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3.2 The Middle Novels

In this chapter, the growth of R. K. Narayan’s career as a novelist the plot construction, theme, characterization, and world view are different from the early chapter entitled ‘The planting.’ We see development and enhancement of thought, style of structuring the events in relation to the theme and characterization. It is like the growth of a tree which is going to have branches connected to the stem of the tree. It needs to be emphasized that plot and actions of the four novels discussed in chapter three shows the growth has become complicated and that more than one sub-plots are woven together by the novelist, R.K. Narayan.

Narayan’s novels in the first phase i.e. ‘The Early Novels’ are autobiographical except ‘The Dark Room’. With ‘Mr. Sampth’ Narayan begins his new phase of creative writing. Narayan’s comic intelligence has obtained new texture and his craftsmanship has introduced new modes and facets which are not handled by the novelist in his first four novels discussed in chapter-two entitled ‘The planting’. These novels are written after independence. Life after independence has become more complicated and complex. In the same way the characters in these novels are not innocent because they see everything with a critical approach and they also have become ambitious of passion. The novelist dramatises a strange sense of emotions and passions in the creation of human contacts as life around has changed materially.

Narayan has extended the range of his story from small town of Malgudi to a large area that is district town of Malgudi. As the period of experiment is over, he attempts to present complex situations and characters. Narayan in these middle novels presents dreamers, artists, financiers, twisters, eccentrics, cranks, cinema stars and sanyasis. Some of them are not born and brought up in Malgudi. They are outsiders staying in the Malgudi.

Narayan concentrates his attention on the problems of modern age, money and sex. Humanity, morality and charity are the three remarkable features of human beings in the society, but they have been replaced by money, commerce and sex in the modern times. Materialistic advancement and industrial development have influenced Indian
life after independence. In the early novels, the novelist mirrors conflicts between tradition and modernity but money and sex have occupied the core place of subject matter in his middle novels. Money and sex are the two strong and strange forces which influence and shape the life of people in the modern Malgudi locale. Money and sex are the two prominent components in ‘Mr. Sampath’, money as the controlling force is the central focus in ‘The Financial Expert’, love in ‘Waiting for Mahatma’ and money and sex are the dominant factors that occupy the place in ‘The Guide’. Narayan’s early work presents simple relations in Malgudi setting but his desire of treating new kind of themes places him in the wider-world. ‘Mr. Sampath’ begins where earlier novels leave off. The Malgudi novels show the town Malgudi changing and making progress in various walks of life from time to time. In the first phase of The planting beginning with ‘Swami and Friends’ and ending with ‘The English Teacher’ Malgudi remains unchanged.

Malgudi in the middle novels does not remain a semi-agricultural town but it has got importance as a semi-industrial town and people belonging to different strata of the society have started to reside there. Through the railway network Malgudi is connected to the neighbouring towns and cities. Consequently, people from the world outside started visiting Malgudi and its environs as tourists. A self-contained village is transformed into a prosperous tourist place. The change in Malgudi has brought economic change in the Malgudi inhabitants. Purchasing of ‘Jukta’ and horse by Raju’s father in ‘The Guide’ to visit shops, banks and adjoining places shows his economic prosperity. Srinivas’s attack as the editor of ‘The Banner’ on the problems of the town in every issue underlines these first signs of development. Consequently, the Municipal Chairman revives the Malgudi Extention plan and the editor begins to receive copy of the scheme. Malgudi district is becoming the busiest district in South India because of a new bridge across the Sarayu river also shows development in the locale, Malgudi.

The economic change in Malgudi has influenced life of the people and has brought tremendous changes in their way of life, understanding and attitude. The people’s desire for wealth is highlighted by the novelist in the middle novels. ‘Mr. Sampath’ is a narration of a man who has strong desire to earn money in a very short span of life. ‘The Financial Expert’ is Narayan’s exploration of money-making Margayya. The
life of modern man is depicted by Mr. Sampath and Margayya who try to acquire positions of dignity but ultimately they have to come back to the place from where they started their profession. The influence of Mahatma Gandhi’s thoughts, campaigns and actions is noticed on all the sections of the society in ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’. Narayan presents modern Indian life through his characters in ‘The Guide’

3.3 PLOT
3.3.1 Mr Sampath
With ‘Mr. Sampath’, one rightly notices that Narayan’s skill as a craftsman begins to develop in a new manner and outlook. The strands of a varied plot are woven together to shape the variegated thread. The story in the novel moves round the main characters Srinivas, Sampath, Ravi, and the old land lord have been intermingled to form a single plot.

