Malgudi but also of the whole country. All these novels are remarkable because they are termed as the novels of maturity in the realm of fictional imagination. The novels in this phase are based on the well-known Indian myths. They present defeat of the evil and victory of the good. The law of life and the law of karma consciousness are the centres of these novels. The four stages of human life are meaningful which have connotative meaning that is cyclical existence.

The boy’s ride on scooter, serving European food in the hotels and button factory in Malgudi shows that Narayan’s locale, Malgudi is changing. There are also lorries and jeeps for transportation and hydroelectric project on the hills. ‘Family Planning Centre’ in ‘The Painter of Signs’ reflects change of time in Malgudi. In spite of development in different fields Malgudi does not show any change in its basic customs and manners. A way of life and attitude of Raman’s aunt in ‘The Painter of Signs’ is a similar to that of Swami’s Granny in Narayan’s first novel ‘Swami and Friends’. Granny’s decision to leave for Banaras to die has a relevance to the tradition of the ancient times. Hence, it is observed that Narayan’s Malgudi changes in terms of material and economic development but it is untouched by modern life, and thinking. The scientific and materialistic changes are presented by R.K. Narayan against the traditional setting of Malgudi.

The Man-Eater in the form of Vasu the taxidermist is at the centre of the action in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’. The mythical structure of novel is based on the war between ‘sura’ and ‘asura’ and defeat of the asura’s by the God. The crisis in the social and religious life of Malgudi and situations are neatly handled by the novelist by choosing characters appropriately. Narayan’s attempt to give poetic justice to the character is fair which is based on their deeds in the society. In ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ the novel moves around the character of Jagan, the hero who is under the influence of Gandhian myth. It shows relationship between father and Son. The
conflict between tradition and modernity is presented through the relationship between father and son. Jagan, Mali’s father symbolizes traditional fatherhood and Mali his educated son follows the Western lifestyle through his behaviour. The different episodes in ‘The Painter of the Signs’ are combined together in a remarkable style by R. K. Narayan and an ancient legend of the king Shanthanu is used in modern context. The episode of love relationship is presented against the ancient love story of Shanthanu and Ganga. The other three episodes of Raman’s meeting with the lawyer, the bangle-seller and the town hall professor are entertaining. They suggest that even in modern times Malgudi people are not free from superstitions.

The structure of ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’ is mythical. The story of the novel moves around the tiger, Raja. The novelist attempts to combine animal world with human world of Malgudi. The episodes in the novel are related to the animal character Raja and one may observe the spiritual development of Raja through various events. The plot of the novel is circular.

Narayan uses mythological theme of Bhasmasura in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’. The theme of rebellion is exemplified by the novelist through the evil man, Vasu and the death of Vasu leads to the restoration of normal order in Malgudi and Nataraj’s life. The theme of father son relationship in ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ is shaped by Malgudi tradition which leads to present the theme of clash between the generations. Raman in ‘The Painter of Signs’ remains the focus of the rebellion and Daisy is a champion of women’s rights. The theme of rebellion is portrayed through the love story of Raman and Daisy. The myth of ‘Shantanu-Ganga’ in ‘The Mahabharatha’ has thematic importance. The theme of generation-gap is underlined through Raman’s relationship with his aunt who is a traditional woman. In order to project the theme of renunciation R. K. Narayan offers real sanyasi in ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’. The novelist traces the themes of communal disharmony, conflict between tradition and modernity, and theme of renunciation. The spirit of rebellion is presented through the various episodes of Raja. It also deals with the theme of illusion against reality. Raja’s going back to the forest indicates Narayan’s recurrent theme: the return of the native.

Nataraj and Vasu are two contrasting forces in the form of characterization in ‘The Man- Eater of Malgudi’. They symbolize the ‘sura’ (God) and assura (demon) in
Hindu mythology. The doctrine, victory of the good over the evil is neatly described through these characters by R. K. Narayan. The characters in the present novel have parallels with ‘sura’ and ‘asura’. In ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ Narayan portrays the characters of Jagan and Mali i.e. father and son in the light of tradition and modernity. Jagan symbolises timeless and unchanged values of Malgudi society which have social implications. Mali’s study tour in America, his idea of establishing novel writing machine and his living with Grace without marriage projects his rebellion, which leads Jagan to renunciation.

In ‘The Painter of Sign’ R.K.Narayan presents the characters of aunt, the lawyer, the bangle-seller who believe in the traditional set up of Malgudi. These Malgudi inhabitants do not want to violate the social values of Malgudi. The love pair, Raman is a rationalist who believes in reason and Daisy wants to champion women’s right. Raja is the central character of ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’ who behaves like human beings. A tiger’s story is compared with ‘The Panchtantra’ Raja’s encounters with the hunters in the forest and with the Captain in the circus make him rebel. Under the Master’s influence Raja shows spiritual development in him. Hence, the roles of the characters, the hunters, the Captain, the master, in relation to Raja’s activities are significant.

The view in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ is that Vasu’s death by hammer-fist has resemblance with the death of ‘asura’ which suggests every demon carries seeds of destruction within him. ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ gives an important message that tradition is a base of Indian society and shows a way to the freedom of soul. The cultural dissimilarity is a source of clash between old and new generation. Jagan is a typical Indian father and his son, Mali is a young man carrying new convictions. The world view shows that the best is rewarded and bad is convicted.

The world-view in ‘The Painter of Sign’ is shaped and governed by spirituality and traditional thinking. The socio-economic changes take place during the post-independence period in Malgudi. Man does not change his life because material development can not fulfil the spiritual needs of man. The aesthetic and social values are prominently focused on by R.K. Narayan through the characters of Raman and Daisy. ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’ suggest timeless quality of ancient legend. The presentation of animal world makes the reader of Narayan to enjoy spiritual world.
The novelist presents different moods of an animal through the portrayal of Raja. In ‘Tiger for Malgudi’ animal characters behave like human beings. ‘The Tiger for Malgudi’ displays the spirit of Hinduism and the novel is based on the theme of renunciation.

4.3 PLOT
4.3.1 The Man-eater of Magludi
‘The Man-eater of Magludi’ is a typical novel with Malgudi as its locale. The same fantastic and ironical sequence of events with the solid base of realism, and almost autobiographical accuracy of lower-middle-class life of South-Indian towns, forms the plot of the novel. ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ is stimulated by the plot construction of ‘Mr. Sampath.’ The main character, in the novel, the man-eater, H. Vasu, M.A., taxidermist is caught in the whirlwind of action. The story teller, and feeble sacrificial of the ‘man eater’s’ distinctive attention, is the printer, Nataraj. The state of affairs is recalling of past events of ‘Mr. Sampath’ with Sampath and Srinivas as prototypes. The tone and place of action are caused by destructive, force in ‘The Man-Eater’. It has the constituents of a jovial comedy, an unlawful killing and a parable.

R.K. Narayan’s ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ has mythical structure in which the story is presented against the background of a mythical story. Direct references in the presentation of characters contribute to the mythical structure of the novel. The story of the novel is told by Natraj, owner of the printing press in Malgudi, who leads a peaceful house. The character of Natraj presents his devotion to his profession. Narayan associates Sastri with ancient wisdom. Rangi plays an important part in the protection of Kumar through the spirit of Dharma.

The commencing of ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ is glossy and peaceful. Narayan shows Natraj, peaceful with the world in the pleasant fellowship of his comrades, a poet and journalist. The peaceful life of Natraj in Malgudi is disturbed by demon like Vasu. Mythical elements and references are used from the Hindu mythology which have significant role in the happenings of the story. They give clear understanding about the action as well as characters. The use of myth in the novel contributes to state what is happening in the locale of Malgudi in a better way. The action of the
novel has resemblance with the myth of Bhasmasura. Vasu’s living in the attic and his conduct creates fear in the mind of Natraj and his fellow people. Bringing the dead body of a beast and a dancing girl, Rangi in his room Vasu creates atmosphere of danger. Vasu in the contented life of Malgudians appears with quaint and devilish plans to destroy the Mempi forest of wild animals. Intricacy begins as the conscienceless taxidermist lands himself vigorously in the attic over Nataraj’s printery. The taxidermist’s harsh quest for larger game brings a disorder in the civilian life and the government of Malgudi. As the events pursue one after another in a very quick series, the strain on the mind of Malgudians ascends. Narayan’s skill in using the literary device of contrast mounts the effect. The jeep-drive to Mempi is the amusing incident in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’.

The dreadful behaviour of Vasu, his sex orgies in the attic, his Satanic plan to kill Kumar, the temple elephant shows a strange compound of evil, horror and humour. The unusual texture of the novel evolves out of “a story of growing tension and anxiety in terms of the light situational comedy, it is impossible not to enjoy what happens, and just as impossible not to feel desperately concerned about the outcome of it all.”(West, Anthony. “The New Yorker”) ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ is a technically perfect novel which presents Vasu’s adventures and misadventures. He always denies human values, social status and morals in order to fulfil his personal desires as he brings prostitutes in attic for the satisfaction of sexual urge. His plan of killing Kumar, the temple elephant suggests disorder. Nobody can kill the taxidermist, Vasu but he dies while driving away the mosquitoes on his forehead with the mighty hammer stroke of his own hand. The Bhasmasura legend is the source of influence and the story is based on the general law: ‘Every demon carries within him a tiny seed of self-destruction.’(Narayan, 1961:172) The mosquito is the metaphysical agent of death i.e., Mohini for Vasu, the Bhasmasura.

The novel has a very clear design of order-disorder-restoration of order, which has reference to the Pauranic conflict between sura and asura. The myth has relevance to the plot and it is not accidental. The Bhamasura myth enables the novelist to convey the traditional belief that evil stands for destructiveness. Births and deaths are related to Karma. The powerful demons threaten the heaven which suggests the force of disorder and finally they find defeat leaving the universe peaceful.
Abnormility in Vasu’s behaviour is witnessed in his act of threatening Kumar. It disturbs Nataraj’s peace of mind because he likes pet animals. The myth of Bhasmasura is used as an element of plot construction. Vasu has decided on a devilish plan of shooting Kumar, the temple elephant in the procession. Natraj is surprised to know that the killing has not taken place in the ceremony because the killer Vasu has killed himself with the stroke of his own hammer-fist. This episode reflects that a man of evil thoughts has in him a source of self-destruction which is unfamiliar to him. Vasu possesses characteristics of a rakshasa whose story is described from the myth of Bhasmasura. The death of the taxidermist is an accidental death a coincidence which turns into an anti-climax. The temple elephant, Kumar symbolizes the climax of spiritual conscience that no Hindu would like to kill.

Narayan’s comic vision in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ is light and funny and it is without pathos or tragedy. Humour in the novel is all extending. The novelist uses humour as a literary device to present weakness and the triviality of nature of Vasu. The scene of women’s visit to Vasu’s attic room is full of humour:

I was mistaken in thinking that Rangi was the only woman. I had only to stand there between seven and eight in the morning and it became a sort of game to speculate who would be descending the stairs next. Sometimes a slim girl went by, sometimes a fair one sometimes an in-between type, sometimes a fuzzy haired woman some mornings a fashionable one who had taken the trouble to tidy herself up before coming out. (Narayan, 1961:110-111)

The plot construction is episodic. The original consistency of the plot reveals itself when it is considered in its entirety. The artistic presentation of the theme is presented through the well organization of plot and it enhances the artistic value of the novel. ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ has the most finished plot because all the incidents have been planned with conscious efforts and they lead to the final result. All the characters in the novel have right sort of relationships and are developed with correct references. Everything falls in line to reach the destination—the down-fall of the taxidermist, Vasu.
Except Vasu there are many characters such as the forest officer, the bus-conductor, and driver, the D.S.P., the Inspector of Police, Muthu the adjournment lawyer who appear for a short duration and disappear. An anti-hero Vasu is a picaro and an adventurous wanderer who plays many roles and his adventures make the plot loose and episodic. He is a scholar because he took master’s degree in History, Economics, and Literature. Learning everything from his master Vasu becomes a ‘pahelwan’ and gives shows at market fair in the villages and in the town halls in the cities and he makes a lot of money. When he is unable to get permission of shooting big game in the Mempi forest, begins to play he plays the role of a poacher and shoots the wild animals. Vasu is a womanizer whose attic is frequently visited by Rangi and other such women. His evil plan even to shoot Kumar, the temple elephant presents him as a misadventurer.

Fantasy in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ is important for the novel and its main character, Vasu. The black-haloed, hammer fisted and bull-necked bully triple M.A. with a stormy past occupies a leading place in the plot. The fantastic occurrences obtain worthiness of belief in regard to the demonic figure. His death is fantastic in its mythical urge. Sastri repeats references to the mythical story of Bhasmasura to elucidate devilish disposition of mind of Vasu and his last act of self-ruin. The allegorical frame work of the novel, ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ is artistic and compatible because of its sustained myth. Peace and happiness from Malgudi have gone out as the diabolical Vasu lands in Malgudi.

It is the fight relentlessly waged by the cult of materialism against all the laws of nature. But the end the novel demonstrates the triumph of Nature. The fight is typically modern, hence the relevance of the novel to our time. (Rao, 1968:38)

Malgudi is seen tension relieved in the last four chapters of the novel with scenes of Nataraja’s domestic life. The temple scene looked at in a mental haze by Nataraj, his visit to Vasu’s attic at night, terrible glimpses of voluptuous Rangi, and unexpected destruction of tension in the death of Vasu contribute to the most skilfully carried out long sequence by Narayan.
4.3.2 The Vendor of Sweets

‘The Vendor of Sweets’ has Narayan’s wellknown and favourite milieu-the family and the plot moves round the character, Jagan and is constructed on the theme of father-son relationship. The plot is stimulated by ‘The Financial Expert.’ Margayya-Balu relationship in ‘The Financial Expert’ shapes the secondary ring of the plot. The Jagan-Mali relationship plays a vital role in the construction of plot in ‘The Vendor of Sweets.’ The dramatic element in the novel is caused by the conflict between tradition and modernity.