William Walsh considers ‘Mr Sampath’ an exception to the “remarkably woven…..quality”of Narayan’s novels. The exception is ‘Mr. Sampath’ a treatment of the zany Indian film industry, which is both uncertain in intention and queerly hump-backed in shape.’ (Walsh, 1964:122) The opening chapters of the novel focus on the conflict of Srinivas occuring now and again seizes Ravi’s tale of frustration in love. Sampath becomes the central point of focus of narration in the chapter IV.

The Plot of ‘Mr. Sampath’ opens with the life story of Srinivas which shows that the publication occupies his mind seriously and he even forgets that he has to call his wife from her village home. In his zeal to start the weekly Srinivas neglects his family. It indicates how the publication of ‘The Banner’ in Malgudi plays a powerful role in shaping his mind and character. Reading of ‘The Upanishads’ has made him indifferent to his family life and he holds philosophical attitude towards this world. With the “expected revolution in the Banner” – its obstruction is caused by the ‘Press-Strike - the scene turns over to the Sunrise Picture Studio. The plot of ‘Mr.Sampath’ gets perplexed with the whims of the persons like Somu, Sohan Lal, De Mello, V.L.G. and others involve Shanti and Ravi performing eccentrically in the tangled mix up. It is noticed that the plot and action in ‘Mr. Sampath’ have become complex because a number of independent short stories are connected to the main plot of the novel.
Shooting of the film ‘Burning of Kama’, and the love of Ravi for Shanti are the independent stories and they contribute to the structure of the plot. Involving eccentrics, mainly in the action of the fiction, Naryan skillfully makes efforts to give farcical colouring to the narrative.

The indefinite strike of publication work leads Sampath to join Somu’s plan of film production. The shooting is disturbed by V.L.G - the star performer of Shiva’s role. When the shooting of ‘The Burning of Kama’ resumes Shanti plays the role of Parvati, Sampath of Shiva and Ravi is the artist working in the arts department of the film studio – the Sunrise Pictures, Malgudi. Ravi finds his lost Beatrice in Shanti. In the climatic scene the heroine and hero embrace each other, Ravi rushes between Shiva and Parvati and takes Parvathi away. The story of the film is mythical ‘The Burning of Kama- God of Love’. Kama tempts Shiva when he is meditating at Kailas. He opens the third eye to burn Kama. Again he gets involved in meditation with detachment. In the film the temptation of Shiva the main theme of the myth is mishandled by the director by giving vulgar and provocative sense to the film. It is a deviation from the mythology which is a treasure of spiritual stories of India and it ultimately causes ruin of the picture and destruction of the studio. Lunatic Ravi is sent to the police lock-up and Sampath runs off to a bungalow in the Memepi hills with Shanti. Sampath used to live in the new extension with his wife and five children and he had married his wife according to Vedic rites. Even Sampath desires to have one more wife according to the civil marriage law. Srinivas, returns to the editing of his journal and Shanti abandons Sampath and takes train to Madras. The wheel has run full circle and detachment follows attachment. The inevitable sequence of attachment follows attachment to the wheel of life which is summed up in the holy Gita “Thinking about sense objects will attach you to sense-object. Grow attached and you become addicted”. (Prabhavanand, 1955:42)

When the shooting of the film ‘The Burning of the Kama’ advances the disturbance takes place because of Ravi’s frustration. Narayan presents the climatic scene in which Ravi watches Shanti as Parvathi and Sampath as Shiva. On seeing hero and heroine embrace each other Ravi turns lunatic. Rushing between Shiva and Parvathi he pushes Shiva and takes Parvathi away. The picture is ruined, the studio is damaged. The atmosphere in the strange plot becomes straight in a strange manner.
Ravi goes downright crazy, the ‘Burning of Kama’ goes up in smoke, Sampath receives great blow and gets twisted in the trial of life, and Srinivas, self-controlled goes back to his editor’s desk. It indicates that the Malgudi people in the course of deviation suffer in their life and their returning to the initial stage makes them realize Narayan’s recurrent theme of the return of the native. Srinivas is able to start his periodical ‘The Banner’ once again with the help of a Police Inspector, a strange kind of benefactor.

The recurring pattern Order-Disorder and Order is followed by the novelist in the novel, which begins with smooth life of Srinivas but the arrival of an outsider Sampath creates disorder in the peaceful life. After a series of unpleasant experiences Srinivas detaches himself from the world of printer and turned into a film producer. The removal of disorder restores the previous order. By reviving his journal, Srinivas finds a sense of calmness in life.

Love springs out in two contradictory directions Ravi is the lover of Shanti and the plot with these characters whirls round either monologue or sentimental explosion. The characters whose mind is haunted by one thought fabricate a sequence of suppositions and chances. Their mental tension and romance becomes a source of action. A sentimental artist Ravi, a bank employee in the account section has to shoulder the responsibility of a big family when his father is attacked with paralysis. An unknown girl whom he loves at the first sight is the main source of inspiration in his drawing and starts portraying in oil colours. Before its completion the girl’s leaving Malgudi disturbs Ravi’s peaceful life. Ravi’s nature and the beauty of the beloved offer him a chance to meet her regularly at the temple. Seeing the object of inspiration at the Iswara’s temple causes awakening in the artist and he begins to paint in new form. Narayan’s theme of order-disorder and restoration to normalcy is reproduced through Ravi’s life as a lover.

Narayan’s novels are combinations of realism and fantasy. ‘Mr. Sampath’ is not free from the elements of the fantastic.
“The fantastic is a quality of astonishment that we feel when the ground rules of a narrative world are suddenly made to turn about 180…‘The fantastic is a potent too’ in the hands of an author who wishes to satirize man’s world or clarify the inner working of man’s soul” (Rabkin Erick, 1977:41)

Some of Narayan’s novels have the fantastic as one of the components of plots. Fantasy co-exists with the realism of setting and characterization. Narayan’s use of fantasy as a comic adjunct, many times inclines to be incongruous. Usually, the second half of Narayan’s plot no doubt breaks away from the realism of the first half, and fantasy takes over. ‘The Bachelor of Arts’ has the touch of fantasy and the second half of ‘The English Teacher’ conspicuously full of fantasy. The zany movie world in the second half of ‘Mr. Sampath’ again revolves around the course of the fantastic. These novels have constantly an obvious element of the fantastic in them.

The plot with its characteristic realism remains the story of a private life with occasional strain of comic overtones in the character of Mr. Sampath. The suspension of the publication of the Banner and Sampath’s immersing into the movie world with Srinivas gives a strange twist to the plot. ‘Mr. Sampath’ has elements of picaresque scheme because Mr. Sampath with ambition and overconfidence moves from place to place in Malgudi to achieve something very big or something unusual which is not common in relation to every person in malgudi. He seems to be a jack of all trades. He starts as a printer then becomes a producer-actor, and finds finds himself ending in calamity. This bestows the plot an absurd fantastical turn. ‘There is from then on a crescendo of comic fantasy in which Srinivas is the comparatively sane and innocent intruder into the mad world of Movies.’(Moore, p.73)

Occurrences and confusions in the plot of ‘Mr. Sampath’ resemble deviations from the normal and realistic, though they are the entertaining events in the novel. Srinivas’s thinking, long on timelessness of Malgudi against the never changing backdrop of human panorama gives the conclusion an unusual moral importance.

The constructional design in ‘Mr. Sampath’ concentrates on the motivational twins of love and money. Somu and Sohanlal are the financers of the company but the
The shooting of ‘The Burning of Kama’ is left incomplete because V.L.G. doing Shiva demands additional five thousand rupees. The first crisis ends to be followed by another crisis. Ravi’s love for Shanti does not allow the scene to go forward. Shrinivas thinks of starting of fresh journalistic career because ‘man has no significance except as a wage-earner’. (Narayan, 1949:13) These instances demonstrate the impact of materialism on the traditional world of Malgudi. The climax in the shooting is built in terms of a mythical legend. Indian life in the post independence period is influenced by the materialistic progress and development in industry.