The plot structure of ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ is episodic. The novel is divided into two parts. The first part deals with realistic presentation of the characters. Jagan and Mali and their relationship as father and son. The plot of novel moves round the character of Jagan, has lost his wife, Ambika and as a widower his only interest is his son and his future life. Jagan’s way of living is traditional and orthodox and his son’s mode of life is modern and he is under the influence of Western civilization. Jagan’s dream about his son’s better future shows his way of positive thinking and his fatherhood which has remarkable place of in the Indian family.

The episode regarding Mali’s education shatters Indian fatherhood but shows him in accepting career in challenging profession. His son Mali does not want to continue his study because he desires to become a writer. As a typical Indian father Jagan not only agrees with his son’s thought but also thinks over it. In order to bring his thought into action Mali cuts the coupon of competition and dreams to begin his literary career by winning first prize in the contest for novels. Narayan presents Mali as a student who has strong will power which we witness in the Indian context.

Mali’s plan to go to America to learn the art of story writing is an interesting episode which leads to the theme of the conflict between tradition and modernity. Jagan’s traditionally shaped mind does not want to send his son Mali to America. He makes Mali to recall Valmiki who has written ‘Ramayana’ in the forest. As an Indian father he does not want his son to pollute his body with wine, meat and women. The future prospects of his son cool down his opposition. When Mali goes to America he feels very proud to tell people about his son’s career and achievements in America.
After coming back to Malgudi with his wife Grace Mali wants to change present set up of working which indicates his fascination for Western outlook regarding profession. Mali’s plan of purchasing novel writing machine gives a fantastic turn to the plot of the novel. The Western woman Grace shows her best regards for Jagan as father in law and she tries to adjust with new Malgudi setting. Malgudi is a place where even outsiders can find the best place to live without hesitation and it offers an opportunity for their career.

Jagan does not like his name being mentioned in Mali’s Enterprises by his son. He takes the situation under his control by means of non-violent and uncooperating strategies. The image of Gayatri is a notable scene which has been created by Narayan. It is source of peace to the people. Jagan feels it is a one of the means to him to seek the peace of mind.

In his interview with his son Jagan finds his son Mali and Grace living together without marriage. According to him it is a sin because a marriage ceremony is a religious rite which requires the boon of God. Hence he starts living in isolation on the mountain to snap his contacts with Mali and Grace. This episode strongly focuses on husband wife relationship which is considered as a spiritual union of the two beings of different sex. It also suggests that Indian society does not allow them to live together unless they are married.

Mali is put in the jail on the charge of possessing alcohol which is considered as the violation of law. Jagan’s cousin advises him to get his son released so that he can come again in the flow of life. His eyes are full of tears as the Indian father cannot tolerate such a type of calamity. But he does not want to change his attitude. He says ‘A little prison life won’t harm anyone’. (Narayan, 1967:192) Through this episode Narayan tries to present Jagan a true Gandhian and prophet of truth.

The motivational aspects love and money are noticed in ‘The Vendor of Sweets’. Jagan is very much devoted to the child, Mali from the day he was born. He is seen dependent upon his cousin to know about his son’s future plans which is indicative of his real Indian fatherhood. The morals are preserved as values. Jagan is haunted by Gandhiji’s principle of simple living. But he is obstinate leech for money, who
converts free cash into crisp currency to keep in the loft at home. He has a ‘habitual uneasiness concerning any tax.’ (Narayan, 1967:117) Even after his escape to a jungle a thought of money does not disappear from his mind. He does not forget to carry with him the bank pass-book while going to the Memp forest. The denouement takes Jagan to an unexpected height. A comparison with Margayya on this point suggests itself. The remark, Uma Parmeswaran makes, is highly appreciated:

He starts from the same point as Margayya, with two overwhelming passions, one of which is his son, but he finishes on higher plane. Both as man and father he finds himself—not fully, for most discoveries are sudden in perception on but slow in realization. (Parmeswaran, 1976:80)

Jagan’s slipping away from the situations is an act of realization and consequent renunciation. The story of ‘The Sweet Vendor’ moves to that end. In this connection, V. S. Naipaul comments:

That act of renunciation implies an ordered continuing world. Chaos has come to Jagan’s world; his act is an act of despair; he runs away in tears. (Naipaul, 1977:40)

The novel begins in disorder and gradually shows the strains and struggles of the protagonist for a perfect order. A fast growing town, Malgudi stands for a symbol of India. The locale Malgudi is not immune to the western culture. The conflict in the life of Jagan begins when his son Mali returns from America with the half-American; half-Korean girl Grace. The story of ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ takes a fantastic turn as he tries to persuade Jagan to finance the manufacture of story writing machine.

Mali’s description of machine is the best instance of humorous fantasy. According to him there are four knobs. The first three knobs consist of characters, the plot situation and climax. The story which is made up of characters, situation and climax appears in the fourth knob. The generation gap is wider because of the influence of the West from which Jagan is totally free and his son Mali adheres to it. Even though Jagan lives in the midst of fast growing town, Malgudi he works with the charkha regularly
and has faith in the spirit of god and goddess. Jagan’s unwilling involvement in the fantastic scheme creates tragic-comic clash of the generations and he tries to escape from unpleasant realities to pleasant memories. The use of Narayan’s flashback makes Jagan recall his youthful past.

The circumstances in which he first met his wife, love for and loyalty towards her, the humiliations she had to undergo because they had no child, the pilgrimage to the temple of Santana Krishna, and the boon that came as a male issue. (Sundaram, 1973:111)

Jagan’s sense of perplexity is seen affecting the plot construction. The intrusion of the element of alienation causes the collapse of Jagan’s world and the same is true of the collapse of structural integrity of the plot. The offending alien elements, in the second half of the plot are crude satire, lack of balance between realism and fantasy, and loss of irony.

Narayan in ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ presents Malgudi as a fast growing and developing town which stands for a symbol of India. The novelist is a keen observer of life of the people, their activities and even the weakness of local grasshoppers does not escape of his eyes. According to him the summer in Malgudi scorches everything and even the grasshoppers are unwilling to leave the paltry dark place which is made of useless plants.

4.3.3 The Painter of Signs

Narayan focuses mainly on the narration of human relationship in ‘The Painter of Signs’ which is presented through many mishaps. The myth of Santhanu-Ganga is a source of the plot structure and it also makes the reader to remember the pitiful story of Bhishma who did not marry himself to remain away from the throne of the kingdom. The plot of the novel moves around the modern issue of love between Raman, a common painter of signs and Daisy, incharge of The Family Planing Centre. But they are unsuccessful in getting married. The story of King Santhanu in ‘The Mahabharatha’ is about a beautiful girl who agrees to marry the king on the condition that he is not to question any of her activities when she becomes his wife. The novel
has unbroken continuity of construction. The incidents and episodes help the scheme of the plot.

The novel, ‘The Painter of Signs’ reflects a structural parallel with ‘Waiting for the Mahatma.’ The love-story of Raman and Daisy recalls the Bharati-Sriram love affair in its initial stage. It is sheer chance that the two novels have portrayed the character of the aunt and the old Granny and suggest parallelism. Their role in the life of the protagonist is very important. The novel begins with romantic love and expands its scope to encircle the national movement which is led by Gandhiji. ‘The Painter of Signs’ remains a novel of love with the then popular family planning programme.

The protagonist Raman, a sign painter lives in Malgudi under the supervision of an old aunt a traditional woman. Raman a common Malgudi dweller is an expert in his task of painting and an advocate of the philosophy of colour combination. Raman’s work of painting is appreciated by the Malgudians. He is proud of calligraphy which helps him to produce exact sign in artistic manner. It is a meagre source of income for him to meet both the ends, which also has aesthetic value and social importance in the Malgudi setting. He is used to a moderately pleasant course of life. The growth and change in the town of Malgudi leaves impact on the Malgudi inhabitants and one may witness its result in their progress. In a few years Malgudi has become a large business town and it provides Raman with plenty of business, and supports him to live on with occasional impediments with annoying clients like the bangle-seller. Raman has to struggle against his own mind which is haunted with sex. The ‘fight’ fixes the tone of comic irony which spreads over the entire plot.

The opposition in the attitude of Raman and his aunt towards life indicates a clash between generations. Raman’s life is portrayed in a rational way. He is not interested in the mysteries which have religious source of production. Raman’s aunt is deeply rooted in the traditions of Malgudi whose interest is only to look after the house and to fulfil needs of Raman. She often goes to the temple to recite the prayers and to listen to the old mythical and religious stories. Raman thinks that the Age of reason cannot be approached if there are people like his traditional aunt.
The incident of the old cave-temple priest is the source of fantasy which presents the ancient eccentrics who are rooted in tradition opposed to the spirit of modernity. The young painter is prevented from painting a birth control slogan by the priest on the walls of the temple. It suggests that the Malgudians do not want distortion of the temple building by posters which are painted in different colours.

Narayan portrays Daisy, who happens to be the in charge of the Family Planning Centre. Daisy’s first casual meeting with Raman is very strange because the mind of romantic lovers is full of various fantastic ideas. Amusingly confused condition gives a new turn to the story. Raman’s efforts of disciplining his mind result in humour. The second part of the plot in the novel ‘The Painter of Signs’ highly abounds in comic invention. The Family Planning Programme has to undergo many tense and some ridiculous events.

The episodes, such as the coincidence of love, love at first sight when Daisy visits Raman with a cheque towards payment for Raman’s work commence the love story of the lovers. She has offered him a special advantage of accompanying her which he can not deny. Raman’s going off to Daisy and staying there until after midnight in the part four shows his fulfillment of desire for Daisy. Part three of the novel shows Raman’s depression which is caused by the five paisa message of The Town Hall Professor. The meeting after a long time between Raman and Daisy brings about establishment of harmonious relations. Narayan’s hero Raman is unable to keep himself away from fresh involvement. He finds Daisy looking at him from over the short wall once when he is working in the back yard of his home. The part three closes with Raman’s re-getting meaning and harmony in life.

Raman in his romantic imagination constructs a nest of love for bride who never comes to him and his defiant act of withdrawal is unpithetic but his aunt’s leaving the house because of his love with the Christian girl Daisy adds pathos to Raman’s existing situation. Making food and eating seem to be meaningless jobs to Daisy and she decides to part away. In this situation Raman feels their marriage is only a delusion and wishes they would live together in the next birth. The philosophical acceptance of life saves Raman from his tragic collapse, which is suggestive of the return of the native.
The Malgudi world picturised in ‘The Painter of Signs’ presents a blending of modernity and tradition, convention, reason and superstitions. The three incidents of Raman’s encounters with the launching lawyer, the bangle-seller, and the town hall professor are most entertaining. Raman prepares a signboard painting for the lawyer who starts his career as a lawyer. A superstitious person, the lawyer is guided by his astrologer who has advised him that a left slant is good for his ruling star. Hence, the lawyer wants his name painted in slant letters. The novelist through this episode attempts to show that Malgudi even in the modern times is not free from the clutches of superstitions.

The bangle-seller refuses to accept the sign board painted by Raman as the word ‘cash’ is painted in red colour, thinking that it will “put people off.” The Town Hall Professor’s selling of messages for five paise each is indicative of the Indian prophets. Raman’s message is ‘This will Pass”. The shopman, Chettiar has everything in the shop, does not believe in giving negative answer to any customer. The Town Hall Professor is a local eccentric who goes to the town hall at every evening in a purple gown and delivers noisy speeches to the public on variety of matters. The frustrated second-hand book-seller becomes happy over the designs the book-worms create on the covers and insides. He has developed a theory of his own.

Narayan attempts to observe continuity in the plot construction of the present novel. The incidents and characters are rightly presented in the organization of the plot. Hence ‘The Painter of Signs’ the mature novel presents love story which depicts romantic love, frustration, humour, agony, reconciliation, delusion and disillusionment of love.

4.3.4 A Tiger for Malgudi

Keeping in mind Indian myths and religious parables, Narayan has written ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’, which displays real meaning of Hinduism. It has a mythical source of structure. The religious tradition of the Malgudi is main stream of thinking in the novel and the social awareness is taken into consideration as a backdrop. On watching a tiger with a hermit in the Kubbhmela the idea of writing the novel touches the novelist’s mind. The scene appeals to him because the tiger moves around without any restrictions and does not hurt any person.
The life story of a tiger, Raja is contrasted against the tale of the character in ‘The Panchtantra’ which reflects Narayan’s traditional pattern of the structure. Myth, legend, persons and society are the authentic sources of his creativity. The episodes in the novel leave impact on the human mind because of originality. Narayan has created stories out of the experience of the persons around him and their day today activities in the life in Malgudi. Raja’s behaviour in course of his life is similar to that of the human beings. Hence, the story of the novel revolves around the character of Raja. One may witness fine and consistent cohesion of animal world with the human world of Malgudi. According to R. K. Narayan, the animals also have likes and dislikes, feelings and emotions and taste like human beings despite their structure of the body and class. In the introduction Narayan says, ‘with the right approach you could expect the same response from a tiger as from any normal human being’ (Narayan, 1983:10)

‘A Tiger for Malgudi’ is an autobiography of the tiger, Raja who narrates his life story in an effective way covers the period from the childhood to the old age. He lives freely in the Mempi Forest, where the hunters have caught and killed his family members. The normal and peaceful life of Raja is disturbed by the hunters which indicate disorder. The episode is indicative of revengeful attitude of Raja. His pride does not allow him to remain silent in grief. Raja begins his revenge by eating animals of neighbouring forest. His physical maturity and strength has created fear in the world of animals. Raja can not tolerate insult shown by others and does not waver to chastise his bad wishers.