3.3.2 The Financial Expert
Narayan’s ‘The Financial Expert’ in second phase of career i.e. ‘The Middle Novels’ is called a satire because it criticizes man’s earnest desire of accumulating enormous wealth in Malgudi vista. But Malgudi the living character in Narayan’s fiction does not appreciate Margayya’s act of assembling money on high interest from the peasants. Consequently, an average man who tried to reach the highest position in Malgudi has to return to the initial place where he began his career.

The plot structure in ‘The Financial Expert’ is divided in three sections. The first section of the structure deals with Margayya’s dreams and ambitions. Establishing his identity as the rich man in Malgudi he desires to purchase the house in the Lawley Extension and desires to get his son admitted to the convent school. The second section of the plot is a description of Margayya’s collapse of financial career. The elements of fantasy are introduced by Dr. Pal who considers himself as an agent of God and the episode of Lakshmi worship. They are useful to make the central theme of the novel firmly established.

A well-built plot of ‘The Financial Expert’ is imaginative in idea and skilful in performance and has an organic compactness in the creation of a figure of great importance. The absence of the sub-plot and digression in ‘The Financial Expert’ does not disturb interest in the main plot. The whole story of the novel revolves around the pivotal figure of Margayya and it is exceedingly a novel of character in the domestic setting. Margayya is tempted by the desire to provide a future for his son Balu. He moves from a humble but happy position as financial expert to the village.
peasants with his headquarters under a banyan tree and enters the wide and wicked world of financial speculation, pornography and money-lending. The central character, Margayya as an ordinary money-lender starts his business under a banyan tree in front of ‘The Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank’ in order to advise villagers of Malgudi in getting loans from the Co-operative Bank.

His excessive desire for money causes him to stop this business and to cherish and pursue dreams of wealth and power. To him money alone matters in life like air and food. This grand thought of getting more money leads him to perform puja to Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth. This episode makes fate to bless Margayya and he climbs up the ladder of money making. It indicates that money wizard Margayya has strong faith in God and Goddess, and it suggests his nature. The funny episode takes place in the novel which introduces Maragayya’s son Balu. There is chase of son by father which may be seen in every Indian household. It is the remarkable experience of fatherhood presented by the novelist in Malgudi which presents fatherhood in every house of India. In a mood of happiness Balu runs away with Margayya’s account book, and throws it into the gutter. Hence it becomes very difficult for Margayya to continue his old practice.

Yearning for money and love for son Balu are the two dominant objects that contribute strongly to lend a definite direction to Maragayya’s action, and, therefore to give coherence to the plot. ‘The Financial Expert’ is Narayan’s one of the best novels in terms of form and structure. The dramatic conception of character in ‘The Financial Expert’ has given the tightness of plot construction.

The dream of enormous money does not allow Margayya a sound sleep, which compels him to go to the temple priest, where he performs puja to Lakshmi for forty days. Using red lotus and milk of a smoke-coloured cow for maintaining holy atmosphere Margayya has recited the holy verses a thousand times. It also shows that the Indian people whenever are in difficulty or want to achieve wealth worship God and Goddesses. One may feel it exotic and superstitious but in the Indian context it is authentic. It also makes one to recall ‘Lakshmi Pujan’ during ‘Deepawali Festival’ in India.
As a result Margayya’s meeting with Dr. Paul brings a dramatic turn in the life of Margayya. Purchasing Dr. Paul’s script ‘Bed Life or the Science of Marital Happiness’ Margayya publishes it in the form ‘Domestic Harmony’. The flow of money from the sales of this sex book has helped Margayya in establishing his social and financial status in the Malgudi town.

The family life of Margayya dominates the structure of the novel ‘The Financial Expert’. Being a representative of the Indian fatherhood Margayya shows his prominent interest in the development and growth of his son, Balu. He wishes to send his son to America for higher education after completion of graduation in Malgudi. But Balu hates education and disappears from Malgudi which makes Margayya pathetic. It reflects emotional and sentimental attachment between Margayya as a father and Balu, as a son. Margayya is a symbol of paternal love and affection. Unable to tolerate Balu’s disappearance, his mother Meenakshi and others force Margayya to leave for Madras and Margayya is helped by the police inspector in the search of his son. Parents in Indian family context always think of the welfare and progress of their son. Balu’s coming back to Malgudi is a source of Meenakshi’s boundless happiness. Narayan presents Indian fatherhood and motherly affection through the episode of Balus’s disappearance.