The two narrators Narayan and Raja contribute to the progress of the tiger’s story. Viewing a subject from various angles Narayan filters it through a number of media and keeps his camera moving backward and forward to get the subject into a new perspective. In a narration of Raja he puts the reader into direct contact with the events as if “the physical impression must precede the understanding of cause.” (Watt, 1980:178)

Narayan shows development of episodes according to the steps of Raja’s life. In his youth Raja struggles with a tigress and produces baby tigers. Once Raja loses tigress and their four cubs because of man’s unfeeling nature which makes him to react in
wilder manner. The effect of surrounding brings a change in his life and he becomes aggressive and wild towards other animals and human beings.

Raja is caught by the Captain and he is sent in the ‘Grand Malgudi Circus’, where he starts playing tricks according to the commands of the Captain. He also gets an opportunity of acting in the film. The relationship between the Captain and Raja gets out of order. The Captain makes use of the metal tongue to control Raja. On the refusal of standing on his hind legs Raja is badly tortured with a whip. Consequently Raja has injured master’s head by hitting his paw against it. He leaves the place and shelters in a building where Raja is influenced by the Master. The wild tiger starts leading spiritual life in Malgudi. The violent tiger wants to get spiritual stability in life. In order to get the peace of mind Raja returns to the forest from where he comes. He begins to live happily by listening to spiritual discourse on ‘Bhagvad Gita’. It indicates R. K. Narayan’s recurrent theme the return of the native. The stages of development in the life of tiger are presented: free and happy life of Raja as a cub, performing artist in the circus, acting in the film in youth and return to the forest in the Master’s company and life in the zoo in the old age. The plot structure of the novel has circular pattern: order-disorder and return of order and of normalcy.

Narayan depended on the Buddhist philosophy of “universal amity” (Chethiamattam, 1969:47) and chose a tiger as his narrator. The novelist draws a parallel from the ‘Panchatantra’ and the Budhist work ‘Jataka’, the beast fables “where animals are presented telling and behaving like men to suggest a satire or point a moral” (Chaitanya, 1977:360)

A story with a realistic action may be planned to present a truth as Narayan states in ‘Introduction’: “deep within, the core of personality is the same in spite of differing appearances and categories, and with the right approach you could expect the same response from a tiger as from any normal human being. (1983:10) Narayan reflects on the “collective unconsciousness” because “this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal.”(1968:3-7)The ethos of Narayan’s fable is of a world and world renunciation and spiritual enlightenment.
Raja, in telling his story is an individual addressing an individual and offers something for reflection. Narayan attempts to escape from distraction of human sympathy by employing an animal as a human actor, a tiger to be specific. He primarily focuses on the action in order to keep the text an object of thought.

The novel ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’ does not have a tightened plot. The incidents like involvement of administrative staff in corruption, language and communal problems, the gospel of non-violence have been beautifully narrated. The instances of corruption in the government offices and school are stated by the novelist. The villagers are exploited by the officers in the government offices. Their disinclination is shown in protecting the villagers from the danger of the tiger. The assistant headmaster can not purchase even a pin unless it is permitted by the officers. They are mainly concerned with personal advantages. The three languages regional, national and international are used to serve the purpose of national integration. The Captain uses these three languages for communicating messages. Malgudi, one may witness is a complete modern place, but Narayan does not give up what is so noble in the grand tradition of Malgudi locale. The incident of rioting is suggestive of communal disharmony.

At another place we went into a rioting mob- groups of people were engaged in a bloodly strife, attacking each other with stone, knife and iron rod and screaming murderous challenges. (Narayan, 1983:156)

Narayan shows that communal tensions have their roots in hatred and intolerance and are outcome of religion. No religion preaches hatred but love and the citizens on the otherhand practice hate. Exploiting religion for political purposes, communalism is utilized to serve political end. Narayan does not go with Russell in his entire condemnation of all religions and argues that religions in India have deserved respect. To him, one cannot condemn Buddha or Christ, the ‘Gita’ or the ‘Dhammapada’, the ‘Quran’ or the ‘Bible’.
4.4 THEME

4.4.1 The Man-Eater of Malgudi

‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ is based on the ancient mythology. By using the myth of ‘Bhasmasura-Mohini’ the novelist renders it in the shape of a modern novel. It explains opposite attitudes to the nature of human life. The mythic episode contributes to describe the theme to invite the attention to the remarkable essence of myth. Narayan as an entertainer observes the life of Malgudi villagers and their social behaviour. He presents conflict between evil forces and traditional culture of Malgudi. R. K. Narayan explores “the problem of good and evil and their roles in human life” (Naik, 1976:65)

Narayan presents the theme of man to man relationship and the theme of the conflict between tradition and modernity in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ through the characters of Nataraj and Vasu. The novelist presents the theme of rebellion through the acts of Vasu. Being rationalist Vasu does not respect values of the Indian tradition. Vasu symbolizes evil through his acts of thoughtless cruelty which creates hatred in the mind of Malgudi villagers regarding him. Nataraj, the printer is portrayed as the representative of the importance of Malgudi tradition and social culture. He has come to Malgudi to create havoc and disturbance in the life of Nataraj and Malgudi. He hunts and stuffs the animals and allows prostitutes to stay in his attic. The taxidermist, Vasu threatens to kill Kumar, a temple elephant, symbolic of sacredness of life values. Vasu and Nataraj portray different faces of India. H. M. Williams says:

‘Vasu represents heroic and violent past, Nataraj the ahimsa of the Jains and Gandhi and the pacifism of Buddha’ (Williams, H.M.: 1976:79)

Nataraj has positive attitude and respect towards traditions and social morals of Malgudi. Living in the company of wife and son Nataraj shows how to practice the traditional way of life. He is presented as the faithful husband and careful father. Vasu, a demon like man denies traditional standards of life and precious family system. Vasu’s behaviour in his room and in the traditional society of Malgudi describes him as a modern Bhasmasura. Showing faithlessness in the Indian woman-
hood he brings prostitutes to the attic to satisfy his sexual desire. Vasu’s determination of killing Kumar suggests an imminent collision between traditional moralist, Nataraj and modern Bhasmasura, Vasu.

Vasu in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ is sketched as the rebellious character who is underlined as an enemy of values. The perfect essence of Rakshasa, Vasu seems to be an example of the ‘demonic lot’ described in the sixteenth chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita*. (Verses 4 to 17) His very appearance is inauspicious in the context of traditional and holy Malgudi society. Vasu’s impious rebellion seems to be tumultuous tempest that intrudes on the saintliness of Nataraja’s Truth Printing Press.

The novel, ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ has pattern of order-disorder and restoration of normalcy where normal order of life is disturbed by temporary disorder but the usual order and peace prevails once again. The ‘Pauranic’ collision of ‘sura’ with ‘asura’ is referred to by R.K.Narayan to make the theme effective. It also persuades Malgudians in the modern situation to believe the philosophy that evil spirit has its own power of self-destructiveness The novelist wants to show the relation of birth and death to ‘Karma’ The rhythm of life returns to Malgudi and Nataraj after Vasu’s death. Jayanta, R. A. says:

> Through the use of Bhasmasura myth Narayan is able to convey in terms of fictional art, the traditional Indian belief regarding evil, its destructiveness and self destructiveness. (Jayanta, 1982:96)

The drawn blue curtain of the printing press stands for order and normalcy. It is as it were a world of eternal calm and peace. But the arrival of Vasu, a taxidermist brings chaos, disorder and tension in the town. Broad shouldered giant Vasu crosses the threshold, “practically tearing aside the curtain, an act which violated the sacred traditions” of Nataraj’s Printing Press. (Narayan, 1961:13) Nataraj becomes victim of Vasu’s rebellion. Coming to Malgudi, Vasu occupies Nataraj’s attic above the printing press and causes unbearable disturbance in Nataraj’s peacefully life and also of Malgudi. Vasu’s philosophy of life is in opposition to the peaceful ordered universe of Malgudi, who declares himself as a rival to nature soon after his arrival:
“...after all we are civilized human beings, educated and cultured to nature. Science conquers in a new way everyday, why not in creation also? That is my philosophy.” (Narayan, 1961:15-16)

Vasu an aggressive, wild bully never cares for any social norms, morals or laws in routine life. Installing himself at the attic he starts to practise rebellious deeds and his speeches display deviant attitude. Vasu’s style of making fun, mocking and amusement show him as a rebel. He makes fun of Nataraja’s friends and picks up quarrels with them. They do not find a way to escape from his unfavourable remarks and amusements. Vasu mocks at the poet as ‘a poetaster obsessed with ‘monosyllables,’ (Narayan, 1961:171) and criticised Sen as ‘local Nehru.’ Vasu mortifies Nataraj’s friends by calling them ‘chair-fixers.’(Narayan, 1961:133) R. K. Narayan presents Vasu as the adversary of the people or the hater of mankind.

Vasu’s attitude towards people and his occupation suggest that he is a rebel. If people suffer in their life his heart rejoices and if he finds them happy he suffers. By killing pet dogs and cats Vasu creates fright in the peaceful life of Malgudi. Vasu’s vocation of stuffing the animals makes the attic and place around it unhealthy which shows notion of rebellion. It is apprehended for its thematic relevance. The philosophy regarding his profession is emphasised when he remarks:

“We have constantly to be rivalling Nature at her own game. Posture, look the total personality, everything has to be created” (Narayan, 1961:164)

Vasu revolts against the nature which indicates his notion of rivalry. His attitude towards tradition notes his spirit of violation of sacred laws. Vasu has no faith in spiritual power. According to Nataraj ‘Garuda’ which has been killed by Vasu symbolizes sacredness. It is God Vishnu’s messenger. Vasu, on this, replies sharply “I want to try and make Vishnu use his feet on now and then.” (Narayan, 1961:64)

Vasu shows rebellion as his inborn tendency in all his deeds. He does not allow Nataraj to carry on his business undisturbed. Pulling out Nataraj with force from his work Vasu drags him to the Mempi Village in his jeep without out his shirt buttons
and without a single pie in his pocket. He leaves Nataraj at the tea stall of Muthu at the bottom of Mempi forest. It shows Vasu’s devilish spirit which makes Nataraj to pass through inevitable suffering.

The rebellious act of Vasu is seen in his wicked plan of shooting temple elephant Kumar. Induced by financial benefit Vasu forgets important cultural heritage and does not care for people’s spiritual and emotional feelings. He tells Nataraj: “I can make ten thousand out of the parts of this elephant.” (Narayan, 1961:173) This causes much mental agitation and spiritual anguish to Nataraj and he grows delirious and loudly cries out ‘Vishnu’, which makes the agitated people rush to him to see what has gone wrong. Vasu, evil incarnate, a ‘rakshsa’ and every demon, as Sastri puts it, carries seeds of destruction in himself. He dies of a blow at his own hammer-fist on his head to drive away some mosquitoes.

Thus, Vasu’s death suggests mythical parallel. Bhasmasura acquired a special boon that everything he touched would be scorched, while nothing could ever destroy him. “God Vishnu was incarnated as a dancer of great beauty, named Mohini, with whom, the ‘asura’ became infatuated. She promised to yield to him only if he imitated all the gestures and movements of her own dancing. At one point in the dance, Mohini placed her palms on her head, and the demon followed this gesture in complete forgetfulness and was reduced to ashes.” (Narayan, 1961:96) Vasu dies like ‘Bhasmsura’ with a blow of his fist on his own head.

Faith in transmigration and rebirth is presented by Narayan in the part of its ethos. It proceeds to realize Gajendra-Moksha story in Vishnupurana, which teaches the moral lesson of how to pull down the killer and save the innocent. Edwin Gerow in this regard rightly says:

The irruption of the rakashasa can be countered by the introduction of an equally potent and inexplicable force: the divine (daiva) fate.

(Gerow, 1966:13)

In India it is held that there is no escape from the workings of Karma. Births and deaths of all living beings are dominantly related to their karma. Thus, there is a
chance of rising again in the hierarchy of creation. Likewise, there is fear of descending to the level of the lower orders of creation. If this is so, there then killing any non-human creature is equivalent to killing a human being. Viewed in this light Vasu deserves to be called a man-eater.

Thus, there is disorder for sometime, but order is restored once again by Vasu’s sudden death. Evil is, thus expelled and normal peaceful life once again becomes possible for Nataraj. The blue curtain is drawn once again. Nataraj and his wife are reconciled and the printer carries on his work as usual, as he did before the arrival of Vasu, symbolizing the force of evil and disorder.

4.4.2 The Vendor of Sweets

Narayan treats the theme in ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ of the father-son relationship which is presented through the characters of Jagan, the sweet merchant and follower of Gandhian philosophy and his son Mali who is fascinated by the western ways of life. It presents the theme of conflict between tradition and modernity. The novel presents the conflict between the old and young generation.

Fifty years old Jagan strongly believes in unchanging traditional values and the Hindu way of life. His son Mali is under the Western way of life which is changeable. Worshiping and singing sermons of Lakshmi and reciting ‘Bhagwad Gita’ by Jagan represents him as a man who believes in God and religion. As every Indian father Jagan desires to make his son well educated and morally good person. Mali’s decision to learn the art of novel writing in America is not approved by Jagan in the beginning. Like a typical Indian father he accepts his son’s plan for his prosperous future life. His love for Valmiki’s ‘Ramayana’ indicates his great regard for the Indian culture.