Margayya’s search for a girl for his son’s marriage shows the tradition bound and horoscope-matching Hindu society. After a long search Margayya decides to settle Balu by arranging the wedlock with Brinda, a daughter of the owner of tea-estate in Mempi-Hills. When the horoscope does not match he keeps himself quiet from the old beliefs in the planets. He thinks that astrologer’s advice is a formality and shows his faith in hard work. The whole episode presents him as a man of progressive ideas. The growth and development of Margayya is paralleled with the growth of Malgudi.

With the help of Dr. Pal Margayya starts his business of money lending and opens his office at 10, Market Road. He begins to get deposits on twenty percent interest and keeps counting money till midnight. There are different calculations in Margayya’s mind during his meal. Meenakshi, Margayya’s wife, worries about his health. As an Indian woman she always thinks of her husband’s welfare and worries over his thin appearance. Meenakshi’s attitude towards her husband presents the nature of Indian
woman-hood. Margayya brings money in sacks in the car. The element of chance brings a break in Margayya’s happy life. Balu’s demand of a share in property leaves Margayya shocked. In the company of Dr. Pal, Balu follows immoral ways of life and refuses to give attention towards his wife and son. Balu is found in the company of imprudent girls. The wheel of destiny turns a full circle. Suspecting Dr. Pal’s role in Balu’s life, Margayya hits Dr. Pal. The episode of revenge follows. The evil days begin to rise in the course of Margayya’s life. The depositors start to withdraw their money from Margayya’s bank as persuaded and prompted by Dr. Pal. The end of the episode shows Balu’s coming back to the old house from his villa with his wife and child and helpless money wizard begins his old profession of a financer under the banyan tree, which shows how Narayan treats his recurrent theme return of the native.

At the end of the novel-again the parallel with Mr. Sampath is marked. Margayya has lost everything and is about to return to the banyan tree where he started to play the role of a financial expert. The element of chance lands him in deep distress. The cyclical structure of the novel is indicative of the recurrent theme of return of the native. It reflects the reality that the foul means are punished.

‘The Financial Expert’ is dominated by the economic motivation and love. Margayya a business transactor under banyan tree becomes a noble man in money lending profession but Margayya does not change. His decision to go back to the banyan tree suggests starting life afresh and hopefully.

The two important deciding forces Dr. Pal’s meeting with Margayya and Dr. Paul’s meeting with Balu are the strokes of coincidence. The preceding force symbolizes the cause of prosperity and it values the profession of Margayya as a financial expert. The second deciding force is the chance meeting of Dr. Pal with drunken Balu, which Margayya feels will lead to the financial ruin. The coincidence in ‘The Financial Expert’ carries double meaning. Thus coincidence stands for prosperity as well as adversity. It remains a tool of good and bad in life.

Margayya’s action, right from the beginning is pushed forward by the sameness of purpose. The initial career of Maragayya as a small moneylender under a banyan tree fixes the tone of the novel. The religious attitude of the common people is shared by
Margayya. His meditation to pacify Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth to extend his financial frontiers shows that he believes in astrology and that it takes the plot further. Margayya, as a ‘Money-mystic’ and financial wizard gives the novel fantastic colouring. The writer amalgams realism and fantasy in order to keep the novel free from the absurd-fantastical denouement of ‘Mr. Sampath.’ The rise of Margayya as a money lender shows monstrosity.

The organic unity of construction is not permitted to be marred by Balu- Dr. Pal axis. On the other hand its very episode and personage in ‘The Financial Expert’ intends to forward the plot and observes the unity of impression. The component of fantasy maintains the proportion and it mixes with the realism of setting and characterization. The figurative overtone in the peripeteia is taken into consideration as the novelist’s special favour of imaginative realism.

‘The Financial Expert’ picturises human relationship which forms the structure of the novel. The middle-class family in the locale like Malgudi is a constituent of Margayya’s portrayal. The novel deals with the father-son relationship in a psychological manner.

3.3.3 Waiting for the Mahatma
The plot construction in ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ is not complete but fragmentary. The unity of time, place and action is provided by the character of Mahatama Gandhi. The present novel is a description of the freedom struggle in which the characters Sriram and Bharati are actively involved. There are two parts in the novel. Sriram’s adventures and his meeting with Bharati are elaborated in the first part while the second part of the novel constitutes Granny’s continuation of life, and projection of Sriram’s relationship with Bharati in a new form. The event of Gandhi’s assassination at the end of the novel contributes completeness to the artistic narration. The absence of melodramatic touch in the plot gives opportunity to the novelist to narrate the scene of Gandhi’s death artistically.