Mali’s idea of beef eating in order to solve the problem of food in India suggests his western attitude. Jagan wishes to teach spiritual values of cow to his son Mali and he writes him a letter about it which shows the influence of spiritualism on Jagan. Mali’s return to home with a half-Korean and half-American girl shakes Jagan’s faith in traditional values. Mali wants to enjoy modern life style. Consequently, Jagan decides to live the life of retirement in the forest. The relationship between Jagan and his son
underlines that Jagan does not appreciate his son’s Western ways of thinking and Mali has no respect for age-old Indian tradition and morals.

The rebellion in ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ has been noticed as a cultural deviation, and is described through the characters Mali, Jagan’s deviant son, and Grace, the Christian girl, Mali’s wife. The novel is a story of ethical humiliation which takes place in Narayan’s traditional and sacred society. It is seen through the notion of rebellion. One may observe a subjective relevance which is concerned with Jagan’s conclusive renunciation. The young lovers ‘Mali and Grace are the members of rebellious group. Narayan shows Mali’s rebellion in his act of cutting the coupons from the library magazine in front of the librarian to “teach that librarian a lesson.”(Narayan, 1967:45)

The defiance of Mali reflects his strong attraction for the “aspirins.” (Narayan, 1967:28) Lack of interest in the formal education leads Mali to leave the college. “I don’t want to study, that’s all.” (Narayan, 1967:29) It is clearly his noticeable defiance. One may observe Mali’s negligence of sacrosanct tradition, Goddess Saraswati.

As an Indian father Jagan wants to educate his son in India. Mali’s initial rebellion is witnessed in his dejection to continue his study in India and leaving to America for higher studies. His behaviour with his father like a stranger has been realized as his defiance. He behaves against the will of his father as his notions of personal liberty clash with Jagan’s traditional values. Narayan uses the American interlude as a technique to mark Mali’s deviation as a firmly established ground for Jagan’s renunciation.

In America, Mali’s act of undergoing a course of writing a novel also notes symbolically rebellious notion. The novel writing machine is an example of satire and paradox of commercialization in art. India has great tradition of writing. ‘The Ramayana’, ‘The Maha Bharatha’, and ‘The Bhaavad Gita’ are the products of India’s remarkable tradition of writing. India’s sacrosanct tradition of the art of writing is well emphasized when Jagan asks his son:

‘Did Valmiki go to America or Germany in, order to learn to write his Ramayans’ (Narayan, 1967: 51)
Mali returns to Malgudi with a girl Grace who is half-Korean, Half-American and she also adds one more dimension to his spirit of rebellion. But as a follower of a Gandhian principle of tolerance Jagan, Mali’s father has to accept Grace as his daughter-in-law who is unable to deny their arrival in traditional home of Malgudi. Jagan takes her arrival as to fill the empty place in the house which is left by the death of Ambika, Jagan’s wife. She stresses on Mali’s cultural aberration and tender emotions of the old man for his daughter in law. Grace marks Mali’s cultural aberration.

The east-west encounter is remarkably visible when Mali explains his father a plan to invest a large amount for purchasing the novel writing machine. Jagan’s traditional view of life does not become ready to accept Mali’s plan. Narayan presents Mali’s modernity against Jagan’s world of tradition. The crisis of values in the Hindu joint family life can be identified with the clash between the two generations: father and son. M.K. Naik comments:

The allied themes of the clash of the two generations and east-west confrontation are handled too sketchily to yield significant artistic results. (Naik, 1985:82)

Mali’s thought of buying America-made novel writing machine shows the influence of modernity on him. The machine may be another option for the imagination. Being interested in the Goddess Gayatri, Jagan becomes ready to accept the sculptor’s proposal to buy the place and turn it into seclusion. By doing so he would see the birth of Goddess of Radiance. Jagan’s unwillingness for investing capital reflects his understanding of the spiritual investment rather than the material one. Narayan shows Mali’s interest in the machine and Jagan’s interest in Goddess Gayatri. There are two constrasting approaches, one is materialistic and the other is spiritual.

Mali’s act of rebellion is seen once again. He is in police lock-up on the charge of violating the prohibition laws. He is found with half a bottle of alcohol in his car. Imprisonment of Mali puts forward the unavoidable enemy for deviant Mali. It also marks Jagan’s decision of going to ‘vanaprasthashram’ away from family complications and a bond of connections:
I will seek a new interest different from the set of repetitions performed for sixty years. I am going some where, not carrying more than my shoulder can bear. All that I need is in that bag. (Narayan, 1967:190-191)

Narayan is aware of ‘Karma’ consequence in the determined universe of Mali. His living with Grace as husband and wife without traditional Hindu marriage system provides a picture of enticement. It is anti-traditional. The orthodox and traditional society of Malgudi does not permit such type of marriage. Mali’s American made novel writing machine is an unsacred act in the land of Sarswati, the Goddess of learning. Here, instead of giving capital punishment to the sinner he is afforded a chance to learn and realize. The encounters between the father’s traditional and the son’s westernized generation and the cultural differences between the two cause Mali’s deviation in ‘The Vendor of Sweets’.

4.4.3 The Painter of Signs-

R.K. Narayan focuses on the real picture of India during the period of independence. ‘The Painter of Sign’ presents the theme of lover-beloved relationship through the characters of Raman and Daisy and the theme of rebellion springs from their relationship. The love relationship is portrayed against the background of the freedom movement in Malgudi is an earlier novel ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’. Unfortunately it does not lead to the formation of Marriage because of moral values and social culture of the place, Malgudi. It may be considered as against the Indian ethos. Family Planning Programme causes them to bring together Raman’s relationship violates the traditional norms of marriage system. They have rebelled against the desires of their own parents. Raman’s love affair with Daisy is against the traditionally old aunt and Daisy’s response to him is seen as an act of rebellion against the wish of her parents. Unlike, Raju in ‘The Guide’ Rman desires to perform anything for the hand of Daisy. Daisy, of course, knows rules and regulations of marriage which are provided by the tradition of Malgudi society.

The theme of rebellion in ‘The Painter of Signs’ subscribes to present recurrent theme of rebellion in Narayan’s corpus of novels and the rebellion is displayed through the portrayal of Raman, a modern youth who seems very anxious to establish
permanently the Age of Reason and Daisy, the champion of women’s right. The rebellion is considered as a deviation even though it is converted into defiance. The novelist emphasizes national activity of family control, motif and the myth of ‘Shantanu-Ganga in ‘The Mahabharatha’ has thematic relevance and dominance in the novel.

Raman’s act of rebellion at the very initial stage may be considered as a matter of mishap. Unexpected travelling in the bullock cart takes place in which Raman is in the company of Daisy, a incharge of Family Planning Centre. Their return journey in a bullock cart to Malgudi gives a chance to the cart driver to misunderstand them as a quarreling newly- married couple, loving and hating one another. He leaves them alone to avoid interference in their romantic life. They are presented against the cool air of the night at a bare place which inspires Raman to begin debate within him “to dash up, seize her.” (Narayan, 1976:24) Consequently, Raman moves in the direction of cart to find Daisy. Gauging evil intention, Daisy rejects his advances and climbs on the tamarind tree where she remained the whole night.

Being a youth of strong emotional feeling and desires Raman jumps into various acts which are against the traditional scene of Malgudi. Raman’s rebellion seems to be a deviation from the codes of religious and social norms. Defending herself from disaster Daisy boldly dares to ask him: “When you are married to the devil, you must be prepared to climb the tamarind tree.” (Narayan, 1976: 77) The tamarind tree is very much friendly to her. It becomes a protective spirit in a Wordsworthian sense because she is saved from the devilish behaviour of Raman. The irony is that Daisy who wills to hide herself away from Raman remained by fate away from her forever.

The first rebellion is followed by the second which is considered as the fall. Daisy’s attitude to sex is contrasted with the attitude of Rosie in ‘The Guide’ by the narrator. Daisy is presented as a new kind of woman who is completely different from Rosie. The mild and passive Daisy remains away from sex and carries her responsibility of family planning centre ahead. Rosie on the other side, plunges herself in to the emotional pond of sexuality. She keeps continuation of individual emotional life and devotion to the art of dancing. Daisy does not desire to touch the world of individual life which underlines her sacrifice for the sake of social work. When Raman comes to
her on his bicycle which he parks infront of her house she says “if you must stay, please bring your bicycle in. I don’t want to be seen on my veranda this hour.”(Narayan, 1976:113) The instance reveals modern woman’s fears of consequence. It underlines that Daisy is deeply rooted in the moral values of Malgudi. Inticement of Raman to physical sexuality is deprived by the thought of shame which is caused by the spiritual spirit of the place, Malgudi. Condemning the act of the young lovers, A.N. Kaul says:

> Romantic or passionate love has no place in it. Any deviation from it, any impulse or act that denies its centrality is a prime aberration in Narayan. This is especially true of Woman. (Kaul, 1977:55)

Lakshmi, an orthodox widow, Raman’s aunt is projected by R.K.Narayan who stands for morality in the traditional town of Malgudi and resists Raman’s rebellion. Religious minded old lady could never perceive the idea of welcoming a daughter in law who belongs to Christian religion. Inspite of aunt’s threatening to go to Banaras on a pilgrimage, Raman brings the bride home. This illustrates his deviation by disobeying the tradition. The old woman’s act of leaving for Banaras is similar to the act of Sriram’s Granny in ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’, who goes to Bararas, Raju’s mother in ‘The Guide’, who leaves for her ancestral place and Jagan, Mali’s father in ‘The Vendor of Sweets,’ who moves towards the forest. They are powerful forces of protecting traditional customs, manners and way of life styles.

The arrival of the birds symbolizes Raman’s rebellion who locks all the family gods in the cupboard to provide a vacant room for Daisy. Consequently, a revengeful trait of the Gods may be noticed in Daisy’s non-arrival which is suggestive of a punishment for the deviant’s unacceptable deed in the traditional house of the aunt. Daisy never comes to Raman’s house. The clearance has proved useless.” (Sundaram, 1982:153) It is noticed that for the sake of Daisy he disregards holy place in the house which is occupied by the Gods. His deviation is the reason for Daisy’s non-arrival which may be taken as the theme of crime and punishment.

Daisy is presented as a modern rebel. Daisy’s rebellion is realized in her deviant nature of womanhood, she is a girl with different eager desires; hence she is called a
misfit in the joint family. Her wants and desires are different from the members of joint family. Her thoughts about the marriage show deviation against the traditional system of marriage. Daisy’s rebellion is seen in her deviation from the traditional norms of the family. When she was told to be ready for inspection as a bride by her parents, Daisy as a furious tigress declared “I told my people that I’d not allow any one to inspect me as a bride and that I’d rather do the inspection of the groom.” (Narayan, 1976:102) Her decision to leave the house for good is realized as a departure from sancrosanct tradition. Her sense of liberty as a woman and her capacity of decision shows her individual identity in the modern times.

Narayan represents educated girl through the character of Daisy whose attitude to sex exhibits her perverse nature which raises dejection in the mind of her lover. Daisy’s views regarding man-woman relationship disclose her negative approach. According to her man marries a woman for the fulfillment of physical sex. Indian woman is entitled to receive respect only when she becomes mother. The arrival of a barren woman is strictly prevented in the religious programs in Indian society. The way Daisy expreses her attitude about the children may be treated as Daisy’s complete disrespect for the woman in India who dreams of motherhood or ‘Matritva.’ The narrator says, “She was not really a lover of children. She looked at them as if to say, you had no business to arrive.” (Narayan, 1976:49) Her contradictory behaviour makes one reminded of Margayya’s wife in ‘The Financial Expert’ who prays to the God of seven hills for a son and Ambika in ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ who endures pains of a barren woman.

Asserting a cause of an urgent work, Daisy leaves Malgudi who cannot keep her promise of staying with Raman as a wife shows her deviation. It shows that she doesnot like and has no interest in married life who considers it as a sacrifice of liberty at the feet of man who seems to be a boss and a woman bossed. Daisy tells Raman: “married life frightens me…. I am not cut out for the life you imagine. I can’t live except alone.” (Narayan, 1976:139) R.K.Narayan tries to present her anti-traditional view in her work and the narrator tells that it is all the ‘karma’ consequence.
The theme of illusion versus reality is presented though the deviant nature of Raman’s relationship with Daisy and his dream of marriage with her is illusion. His wandering in the company of Daisy shows his possessive attitude but it remains meaningless. Flinging away violently the keys Raman says “To hell with it” (Narayan, 1976: 143) Raman’s coming back to the real world of the Boardless (Narayan, 1976:143) is considered as his return to the world of reality.

4.4.4 A Tiger for Malgudi
The mythical novel ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’ shows Narayan’s spirit of Hinduism, which is about the perfect world of spiritual bliss and reliable intelligence of the animal world. In treating the theme of renunciation Narayan offers a real sanyasi for its perfection. A nameless Master of the tiger brings before the eyes a whole transformation of a worldly man. In spite of depicting the traditional submissive woman, the narrator picturizes a nagging woman in order to point out deficiency of understanding between man and woman. A clash between tradition and modernity causes an obvious change.