Gandhiji’s struggle for India’s freedom is the background against which the story of Sriram’s love for Bharati takes place. A big crowd of people in Malgudi waited for the Mahatma because they were guided by him during the freedom movement. In the same way Sriram and Bharati were also waiting for the Mahatma’s consent for their
engagement. The action of the novel is influenced by the Mahatma. It is underlined that the Mahatma is everything to Bharati. The episodes of the novel take place in Malgudi. Gandhiji’s revolutionary thoughts and action are contrasted by R.K. Narayan with the views of the Malgudi people and Sriram’s Granny who are deeply traditional in their way of life.

The plot has traditional Indian family setting. The unstriking eventless course of Sriram’s life has turned him into a semi-moron. Sriram would have used his indolent life time in looking after his Granny, who has deposited money for her pampered grand-son. The story takes a turn as Sriram forsakes his loving Granny to follow the Mahatma. It is not nationalist ardour for which impulsively Sriram joins Gandhiji’s group of followers but it is his love for Bharati. An unexpected confrontation with Bharati brings a change in his life.

Love at first sight is the set pattern of this novel. Even though Sriram’s love for Bharati is an absolute event, it does not possess situational reality. It is love that happens because it happens. His love for Bharati brings him in the Gandhian movement. The corresponding movements of love and service to the country contribute to plot speeding forward. Characters portrayed in the novel are materialistic and they do not have faith and purity of heart. Sriram does not wait for the Mahatma but for Bharati. The motivational device of love is presented by the novelist.

Sriram’s meeting with Bharati is a dramatic episode. Work on spinning wheel and uses of hand spun cotton dress are inspired by Gandhiji’s nationalism. Bharati one of the activists in the freedom movement was collecting money for the welcome of Mahatma and she met Sriram near the market fountain and asked for his contribution. Sriram fell in love with Bharati at first sight. His unreasoning fondness for Bharati has forced him to join Gandhian freedom struggle. Consequently, Sriram’s hard effort contributes to Gandhian movement being powerful in the traditional town, Malgudi.

Sriram’s meeting with Jagadish in the ruined temple is the turning point in the life of Sriram. The ruined temple is symbolic because it is the place where he is brought in the stream of terrorist activities. His active participation in derailing trains, cutting telegraph wires, setting fire to the court records and exploding bombs present
Sriram’s love for the country and hate for the white people. Hence he is arrested by the police and released from the jail after Independence.

The structure of the novel has flavour of Gandhian principles of non-violence, love and freedom. The relationship of Sriram and Bharati projects Gandhiji’s process of thinking. One may witness reflection of personal life into the national activities. When Sriram comes to meet Bharati he knows the difference between passion and love, violence and non-violence. Gandhian ideology is underlined against the background of the love story of Sriram and Bharati.

The entire plot of the novel from the beginning till the end moves around the character of Sriram’s love for Bharati against the freedom movement which is started by Mahatma Gandhi. Sriram’s love for Bharati is true. Due to imprisonment he has been separated from Bharati. Sriram goes on fast to find salvation from the violent terrorist activities which suggest influence of Hindu philosophy regarding the fast. He feels that because of fast he is able to tame violent sex passions. To him fast is the spiritual act in Hindu religion which purifies the mind of a man by taking away evil thoughts.

When Sriram is released from the jail after Independence he marries Bharati with Mahatma Gandhi’s approval and blessings. Sriram’s expression of will to marry Bharati in a careful manner is in keeping with the age old tradition of India. Sriram’s marriage with Bharati reflects the victory of non-violence over violence. The youths are successful in winning freedom but they have lost their leader of freedom movement, Mahatma Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhiji’s determination of ‘Kanyadan’ represents one of the religious rites performed by the parents of the bride in the marriage of Hindu community. But the destiny does not allow him to fulfil his desire because he is assassinated by the young man in the prayer hall.