Narayan in ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’ focuses on the theme of renunciation, communal disharmony, and conflict between tradition and modernity. The novelist while presenting modernity does not go away from the tradition. The violent disturbance in Malgudi underlines the theme of communal disharmony. Challenging each other the people are divided in groups on the basis of religion. They use weapons like stone, iron bars, and knife for attack and bring disorder in the peaceful life. The reasons like hatred and suspicious nature, change of direction of canal water, fight between two small boys, rumours of woman’s torturing and right of worship are the causes behind the communal conflicts. According to R. K. Narayan religions teach love, sympathy, co-operation, kindness and not hatred but they use it for political purposes and communal riots. The use of regional, national and international languages in India contributes to establish national integrity. Hence it is witnessed that the Captain uses these three languages for giving his messages to the spectators. Ellucidations of philosophy on Karma, rebirth and passing of the soul into another body after death have spread all over the Malgudi world.
The conflict between tradition and modernity is the recurrent theme in R. K. Narayan’s novels. The gradual development in Malgudi symbolizes social and cultural development. The growth of Malgudi parallels with the growth of the tiger Raja. Raja who begins cubhood in the Mempi Forest begins his new life in the circus and gets an opportunity to play a role in the film. Raja’s feeling sorry for his violence indicates the philosophy of ‘rite-de passage’. Under the influence of his Master, the killer Raja starts learning lessons on Yoga and Gita which brings spiritual development in him. Traditional Malgudi brings a change in nature and attitude of tiger, Raja. This event also shows tiger’s spiritual connection with his Master and it presents the theme of teacher-disciple relationship. A mysterious change in the character of Raja shows Master’s spiritual influence on Raja. The tremendous power of spirituality contributes to the change in the wild nature of the tiger. Throwing light on humanity Narayan says if innocence emphasizes ‘brahmacharya’ (bachelorhood) the sanyasa stresses ‘sanysashrama’ (stage of renunciation).

Under the shadow of the Master’s spiritual powers Raja functions as a good disciple. One day, the Master realizes that the time for attaining Samadhi is near at hand and decides to send the tiger to the zoo. On returning to the dense forest of the Mempi Hills Raja has lived happily. He may still have a chance of reuniting his Master in the next life. Narayan intentionally stresses on the interpretation of the Indian philosophy of karma, rebirth and transmigration of soul. The gradual development of Malgudi parallels the evolution of India’s social and cultural surrounding and the circus imparts festive look to the ever-growing Malgudi.

The theme of rebellion is realized through the character of the tiger, Raja. He may be imagined as a rebel. The notion of rebellion is noticed in his cubhood and youth of the tiger. There are some examples of rebellion. The tigeress and their four cubs are killed by men. This leads Raja the tiger to raid the villagers and kill their animals. Raja’s rebellion is the consequence of his partner’s death along with the cubs.

Raja’s second act of rebellion follows in the Grand Malgudi Circus. Raja refuses to stand on his hind legs. Hence he is whipped by the Captain. Raja injures the Captain who eventually dies. Raja’s rebellion is presented to deal with the theme of illusion versus reality. The novelist portrays illusory aspect of tiger’s life through his act of
furious behaviour. Raja’s return to the forest indicates the treatment of Narayan’s theme of the return of the native. The tiger begins to listen to spiritual discourse to seek the peace of mind. It indicates the spiritual growth in the nature of Raja, the tiger.

4.5 CHARACTERIZATION

4.5.1 The Man-Eater of Malgudi

Vasu and Nataraj, the two entirely different characters in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ have similarities with ‘sura and asura, the characters in the Hindu mythology. Vasu seems to be anti social by his deeds. In the battles of Gods and Demons, the powerful ‘asura’ threatens Indra, which causes his own ultimate destruction and order is restored again in the world.

Vasu, the mighty man not only kills wild animals in the Mempi forest but also kills himself with a blow of his fist just as ‘Rakshasa’(demons) in the ancient period used to kill animals and human beings. Nataraj, the other man is a simple man, whose easy-going life is disturbed by the entrance of modern ‘Rakshasa’ Vasu, who is accompanied to his attic by the prostitutes and assembles dead animals in the attic for stuffing them. His thought of killing, Kumar the temple elephant brings everyone under tension. It is through the grace of God that very soon Vasu kills himself by the hammer stroke of his own fist.

Like Curtz a part of the ‘horror’ (Bose, 2001:177) in Conrad’s ‘Heart of Darkness’ (1999) Vasu symbolizes an evil force and Nataraj stands for the values of tradition and culture of the town, Malgudi. The placid and smooth life of Nataraj and the Malgudians is disturbed by Vasu’s sudden intrusion, and turns Nataraj’s quiet life topsy-turvy (Mujeebuddin, 2001:18) Vasu brings carcasses in the attic and does unsanitary stuffing causing pollution of the surroundings in the residential area. He also pollutes the room by bringing, a spoiled dancing woman Rangi into it.Vasu brings with him disorder, disorganization, and dismay.

Vasu, the taxidermist, is a short form of Vasudeva, and one of the names of Krishna. With a short ‘a’, Vasu symbolizes one of the eight forces of nature: water, the pole-star, moon, earth, wind, fire, dawn and light (Sundaram, 1973:99) which accompany
the God, Indra. Vasu’s attitude towards science is positive and tells that diet has scientific base. Vasu, an M. A. greatly believes in development and the progress made by science, and his scientific outlook is marked in talk with Nataraj. “Science conquers in a new way everyday; why not in creation also? That’s my philosophy” (Narayan, 1961:15) Being barbarian his diet, a scientific method of maintaining health is like the diet of ‘rakshasa’ which involves almonds with milk, six eggs with honey every morning, rice and chicken at lunch and abundance of vegetables and fruits at night.

Vasu’s physical structure and appearance reflects his demonic nature whose mind is also shaped by the destructive thoughts of a monster. He is not aware of social morals and his thoughts regarding marriage are full of hatred. A six feet tall, with large powerful eyes, a large forehead, bullneck and hammer-fist (Narayan, 1961: 13) Vasu is identified with the mythical demon, Bhasmasura who passes through the moment of self-destruction. He is very confident, hard-hearted and does not have perception of morality. He boasts of being the rival to Naure whose values of life are based on material sources and destructive reasons. He hates marriage system, and comments that only fools desire to get married. Through his dominant behaviour Vasu impresses himself as the authority of the world. He symbolizes ‘the cult of materialism which passes under the cover of modernity and scientific outlook.’ (Girla, 1984:185)

It is believed that every man who is involved in the bad deeds has to pass through tragic end at last. At this moment his strength remains helpless. Bhasmasura and Ravana were powerful demons but they had to suffer through their tragic end. The taxidermist’s plan to kill Kumar the temple elephant in the festival procession makes one realize that Narayan associates modern demon with old demons Bhasmasura and Ravana. With the help of Bhasmasura myth he depicts the diabolical and evil nature of Vasu. Applying all the definitions of Rakshasa Sastri tells Nataraj:

Every rakshasa gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something or other will destroy him. (Narayan, 1961: 67)
The proverb ‘the best is rewarded and the worst is punished’ seems effectively emphasized in connection with the death of Vasu. All the demons carry within themselves seeds of self destruction and they rise up at the most unexpected moment. The unconquerable Bhasmasura burnt everything he touched and at the end ‘reduced himself to ashes by placing the tips of his fingers on his own head.’(Narayan, 1961: 242) Vasu whose mind is devil’s workshop dies of a severe blow delivered by his own hammer fist. Intending to push away mosquitoes that had rested on his forehead, Vasu slaps his temple with his hammer fist and meets his own destruction. “Vasu, like the rakshasa carries with him the seeds of his own destruction.”(Walsh, 1983:139)

Natraj, another central figure in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ by Narayan, reminds of Srinivas in the earlier novel ‘Mr.Sampath’ believes in the cultural and religious traditions of the place, Malgudi. He is praised as a peace-loving friendly domestic man. Nataraj, the poet and Sen present to the Malgudians and the traditional cultural society of Malgudi. R. K. Narayan portrays Nataraj typical Malgudian in a middle-class setting of family. The relationship of Nataraj, an ordinary citizen of Malgudi with Vasu carries strong dislike and attraction. Vasu’s influence on Nataraj and his efforts to create friendship with him show that evil force is more powerful and enticing than goodness.

Every man in Hindu family is grateful to the Goddess Laxmi for happiness which is sought through the earning. The Hindus firmly believe that worshiping Laxmi keeps on a flow of money ceaselessly. Similarly, living in a traditional family, Nataraj worships the Goddess Laxmi for his satisfied life. ‘I hung up a framed picture of Goddess Laxmi poised on her lotus, holding aloft the bounties of earth in her four hands, and through her grace I did not do too badly.’ (Narayan, 1961:1) He also views that for the sanctity of love every one should have a stuffed ‘garuda’, the holy bird in puja room.

The faith in the passing of soul into another body after death and rebirth is shown as a part of its ethos. Vasu’s determination of killing Kumar creates anxiety in Nataraj. He remembers a story from the Indian mythology of the elephant Gajendra who was helped by the Lord Vishnu from the hold of the crocodile. Nataraj sees Gajendra in Kumar and crocodile in Vasu. The symbolic dramatization of the story Gajendra-
moksha is referred to in the context of Vasu’s rebellion. Natraj consoles his mind that Lord Krishna of the temple “was really an incarnation of Vishnu, who had saved Gajendra, he would again come to the rescue of the same animal”. (Narayan, 1961: 182-83) Ironically virtuous Natraj feels fearful and feeble on hearing Vasu’s plan of killing temple elephant Kumar. It also makes him stick to his inherent middle class psychology. (Dnayate, 1996:122) The storm of misery in the life of Nataraj comes to an end by the death of Vasu, and he returns to his original world. At the end of the novel one may witness destruction of the evil and the restoration of peace and order which is suggestive of Narayan’s positive philosophy of life.

If Lord Shiva is associated with the ‘tandavanritya’, Nataraj of Printing Press in Malgudi is realized as the ‘Lord of Misrule.’ He is made known as an eccentric by his strange attitude towards the Poet and Sen. Being unknown of business psychology Nataraj does not intend to have more profit. His parlour becomes serviceable for the common good: “Any one who found his feet aching as he passed down Market Road was welcome to rest in my parlour on any seat that happened to be vacant.” (Narayan, 1961:2)

No thought of rivalry peeps in Nataraj against the neighbouring printer and he compels the customers to go to the neighbour for excellence which reflects his eccentricity. Acquiring eccentric trait in his nature Natraj consults Vasu to order less number of visiting cards to keep them fresh. In such eccentric behaviour is observed the unselfish nature is in Natraj. The lack of social sense and absence of human consideration are noticed in attitudes of Vasu. Consequently, Nataraj symbolizes goodness against the badness of Vasu.

Nataraj has to maintain his family financial matters within a frame work of his earning. Taking Nataraj to the Mempi village Vasu cruelly drops him there. Nataraj’s imagination “What would my wife and little son do if they were suddenly asked to produce fifty thousand rupees for my release?” (Narayan, 1961: 41) reflects care taking attitude towards his wife and son, which is one of the objectives of the Hindu family system.
Sastri is a trustworthy and knowledgeable assistant working in Nataraj’s Printing Press of Malgudi. He is in search of knowledge about ‘Janana Yoga’ and makes holy pilgrimages and performs puja and religious rituals for the same. R.K. Narayan artistically connects Shastri with the myth whose name means “man of scripture” (Banda, 2010:139) Sastri’s ancient wisdom leads him to associate Vasu with the Rakshasas. He loves worshipping and visits holy places. Muthu, a religious man does puja without any break everyday in a temple. Rangi who is recognized as a temple woman is wedlocked to the temple god. Hence, she is Krishna and in Vasu’s death Rangi performs the role of Krishna. Inspite of a public woman Rangi lives for ‘dharma’. The tale is that because of loyalty to dharma the prostitute compels the river Ganges flow up stream. It contributes to know that by pursuing dharma Rangi gets power and leads Vasu to find death in his life by his own fist over the forehead as Krishana in the mythology brought Bhasmasura towards death in the same way. Rangi’s action is unselfish which suggests ‘Karma Yoga’ who has sacrificed happiness in order to save temple. Muthu shows a way of devotion, Bhakti Yoga. The other eccentrics in ‘The Man-eater of Malgudi’ are Sen, the journalist, the nameless character-the poet, the forest officer who is known for idiosyncrasy, Dr. Joshi- a type, and one liner- a tailor. Naik, M. K. rightly remarks:

In terms of characters ‘The Man-eater of Malgudi’ presents the largest single concentration of eccentrics in Narayan’s entire fiction. (Naik, 1983:74)

A two liner, Sen always analyses Nehru’s policies and Vasu humiliates him by calling him “the local Nehru”. (Narayan, 1961:171) The ‘monosyllabic’ poet is an intimate friend of Nataraj whose eccentricity is projected in his monosyllabic verse ‘The Radha Kalyan’. He uses polysyllabic when he is not able to find a monosyllabic verse “Girls with girls did dance in trance.”(Narayan, 1961:2) Preparing an anthology of ‘Golden Thoughts’, the forest officer desires to print it great in numbers from Nataraj and give the copies to the school boys without charging anything. It reflects his earnest desire for spreading knowledge among the learners in the school of Malgudi.

The tailor, one of the trustees of the temple, whose unwillingness to move the ailing elephant becomes the cause for Malgudi people to suspect that he is associated with
Vasu to shoot the elephant. Dr. Joshi, the veterinary surgeon dedicates his time for the particular work. Hence he is called a man of mission. He dispels the doubts in Nataraj’s mind by telling his philosophy “only the stimuli and medicinal doses differ between human beings and animals.”(Narayan, 1961:190) By portraying eccentrics from different walks of life Narayan suggests inconsistent nature of life.

4.5.2 The Vendor of Sweets
Jagan, the sweet vendor in ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ is a more polished form of Margayya in ‘The Financial Expert’ and Mali, Jagan’s son recalls the alienated son of Margayya. R. K. Narayan presents them to show distinctive difference between tradition and modernity. The timeless and unchanging values of the Hindu way of life in the traditional Malgudi are delineated by Jagan and Mali draws the changing Western ways of life as Tara Malhotra thinks:

Jagan’s altruistic pose, his Benthamite Zeal for public service, and ostensible high regard for Gandhian tenets be speak a Peck shniffian hypocrite, we have not to scratch deep to discover a very ordinary person with the most ordinary feelings and foibles. (Malhotra, 1983:54)

Leading a simple life in the town, Malgudi Jagan’s life has a base of Gandhian philosophy. Jagan’s active involvement in the freedom movement of Gandhiji and remaining in jail for sometime continue to give him moments of pleasure. He feels such type of detachment is a source of being alone and meditation for healthy and happy life. Being religious, Jagan the protagonist performs prayers to the Goddess Lakshmi in the morning and recites ‘Bhagavad Gita’ everyday and Indian culture and tradition for Jagan are the powerful sources of his actual strength of life. Jagan, a true follower of Gandhiji and naturalist, spins charkha regularly and puts on clothes made of hand woven cloth and uses sandals of leather of an animal which died naturally. Viewing that bristles are made of the hair from the pig’s tail, Jagan prevents himself from the use of tooth brush. Believing in the wisdom of ancients he opines that the twigs of margosa, an ambrosial plant make ideal tooth brushes. After the death of his wife, Ambika Jagan takes care of his son, Mali. Like a true Indian father Jagan wishes
his son’s bright educational career and looks forward to his winning big prizes and enormous fame.

He is very affectionate to his son even though his main interest is in money and its acquisition. When Mali threatens to leave home he like a typical Hindu father asks his cousin, ‘As my good cousins please try and stop him. I don’t know how I can live in that house without him.’ (Narayan, 1967:54-55)

Enticed away by the attraction of the West Mali’s determination to go to America for studying the art of novel writing brings the clouds of gloominess in the course of Jagan’s life that propagates Gandhian philosophy and thoughts. Tendering often honour to the Indian culture and tradition, Jagan’s patriotic feelings arouse in him and he thinks of ‘The Ramayana’ written by Valmiki in the ‘Dandka Forest.’

R.K. Narayan presents Jagan as a typical Indian father in welcoming Mali’s decision to go to America. He becomes highly excited on receiving Mali’s letters from America Jagan wastes more time in reading them than ‘The Bhagwat Gita’. He develops the habit of talking about American civilization and culture. It shows that even traditional man is aware of changes taking place in Malgudi where traditional way of life continues in the post independence era. Mary Beatina quotes:

Narayan recognizes the problems of modernization and westernization after which he leaves to his readers the resolution of the problem. Without taking sides, he portrays how the struggle is experienced by Chandran, Raju, and Mali. (Beatina, 1993:44)

Mali returns from America with Grace, an American wife after three years of education and he earnestly desires to establish a ‘Novel Writing Machine’ which pushes Jagan emphatically to his attitude towards his son and he remains aloof. The kind hearted and generous Jagan is taken aback when Mali asks for 52000 dollars for his plan of story writing. Loving father and a liberal thinker, Jagan gets disillusioned when his son constantly neglects him. This results in beginning of new vistas for the latter. Jagan’s communication with his son is very limited and not at all encouraging.
Their living together as husband and wife without marriage is shocking in the eyes of old fashioned man. He feels it is a sin. Jagan is horrified by the notion of modern generation as A. N. Kaul thinks:

Jagan is upset by the values of the man and woman of the new generation, with whom his own cherished notions of marriage and morals sum to count nothing. He is agitated by the thought that he has been fooled by the young people and that the house which has remained unchanged for generations, has now this bolt to carry. (Kaul, 1977:49)

When Jagan is informed that his son, Mali has been arrested for the illegal possession of liquor he expresses his views by saying, 'A dose of prison life is not a bad thing. It may be just what he needs now'. (Narayan, 1967:191-92) It shows Jagan’s view that jail will bring change in his son’s life and he will lead right path. Jagan knows there is no peace of mind and decides to leave for the forest. This is the result of the rude behavior of Mali. Being faithful in the ‘Bhagvad Gita’ he feels to experience detachment from his son. Retiring into the life of spiritual devotion Jagan decides to lead the life of ‘Yogi.’ Non-attachment shows a kind of selfless love towards all and Jeewanmukta is to perform duties like ordinary man.

The ideals for Narayan are the thoughts of Sanyasa or renunciation of worldly goods and attachment for spiritual chase. Jagan decides to leave responsibility of domestic affairs and business to Mali and go for experience of sanyasa in the forest. Jagannath renowned owner of the sweets shop has a lonely heir Mali who is born after many years of married life and special pilgrimage of Badri Hills.

Self-realization compels him to break away with his son and his long cherished notions of marriage and moral. He escapes from the chains of the vicious world of his son. (Singh, 1991:24)

Realizing the fact that sanyasa is only a way of escape from the rules of society, Jagan does not leave the world of Malgudi. It reveals that Jagan does not want to be free from the attachment to his son. From the day of Mali’s birth, Jagan is a loving and
devoted father but he fails to understand his emotions and mind. Even after living together for long twenty years he does not know likes and dislikes of Mali which shows Jagan’s innocence. Instead of having a discussion with his son Jagan consults his cousin for the future plans of Mali.

The conflict between the two modes of thinking between tradition and modernity is so visible that both Jagan and Mali come out vividly as individuals. The characters of two generations, traditional and modern respectively are Margayya and Jagan who show changes in the traditional joint family system. Both Jagan and Mali come out in sharper relief than most Narayan characters…Instead of Narayan’s usual pencil-sketch characterization we have a hero who is painted in colour, with clear details of physical appearance, habits, moods, and thought-processes. (Parmeswaran, 1976:76)

Jagan’s lonely son, Mali is an achievement of his visit to ‘Badri Hills’. Through the character of Mali R. K. Narayan presents a young boy who wants to lead his life in a modern way. His idea of going to America for learning, his returning with American wife Grace, his life style, and idea of ‘Novel Writing Machine’, mirror Western influence on Mali. R. K. Narayan also represents some instances of his innocence.

Mali, a young boy in ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ continues to be a stained figure through whom Narayan focuses on innocence. His attraction for the headache pills can be considered as a childlike trait. Mali, as a child character is a thumb-nail sketch. Thinking carefully the trio in their completeness in later novels Uma Parmeswaran views, “children are purely secondary who highlight the idiosyncracy or attitudes, of adults.” (Parmeswaran, 1985:53) Narayan shows his less interest in portraying child character in later novels and hence, they become trifling part of adult characters, which suggests that the novelist pays more attention on the serious issues of life. The phase of innocence may not be taken into account seriously in the context of modernity.

It is noticed that the traditional India is contrasted against the modern India. The young boys who return from America feel that they may forget their traditions and customs. But it is their illusion. They suffer in their life due to violation of moral traditions. Narayan picturises action and reaction between personal and cultural ideals
through Jagan and Mali. The cultural and traditional Indian values are contrasted with individual liberty of Mali. Deeply influenced by western feelings Mali does not show any concern for Indian tradition and values as Harry Puckett comments:

> The essence of Narayan’s work lies in the interplay between two worlds, the personal and cultural conflicts arising from this interplay but also moving and unexpected nobility of everyday life. (Puckett, 1993:p.xi)

The influences of modern western culture are effectively seen on the town Malgudi. Consequently, rascals like Raju, Sampath and Mali are tied up with commercial world while persons like Jagan and Margayya are rapidly going away from the society of Malgudi. The character of Mali symbolizes violation of many holy and spiritual things which is realized through his several acts. His installation of story-writing machine prohibits writer’s creativity and imagination. Mali is found at a typewriter and publishes prospectus. His wife, Grace is inspiration to him for ceating his interest in the commercial world. A beef-eating of Mali even though regarded as the need to make up the food shortage in India is against the holy ‘shastras.’ Mali’s letter to his father regarding the need for beef eating to solve the problem of starvation in India discloses his fascination for western values. It is contradictory opinion of Mali against Jagan’s traditional values. In his letter Mali says:

> Why do Indians not start to eat beef? It will solve the problem of useless cattle in our country and we would not have to beg food from America. I sometime fell ashamed when India asks for American aid. (Narayan, 1967:62-63)

Mali, a motherless son of Jagan does not believe in sanctity and his spirit of rationality forms his modern way of life. Mali reminds of Vasu whose deeds are harmful to the social codes and conduct and his rejection of Indian concept of marriage upholds modernity which strangles moral values and religious bondage. Mali returns with Grace, an American girl and lives with her without marriage. The Indian system of marriage does not approve of his living with Grace without marriage.
Of the two women characters, Grace adjusts herself to the changed situation in India. Her cooking for Mali and feeding him indicate that she makes efforts to move forward through Indianization. Even though half-Korean and half-American i.e. non-Indian does not hesitate domestic duties like using the broom or cleaning the vessels. Interest in Indian things inspires her to get all types of work done in time.

China Dorai, an eccentric character devotes his life time in bringing the Goddess Gayatri out of the stone. Ambika, the wife of Jagan, is successful in shedding a havoc caused by barrenness with the blessings of Lord Santana Krishna, and feels magnificent for Mali’s birth which gives her acknowledgement and honour in the family and in the social world of Malgudi. Jagan’s cousin, a nameless boy is a regular listener of his sermons who experiences cousin-hood as other boys in Malgudi. He is mediator beteen Jagan and his son Mali ‘Jagan’s alter ego is cousin’. (Iyengar, 1973: 380)

4.5.4 The Painter of Signs
The character of an ordinary man in the unheroic figure of Raman is presented by the novelist in ‘The Painter of Signs’. Raman works as a painter of signs in the town, Malgudi, which is not only a means of bread and living but it has social importance. Understanding that in a money-minded society, people do not bother for aesthetics, designs and values, Raman begins to doubt his long connection with painting. Raman’s contact with Daisy makes him aware of the social consequence and importance of his occupation and he realizes significance of signboard painting in a creation of a link among people of the different professions. Raman’s work of paintings brings Raman and Daisy together.

R.K. Narayan in ‘The Painter of Signs’ shows that the background of the early life of Raman and Daisy is shaped and directed by the family enviroment. Raman is guided by his orthodox aunt. Raman’s profession of sign board painting in his house on Ellaman Street introduces beginning of his romantic life. The characters of Raman and Daisy are projected against the background of family planning centre. Touring the surrounding villages for spreading the gospel of controlled families Raman has fallen in love with Daisy. On the bank of the river, Sarayu, feelings of love turned into a decision of getting married. Denying the norms of an orthodox Hindu family, Raman
decides to marry Daisy, who converts aunt’s pooja room into a room meant for Daisy and all her gods are wrapped in the cupboard. This self-styled rationalist tries to establish the Age of Reason in the whole world. (Narayan, 1976:11)

Narayan makes use of myth in a changed situation and modern context. Raman refers ‘the ancient king Santhanu’ (Narayan, 1976:159) when Daisy puts before him conditions for marrying him. The tale of the king Santhanu in ‘The Mahabharata’ refers to a beautiful girl who consents to marry the king on the condition that he will not object to any of her action. If he fails to keep his promise she would leave him alone immediately without hearing a word from his lips. Accepting her condition Santhanu marries her but very soon he is horrified to know that she inundates seven children born to her, yet he does not utter a single word to object her. When eighth child is born and is probably to be drowned, he is unable to bear himself and questions his wife. Realizing violation of condition she deserts the king confessing him revealing herself to be Ganges, the holy river so that the malediction of the Sage Vasistha may run its usual course.

When he dares to tell Daisy all about their house arrangements, Raman listens from her lips “married life is not for me.”(Narayan, 1976:139) It shows the influence of progress on Daisy who does not think marriage as an essential commodity of life. When Daisy leaves Malgudi for ever for Nagari, Raman returns again to the place where he had actually started his job. Raman’s love for Daisy remains a charming and enthralling dream. Realizing the truth, Raman arouses again and finds himself back to the world of reality which was his own real world before he met Daisy. Raman is like King Santhanu very much tempted by love agrees to marry Daisy by accepting her conditions.

Becoming desperate Raman hopes to meet Daisy in the next birth which suggests his belief in the reincarnation:

He had a last glimpse of Daisy as she sat back, almost wandering her face into the shadow. He reflected, may be we will live together in our next janma. At least she will leave people alone, I hope. (op.cit, Sept.26, 1976:36)
'The Painter of Signs', a comedy about birth control which presents Narayan’s ‘New Woman’ Daisy who is an enthusiastic leader of women’s rights. She strives to declare the independent status of women’s rights and advises some standards of small families. She has made sacrifice of her life time for the mission of birth control which is considered as a social task. She delivers speeches on the subject in an interesting manner. Daisy is “a militant social reformer who works at a Family Planning Centre and is the embodiment of a new type of emancipated, feminist post-independence Indian woman.” (Bharati, 2010:269)

The new emerging woman of the post-independence years, Daisy has a liking for social work and moves from village to village for the propaganda of birth control. Expressing the real rationalism and scientific spirit in her family planning scheme, Daisy boldly thrashes ceaseless obstacles coming in her path. She represents Indian women who are conscious about the problems in the country. The effects of freedom are realized through the character of Daisy.

Narayan projects old traditions of the Indian society regarding marriage. In the Hindu families a prospective bridegroom visits girl’s house to inspect her with his family members even during the post Independence period. A true modern, Daisy revolts when, once a bridgroom comes to inspect her with all members of his family. The elders in her family instructed her with the words: ‘Don’t be mad!’ ‘Don’t you know that it is not done?’(Narayan, 1976:130) In response to this Daisy wants to show her boldness by desiring to do it if nobody does it. Her attempt is to establish her own identity. It also indicates that living in a traditional set-up she wishes to bring changes in system of marriage. She has hopes like Geeta in the ‘Inside the Haveli’ who tries to change the attitude of the rich people towards the washer women and their daughters by starting a school for them in her home.