The episode of Granny’s survival is astonishing. Knowing about the death of Granny Sriram goes to the cemetery, but just to find old Granny alive. Readers get the feel of the society in this event. Sriram’s granddmother is prevented from entering in Malgudi by the villagers. They are under the impression that some evil event will take
place in Malgudi. The people are superstitious and they are not able to make any
difference between life and death.

The direction of incidents is variegated, with a turn for the fantastic. Sriram’s tasks
and pranks under the guardianship of Jagdish are stirring but at the most amusing.
They do not give any notion of a patriot in action. The death of Sriram’s Granny takes
him back home, but only for a while. “After this the story takes a fantastic turn. In
this novel the occasion that breaks it is even more fantastic than usual, and strangely
incongruous in the context of Narayan’s general realism.” (Parameswaran, op. cit., p.
72)

The grandmother starts respiration again. After many vacillations of fate Sriram is
married to Bharati. On the day of assassination of Gandhiji, in New Delhi the two
shores of the plot, private and ordinary, and the other, national and ordinary incline to
get entangled rather than weaving together. The unity of impression sustains loss in
result. ‘The Waiting for Mahatma’ is not a love story, and it does not succeed to carry
epic quality of Gandhism, as ‘Kanthapura’ did. The plot is episodic in its scheme of
Gandhian struggle. The two episodes at Solur, and ‘Mathieson Estates’ are greatly
pleasant and they scarcely convey the Gandhian theme. Sriram, as a part of movement
is given responsibility of writing ‘Quit India’ at different places, which brings him
into contact with variety of people. His meeting with Mr. Mathieson, owner of
plantation estate is memorable. This seven-foot English man came to India in his
youth and made this land his home. Being sixty-two today he has attachment to this
country. He does not want to wipe out the slogan ‘Quit India’. Therefore, he asks why
should he quit the country with other Britishers?

‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ is free from melodramatic element. Thus, unconscious
expression of the Mahatma is in the form of remarks:

You may come and all the dreadfully serious business in life is over.
Bharati, I have a feeling that I may not attend your wedding tomorrow
morning. (Narayan, 1955:250-51)
The novel is full of humour. But sometimes it takes place where it is not necessary. Sriram’s conversation with Methieson: ‘You too want to refire there.’

Narayan presents Indian rural life with untouchable and the pathetic condition of freedom fighters in the jail. The crowd waiting for Mahatma Gandhi on the sand of Sarayu is realistic. Natural atmosphere painted by the novelist in the novel is precise, vivid, accurate, appropriate and suggestive. Descriptions build situation hence atmosphere and incidents are important and easily noticeable. With economy of words he presents graphic picture of summer in South India.

It was April, the summer sun shone like a ruthless arc lamp and all water in the well evaporated and the road-dust became bleached and weightless and flew about like flour spraying off the grinding wheels. (Narayan, 1955:21)

3.3.4 The Guide
Like other novels of Narayan ‘The Guide’ is based in Malgudi, the fictional town in South India and he uses ‘flash on’ and ‘flash back’ techniques in the structure which helps him to maintain curiosity of the reader about the present and the past incidents of Raju’s life. He describes present life as well as early life of Raju. The novel is innovative and complex both in conception and construction and sketching of the central character causes complexity. The novel originates its subsistence from the Indian heritage. The inherent improbability is to be seen dazzling to the western mind; obtains worthiness of belief in the Indian context and for the Indian sensibility. The profession of Raju with its fantastic overtone recalls Maragayya’s exoticism of the Indian scene. ‘The Guide’ is at once a lively tale of teeming modern India and a thought provoking fable.

The situation in which Narayan presents his characters is realistic and convincing. He gives details of every situation that his heroes have to go through. The plot of the novel revolves around the central character of Raju in Malgudi and development in the character of Raju is shown through the different events which have taken place in the life of Raju. On account of his experience of life Narayan watches everything in minute details. The character of Raju is described at different places of Malgudi in
different situations: Raju as a small boy in the shop or a shopkeeper at the railway station, as a tourist guide, and as a saint.

The action flows out of character and also influences and moulds the life of character. Raju grows up near a Railway station in the house of an ordinary man who runs a shop at the Malgudi station. He begins his career as a book-seller but his continuous contacts with tourists give him recognition as ‘A Railway Raju’. Working as a guide to the tourist on the neibouring Mempi Hills and in the caves Raju becomes a tourist guide. One may witness progress of Raju only because of Malgudi Railway station and Malgudi as a tourist place.