Through the presentation of Daisy’s character R.K. Narayan shows influence of modern scene on the traditional world of Malgudi. Portraying the character of Daisy, Narayan highlights changes occurring in social institutions and accepted values. Daisy reflects changes taking place in Indian women and their surroundings. Her devotion to work and will power presents her as an emerging modern woman. She rejects the age-old orthodoxies and customs. Knowing the fact that, marriage system in Indian
society is restricted by religious and traditional norms Daisy views, a home is “Only a retreat from sun and rain, and for sleeping, washing and depositing one’s trunk.” (Narayan, 1976: 167) It shows how the marriage system is changing gradually. Daisy is of the view that if a man and woman determine to stay together, marriage can not be an obstacle in their life. Daisy proves a rebel in the sense that she disappoints her parents and runs away to Madras. Daisy is projected against the conservative and orthodox background of Malgudi and she considers that independent individuality is an important element in woman’s life. The scene reminds of Savitri, in ‘The Dark Room’ whose revolt against the norms of society is temporary, and she surrenders to the circumstances. Daisy represents as a woman of modern times and Savitri a cheerless woman of traditional times who being traditional realizes that her existence in life without husband and children is meaningless.

Some of the instances present Daisy as an ordinary woman of India. She travels from place to place without showing any symptom of fatigue. As a common woman she satisfies her hunger by eating food which is available at the moment. She is enjoying morning bath in a public well happily and does not restrict the place for drying the wet dress. Daisy’s needs of life are very simple and ordinary like poor villagers. Her commitment to the work is observed when she requests Raman to live away from her for few days. She feels their meeting may become an impediment in the way of understanding their own people. In order to establish her identity with the down-trodden peasants of Malgudi, Daisy refuses to have contact with any ideology.

A modern and sophisticated Daisy is a woman, whose past is like Ganges which is taken as a story of mystery. Santhanu does not know her real identity in the initial stage but it is revealed to him at the end. Raman is also ignorant of Daisy’s real name. When Raman asks her about their marriage Daisy discloses him two conditions. She tells him “they should have no children and if by mischance one was born she would give the child away and keep herself free to pursue her social work….If you want to marry me, you must leave me to my own plans even when I am a wife.” (Narayan, 1976: 158-59) Daisy shows her moral attitude to sex and states that she does not think that there is any role for the shastras and codes in her scheme of married life. Narayan’s intention is to underline Daisy’s deviation. Daisy has become one with her
social work. She does not want to cage herself in a house and act on the direction of husband and Daisy makes it clear that she hates usual routine life.

Daisy advises Raman to allow his old aunt to go to the holy place Banaras. Her questions to Raman “will the gods not smite us for this effrontery,” (Narayan, 1976:170) when he bundles all the gods in the cupboard. This makes it very clear that she is not completely irreligious. She desires to keep the gods undisturbed in their old dwelling place.

‘The Painter of Signs’ telescopes the sanyasa motif through Sanyasini, Raman’s aunt, Lakshmi. The old aunt of Raman, a leader of orthodox values of life, is realized as a type and a stock figure. Her visits to the temple Lord Ganesha every evening and listening to the Harikatha presents her to be a religious old woman. Lakshmi’s belief in God and religion and her everyday prayer before the statues in her home indicate that ‘Maya’ and ‘Moksha’ are not strange to her. Her final aim in life is renunciation for which she has been waiting. She understands psychology of the youth. Learning from Raman that he is willing to marry a Christian girl the aunt protests their proposal of marriage and asks him “How can you bring in a Christian?” (Narayan, 1976:146-147) Her ideas about old values and her orthodox mind begin to shatter.

Finding no solution, she decides to go on pilgrimage with old women and men who want to visit holy places, Badrinath and Haridwar. Raman’s preparation to bring the bride, Daisy at home, despite his aunt’s decision to go on a pilgrimage is a deviation from the accepted codes. She exemplifies traditionally conceived sanyasa-renunciation. Like very old people, she desires to stay at Kashi in remaining days of life in order to dissolve in the Ganges. It suggests her desire to seek peace for the soul in the last stage of life. Hindu customs and rituals are found vividly in the character of Raman’s aunt who says:

A darshnam of the Badrinath, and if possible to Amarnath, where lingam is shaped in ice. I wouldn’t care what happened to me or to the world after I have seen the holy places and dipped into the Ganga from its birth-place all long its course, until I end my pilgrimage in Banaras. After this I shall want nothing more in life. (Narayan, 1976:251)
The aunt’s sanyasa recalls Jagan’s renunciation in the ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ and it is understood in the context of her idea of sanctity through a man-woman relationship. The one-liner sanyasini, the aunt is realized as a flat character.

There are a large number of eccentric characters in ‘The Painter of Signs’, who show oddity in their conduct and nature of life. The young lawyer determines to see the letters on his name board slanted to the left indicates his superstitious attitude towards his profession. He is guided by his astrologer. According to the astrologer a left slant is his ruling star which is known as Saturn. The Town Hall Professor is “a local eccentric” who goes to the town hall fountain every evening, sitting cross-legged on the parapet and delivers spiritual messages to a small circle of listeners in catchy phrases: “Past is gone, present is going, and tomorrow is day after tommorrow’s yesterday. So, why worry about anything? God is in all this. He is one and indivisible. He is yesterday, tomorrow, and today.” (Narayan, 1976:25)

The local eccentric plays a symbolically realized role. The utterances of the eccentrics emphasize transitory nature of human life. Raman’s aunt’s grandfather, ‘The Poona Grandee’ has left his wife in order to live with mistress in Poona who gives birth to numerous children, after whose death the Poona Grandee, at the age of seventy five marries a seventeen year old girl. The owner of the Bhandari Stores is a “water thin man with a waxed moustache so finely pointed and turned parallel to the earth that if you stepped too close it might puncture your eyes”. (Narayan, 1976:24) The Police Inspector is a hater of Mondays. An accountant, Raman’s neighbor, is an “office ridden negative man….A replica of the Common Man created by the cartoonist Laxman.” (Narayan, 1976:159) His wife is a lefty lady with a “turmeric splashed face.” (Narayan, 1976:160) There is the old man with a white flowing beard and a distinct voice who can tell future if the interested man mentions either a number or a colour. The Bangle-Seller who shows his interest in the welfare of common men are actually money minded. With the help of coloured bangles he has decorated his shop. Publicising sale of bangles with family planning catch-word he wants to earn money.

The village priest does not allow the young painter to paint a birth control slogan on the outer walls of the temple where barren women go to pray for children. He opines
that evil thoughts do exist in such a type of planning. Turning out from the place, he calls Raman a man of evil mind and says “No, no, no, you get out of here first,” (Narayan, 1976:78) which describes the orthodox mind of the old priest. The characters of Raman and Daisy are Cardish and all the eccentrics are minor comic characters.

4.5.5 A Tiger for Malgudi

In ‘A Tiger for the Malgudi,’ Narayan pursues literary tradition of ‘The Panchtantra,’ in which animal characters behave like human beings and are the protagonists of the stories. The novel gives an account of the life story of a Tiger Raja, who is gifted with a mental ability, and other distinguishing qualities He has been then spiritualized by his Master.

Opening the door of spiritual life for the furious tiger that caused terror in other animals of Mempi forest his Master brings a change in his wild life. Accepting the philosophy of non-violence which is rooted in the soil of Malgudi he understands his master’s spiritual sermons on Yoga and looks forward to his salvation. Knowing his guilt, the tiger feels sorry for killing the animals for his food. Thus, the violent tiger is transformed into a saintly creature with non-violence as the chief cherished opinion of life. Narayan views that the animals have thoughts and feelings as human beings. The spiritual development of the animal community is presented by the novelist.

Even though Raja is illtreated by the Captain on the film set with a metal tongue to soften, he makes the Captain aware of danger and screams: “Oh, Captain, don’t be foolhardy, your life is in danger, go away, leave me before any calamity befalls you.” (Narayan, 1983:114) It reveals that a ray of humanity comes out from the heart of the terrorist like Raja. The circus life of the tiger stands for the active aspect of man’s life and his peaceful life in a zoo ending in peaceful death is symbolic of sanyasa, the last phase of human life. The tiger makes human beings to understand that he is not a wild animal who enforces to remember the writer’s saying in ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’ that the beast is a “cruel and insulting word for a living creature.”(Narayan, 1983:83) Raja, the tiger is hero of the novel who comes out better than most human beings.
Captain, the owner of Grand Malgudi Circus is the Malgudi inhabitant. Being hardworker his routine life is fixed. He takes care of animals and is worried about their health and welfare. There appears that the Captain and his wife Rita continuously argue but even then there is domestic harmony in his house which is expected by Malgudi family system. The Captain is obedient to his wife Rita and has kept their boys in Lovedale School as per the wish of his wife. It presents him as an Indian loving father. The Captain is helped by his wife in the circus work but he never introduces his wife before her performance on the trapeze. According to him creatures need introduction and not his wife.

Rita, the wife of Captain, is a bit argumentative and is not a submissive traditional woman like Savitri in ‘The Dark Room’ or an independent woman like Daisy of ‘The Painter of Signs’, but she is very much devoted to her husband. Analysing the character of Rita Master says “some wives in this world show their deepest love only by nagging.’ Being devotional and faithful wife of the Captain, Rita loves him with great pleasure. For a profound love with her life partner, a nagging wife of the Captain, Rita does well in a show of the circus expecting benefit of her husband. Rita, a woman who enjoys her conjugal love is unable to show her feelings in speech. She does not bear the pangs of separation after her husband’s death. When she understands that her husband, the Captain has been beheaded by the tiger, she commits suicide without a word or tear which is recalling of a ‘Sati’ in Indian social history. It makes the novelist to say that an ‘ideal wife lives and dies with her husband.’ (Sharan, 1993:292) Narayan tries to give a new dimension to man-woman relationship.

Master is not a fake swami but real one. The Master, a man of prosperity, who participated in the Quit India Movement and lived at Ellemma Street with his wife and children, left one night behind everything for seeking spiritual heights and to seek illumination of a true ‘Sanyasi.’ Very much in the manner of Sidhartha he acted to merge his soul with the universal soul. Commenting on Narayan’s search into saintliness of Sanyasi, K. Natwar Singh says:

A Sanyasi is one who renounces everything and undergoes a complete change of personality. He assumes a new name, bearing no mark of his ancestry or class, but indistinctive of some general beatitude. He had
freed himself from all possessions and human ties. He is a wanderer, living on alms, never rooted to any place except when he seeks the seclusion of a cave or forest at some stage for prolonged meditation. (Natwarsingh: 1983)

Master is Raja’s transformer. He brings about a drastic change in the life of the dreadful animal Raja. Accepting the Master, as his teacher Raja the tiger yields himself to the mysterious powers of Master and becomes his follower. The two—the ‘Guru’ and ‘Chela’ (teacher and disciple) return to the green foliage of Mempi hills where they pass their days in philosophical speculations which mainly involves teaching of the ‘Bhagwad Gita.’ The nameless Master of the tiger is undoubtedly a real saint who has obtained a spiritual maturity and strength after ‘Sadhana.’

Master’s wife appears at the end of the novel. Once, Master was experiencing spiritual pleasure in the company of the tiger. Master saw a woman visitor coming and Master guided the tiger Raja to keep himself out of sight. Acting on the direction of the Master Raja observed everything thorough leafage. The woman was master’s wife. As a faithful Indian wife she laid down before master, which indicates her profound respect for her husband who has a noble soul.

The chairman of Save Tiger Committee is responsible for the tiger’s protection in forest from hunting. He allows Alphonse to shoot the tiger when he says something to him in whisper. It shows that the officers in the Malgudi are not free from the system of corruption.

4.6 World-View
4.6.1 The Man-Eater of Malgudi
There are two contrasting symbols in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’, Natraj stands for traditional values and Vasu symbolizes Bhasmasura. Vasu’s philosophy of life is to oppose peaceful and ordered life of people in Malgudi. The two persons Vasu and Nataraj psychologically and emotionally are opposites of each other. Vasu’s presence in Malgudi locale is horrible not only to Nataraj who is follower of Gandhian philosophy i.e. ‘ahimsa’ but also to everybody in Malgudi. Narayan presents evil as
self-destructive. Science and technology has made Vasu more powerful than Ravana who possessed ten heads and twenty arms. The philosophy of ‘Asura’ is that there are no ideals like truth and morals in the world.

In ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ the relationship between Vasu and Nataraj is considered as the meeting point of good and evil which can be treated as coincidence. Kumar the temple elephant is the chief attraction of the grand procession. Nataraj has prepared the Krishna Radha procession. Vasu has planned to kill the elephant while the procession is on. His wicked plan fails as Vasu proves to be the cause of his own death. The novelist attempts to show how the westernization and modernity have distorted human relationship. It suggests conflict between Indian spiritualism and Western materialism.

‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ is a well shaped novel in which matter and method are artistically blended. The arrangement of the events is well-designed which results into a successful novel. The novel deals with the basic problem of existence and evil. The mythical element in the novel is powerful which shows destruction of ‘rakshasa.’ Nevertheless, the social structure does not create evil or the social good does not ruin it. Though the novel presents social customs or social ways of life in a vivid manner, it is social in its implications. The cause of Vasu’s death is unbecoming. Nobody can avoid the ultimate end of life which is death. Death is inevitable for everybody. Everybody has to pass through this last stage of life. It is right to say that his own wickedness is the ground that is responsible for Vasu’s decline. The manners of Vasu are like ‘rakshasa’ and his death is only through coincidence and for that reason proves to be, morally meaningless. Vasu dies like ‘Bhasmsura’ with a blow of his fist on his own head. The novel comments on this coincidence through the following words of Sastri:

Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the ‘rakshasas’ that were ever born. Every demon carries within him unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction on and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. (Narayan, 1961: 243)
The action and reaction between Nataraj and Vasu shows contrasting attitude of these characters towards their life. Vasu is under the impression that all the things around him must satisfy his ego. Nataraj’s unselfish nature is essentially unwanted in his printing business. Vasu and Nataraj are the sufferers in their life. Vasu’s rashness and Nataraj’s shyness and their contrasting nature of behaviour give a chance to examine these characters.

The view that an evil bears its own destruction is possibly quite consoling. It mirrors again the Hindu passivity and trust in fatalism. Narayan has no ideological commitment. He does not pay much attention to the dialectics of history which exercises that man has to make his future that is confronted by evil and man has to struggle for his salvation. The accidental death of Vassu, a taxidermist, lends the novel a touch of moral relevance to the recent times.

‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ may be called a novel of character which presents the characters like Nataraj and Vasu who are men of opposed characteristics of human race. R. K. Narayan achieves abundance in the theme by describing conviction for the evil through the character of Vasu which is termed as the poetic justice.

‘Bhagvad Gita’, a religious book of India preaches universal principle about godly and devilish nature of human personality. The characters, Nataraj and Vasu are the representatives of this philosophy in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’. Nataraj is a man of social awareness, understanding and follower of traditions. Being devilish Vasu thinks of the world without faith, truth and morals. Unable to distinguish between good and evil Vasu likes to be involved in the evil acts.

The use of Bhasmasura myth focuses on the result of devilish way of life in the society of Malgudi which has a traditional platform. On account of the use of myth the novelist is able to give new breadth to the narration. Malgudi in ‘The Man-Eater of Malgudi’ has been brought to a new height of significance with the help of the myth. Hence, myth shapes and governs plot, theme, characters and world-view of the novel.
4.6.2 The Vendor of Sweets

‘The Vendor of Sweets’ does not possess lavishness and animation. It has features of tragi-comic excellence in the picturization of life. The character of Jagan is artistically portrayed by R. K. Narayan to reflect his simplicity and discipline of life. The realism does not conceal duality of his mind which usually flavours pretence. Being a shrewd merchant his intention in running shop is to earn money. Jagan’s unassertive nature is not able to establish his identity in the company of his son Mali. Despite his negative view, Jagan as typical Indian father cares for his son’s education, health and his prosperous future life. Opposing Western values Jagan attempts to preserve Indian tradition, social system and morals. He gives long lectures to his servants and cooks in his shop. By curtailing price of the sweet Jagan allows Malgudi people to enjoy taste of the fruit in his sweet-mart. Jagan is presented as a staunch supporter of Gandhian thoughts and philosophy.

‘The Vendor of Sweets’ is a novel of character. Mali’s intimacy with Jagan presents the conflict between tradition and modernity. There are eccentric characters such as the cousin and Chinna Dorai who may be termed as ‘types’ of Narayan’s comic world. Grace is a pleasing despite her Western nature. The captains, Adjournment lawyer, the Sait, Sivraman, the cook are ‘life-like’ characters who are projected in the novel to complete the circle of Malgudi.

The novelist tries to show an unexpected meeting between the East and the West which is considered as remarkable. R. K. Narayan presents modern India against the traditional India through the portrayal of Mali and Jagan. The men and women who go to America come back with Western thoughts. Their attitude regarding life style and way of life changes. It is noticed that they forget their tradition, culture and custom. Narayan presents this reality through the character of Mali.

‘The Vendor of Sweets’ presents manners of the Eastern and Western cultures. Westernized Mali separates himself from his father Jagan which leads to “the divisions of East and West, of young and old, of child and parents.” (Walsh, 1983:151:52) The novelist shows changes that have been taking place in the society of India after Independence. People in the country are seen using Gandhian philosophy for their personal gains. The clash between the old and new generation is
observed because of cultural unlikeness. ‘The Vendor of Sweet’ presents a study of traditional as well as Western cultures in India. Hence, the novel is a social document.

Jagan presents Indian fatherhood who allows his son to go to America for further study. He tries to know American civilization and culture through his son’s letters which are written by Mali under the impact of modernization of life in the West. Jagan does not appreciate Mali’s living with Grace without marriage. Jagan opposes the presence of Western materialism and commercialism in India, in particular, in Malgudi.

In ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ Narayan brings to the front the confrontations between the two generations of contradictory values through the altering reality in India. The conflict between the old and the new, between traditional and modern between the east and the west direct the contrary forces incorporated in Jagan and Mali to their doomed end.

The world view in the novel works out through the characters and their relationships. Intimately mingled into life styles were the ideals before the two generations, one before independence and the other after it. Jagan, a typical travesty of Mahatma Gandhi belongs to the generation which was involved in the freedom movement and was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. This peculiarity has made him a traditionalist in his life style. He talks of Mahatma Gandhi, and recalls ‘the heritage of ‘The Ramayana’ and ‘The Bhagvad Gita’. (Narayan, 191967:95) On the other hand, Mali, his mediocre son is snobbish and shallow. The great heritage of India and the sacrifice for the sake of liberation of the country from the colonial rule by those that belonged to older generations are not known to Mali and his generation.

meaningless ideas about greatness of the west have enticed young men and women whose absolute concern has been the acquisition of money and power. Finally, the chase of mimic-men like Mali would lead them to calamity as they land Mali in jail. Having faith in the traditional wisdom, Jagan obtains a new vision and becomes a free man. ‘The Sweet-Vendor’ views that tradition shows a way to the freedom of soul whereas modernity tends towards its imprisonment by body.
The corruption and disloyalty in serving has become rampant, even though the middle-class ultimately clings to the traditional morality and good behaviour. The encroachment of new values in modern life has caused a sudden fall and adulteration. Suffering from rootlessness, Mali does not understand clearly the crisis in his life. The novel recommends the inculcation of mental vigour and viability of the Hindu view of life as advised in ‘The Gita.’

The ideal of a detached mind is the utmost expression in Jagan; the Vendor of Sweets. He finds his own solution in withdrawal and detachment. Life and its problems are to be realized as temporary and passing. Jagan’s feeling has been ‘Nothing really to matter.’ This view of life discredits any involvement in the changing life and its problems. It is the desire of a person to do his ‘Karma’ assigned to him with full detachment as Sivaraman made a preparation in a very good manner. Change, in this way is illusion, insignificant and involvement needless. Entering ‘Vanprasthashrama’, Jagan seeks solution to his problems in following the path of traditional wisdom.

Jagan’s problem is his uncontrollable son who has landed himself in jail on the issue of bottle of liquor. The individuals in ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ projected are the ‘types’ in a realistic way, where the crisis has no social dimension. The view of life has been outlined in the work.

Through the novel ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ Narayan has made efforts to present the contrast between the norms of the East and the West, or yesterday and today. The ambiguous relationship between father and son i.e. Jagan and Mali is presented. The division of way of life, thinking, and attitude do not allow them to stay together. The three divisions East and West, young and old, child and parent are picturised by the novelist. The novel shows changes taking place during the post-independence era in the Indian society. Narayan highlights how Gandhian philosophy is used by selfish people for the fulfilment of their personal needs. The cultural differences become the causes of the conflict between traditional and westernized generations. The novel ‘The Vendor of the Sweets,’ thus remains a valuable study of the Indian society after independence.
4.6.3 The Painter of Signs

R. K. Narayan as a novelist who gives importance to the domestic setting in his novels and portrays family conflicts through his characters. He wants his readers to be sympathetic towards his characters. A scene of dramatic irony is produced by Raman’s faith in rational illumination of mind and Daisy’s falsification by Raman. Raman and aunt are the source of conflicts between old and new generation.

Raman shows his rational approach in his praying to the goddess. The priest’s singing of spiritual songs presents the oral tradition of saints and people who worship either God or goddess. Being a progressive woman Daisy may not respect this. The Town Hall Professor predicts that “This will Pass” (Narayan 1976:25) but the man and woman like Raman’s aunt will not realize it.

The novelist presents family conflicts in most of his novels. The role of Daisy shows change in women community in the society. The reason for it is that women in post-independent of India have become confident and positive in their outlook. They have been given liberation in different fields to pursue their careers independently.

In the novel ‘The Painter of Signs’ the novelist has treated the theme of sex. According to Narayan sex is not an activity which goes on day and night. It has certain restrictions in respect of time and place. Daisy is aware of the restrictions of traditional society in Malgudi and norms of morality. Daisy’s rebellion is seen in her rejection of her parents’ proposal about her marriage. Daisy accepts the reality of the relationship that exists between man and woman. She takes care of maintaining her identity. She rejects dependence on another person which is the basis of the Hindu marriage system. Daisy does not think of her marriage. Her devotion to social work is of great importance to her. She refuses to act upon Raman’s desire of accompanying him to his house. Daisy is totally modern woman who gives more importance to independence in life. She tries to show herself as an individual even though she is surrounded by a social group.

Narayan in ‘The Painter of Signs’ tries to present woman’s identity and her independence in economic terms. The woman’s individuality, liberty and her independence are the major issues in post-independence period of India. The attitude of
male is changing towards the women. In ‘The Dark Room’ Narayan presents
dependence of woman. She depends on man for everything. Daisy is a self-reliant and
a confident woman. R. K. Narayan in ‘My Days’ says:

In ‘The Dark Room’ I was concerned with showing the utter
dependence of woman on man in our society. Daisy in my novel ‘The
Painter of Signs’ is not dependent on man she is very strong character’. (Narayan, 1971:62)

Rejecting the powerful dominance of the male in the society, Daisy objects to their
authority. She agrees to marry Raman on two conditions that they will not have a
child. If unfortunately she gives a birth to a baby she will remain free for social work
by keeping him away from her. Narayan has presented the vision of a progressive and
modern woman who is aware of her independent identity and economic freedom.

The scientific progress has brought many changes in Malgudi. A hydroelectric
project, on the Mempi Hills, jeeps and lorries are some of the remarkable instances of
projects of developments in the Malgudi. These developments, of course, can not
satisfy spiritual needs of the people in Malgudi. The temple and the river Sarayu exist
there to serve their purpose.

During the post independence era in India the increase of population at the highest
rate has become the most severe problem. It has given a big challenge to the country
like India to control the growth of population. The novel ‘The Painter of Sign’
presents a reality about population in India. An aggressive woman, Daisy is presented
by R. K. Narayan who has undertaken responsibility of tackling the problem. She is a
model for the women in Malgudi and also for the women all over India.

The extremely transformed India is the background of the novel ‘The Painter of
Signs’. The socio-economic changes during the post independence period, its
achievements and problems are shown by the growth of Magudi including the
establishment of the family planning clinic. Being a product of Free India Daisy
devotes herself to the work of family planning, undertaken by the Government. The
sarcastic end of the novel is remarkable:
He mounted his cycle and turned towards. The Boardless that solid, real world of sublime souls who minded their own business. (Narayan, 1976:183)

According to Narayan the unreal world of changes is suggestive of the world view that man cannot change the pattern of life. Narayan has brought out the changing social reality.

4.6.4 A Tiger for Malgudi

‘A Tiger for Malgudi’ is Narayan’s captivating fictional work in which is observed the cinematographic picturization of each moment. The faithful presentation of animal-world leads the reader to enjoy spiritual world happily. Narayan’s interest in birds and animals has been revealed his discernment and genuineness. He is able to give expressions to their likes, dislikes and thinking. The novelist presents different moods of beasts through the character of Raja. From the risky circus life Raja plays a role in filmshooting but he frees himself due to the Captain’s persecution. He then enters the headmaster’s room in the school where he creates horrible fear in everybody’s mind.

R. K. Narayan neither portrays submissive woman nor a modern woman in ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’. His presentation of nagging wife makes one realize that there is no healthy relationship between man and woman. Rita is Captain’s faithful wife. Inspite of her true nature and loyalty to her husband she constantly argues with the Captain. When she understands that her husband has been injured in the head by the tiger, Rita without uttering a word or shedding a tear commits suicide herself. This episode reminds of the traditional woman of the past who lived and died with her husband knowing that the life is meaningless in the absence of a husband.

‘A Tiger for Malgudi’, well-formed novel is a political allegory. It may be called a social satire. Narayan presents the Master who is leading a life of severe discipline and hardship. The character of Raja possesses qualities of human being and desires to seek salvation. Being interested in spiritual songs on ‘Yoga’, Raja listens to the thoughts on God and ‘Gita’. Hence he feels repentant on his act of killing animals for the purpose of food. It is very difficult to agree with the view that a tiger like animal feels sorry for his kills but that is the reality presented.
Narayan, in ‘A Tiger for Malgudi’ introduces a new dimension in novel form by uniting myth and fable, Raja the tiger is profoundly rooted in the cultural context of India. It suggests the timeless quality of ancient legends. He brings the century old religious and philosophical beliefs of the nation into a fictional narrative.

The writer shows reliable comprehension of the animal-world and the perfect world of spiritual bliss. In the artistic handling of various birds and beasts Narayan presents his astonishing vision and unusual authenticity. From the mature pen of the novelist their likes and dislikes, thoughts and ideas are given sufficient expression. In a true sense the novelist gets inside Raja and picturizes the various moods of this dreadful animal.

Narayan borrows a leaf from the ‘Panchtantra’ to tell the story of his tiger from his infancy to the old age through blending animal world of the ‘Panchatantra’ with the human world of Malgudi.