The central figure of ‘The Guide’ Raju has been given symbolic significance by his life and the novel takes its texture after him. In the very beginning the novel points out a personal story of Raju as a railway guide and Rosie’s lover but steadily develops into a ‘novel of India.’ The third step of Raju as Swami grows widely to encircle the Indian scene, its intricacy, its fatuity, and its grandeur. The structure of the novel claims a blending of realism and fantasy. The two divisions of the plot in ‘The Guide’ tell stories in two different manners. Bruton rightly says:

“It contains, in the interior monologue of Raju which constitutes most of the book, a magnificent flow of comic invention.” (Brunton; op.cit, p.60)

The career of hero follows “the familiar pattern of anonymity to glory followed by deflation.” (Taranath; p.366) The tremendous change comes in the life of Raju when he comes in contact with Rosie and her husband Marco, who is interested in the study of India’s culture, caves and paintings. Rosie, a temple dancer wants to see a king cobra dancing. Their contrasting attitudes towards life and interest give a chance to Raju to fall in love with Rosie at first sight. Raju loses his shop at the railway station and his mother’s affinity because he is staying with a married woman which is against the traditional way of life and the social context of Malgudi.

Rosie is ushered into the life of Raju by the first important episode in the novel, and the plot takes a new turn. The steps in the progress of the plot are Raju’s skill in
dealing with the ill-matched couple and wily allurement of unfortunate wife. They are loaded with easy inclination to improbability and exaggeration. Besides, moral thought of the issue could make it unpleasing and shocking to the Indian sensibility. The motivational twins of love and money are the centre of the plot construction of ‘The Guide.’ Raju and Rosie are the lovers. They are lovers of each other for life. Raju gets money working as a tourist guide. A parallel may be drawn between Raju’s never satisfied strong desire for money, and Margayya’s earnest wish for profit. The disaster, in the life of Margayya is caused through his son Balu and Dr. Paul. In the case of Raju no other person but he himself is responsible for the blunder in his vaulting ambition. Rosie tries to obtain love and life and thrill and passion in the company of Raju. She achieves fame and money by giving the performances of her art of the classical dances of India. Raju becomes her manager.

The incident that disturbs their comfortable life is that in which Raju forges Rosie’s signature on the document for her jewels. Consequently Raju is jailed for two years where he guides the prisoners and becomes a model prisoner. Rosie leaves for Madras. On Malgudi works of art a book is written by Marco. Money brings lovers together and also separates them at the same time. Rosie’s jewelery has separated them for the rest of their life. The climax in the plot of ‘The Guide’ reaches to the height with Raju’s imprisonment because of his overreaching himself. It is the real climax. It brings Raju-Rosie intimacy to an end which shapes the main string of the plot. The beloved Rosie consoles him with irony of moral wisdom: “This is Karma” (Narayan, 1958:193) It is Narayan’s craftsmanship to make the situation look reliable and he accomplishes it by bringing up Rosie’s consciousness of her marital bond with Marco- “After all he is my husband.” (Narayan, 1958:179) The writer’s narration of the present is notable for its comic skill. The interlinking of interior monologue is skillful and the technique of the story telling in connection with the past and the present is commendable. Despite her emotional relationship with Raju, Rosie does not forget her past relations with her husband. In this situation her womanhood is noticed. The husband wife relationship in the Indian context has a glory of its own. The woman deserves nothing without husband because apart from emotional life he is everything to the woman.
Narayan’s method of plot construction in ‘The Guide’ has knit skillfully the episodes of Raju’s career with unity of purpose and unity of impression. The story of the novel indicates the fate of the hero, Raju. There is a close relationship between the story and the theme of the novel. The narrative of the novel oscillates between the past and the present. It moves backward and forward as Rosie does when she dances which suggests that Raju’s present is rooted in his past. There is parallelism in the stories of Rosie and Raju. Rosie narrates to Raju the story of her own experience with Marco and Raju narrates to Velan the story of his past life. Raju allows Rosie to speak for herself and the novelist allows Raju to tell the initial part of his life which closes in the jail.

The closing part of the plot is a visible sign of breach with the scheme of incidents. A mere coincidence takes Raju to Mangala, the village. He comes out of jail and comes to Mangala with only a desire to avoid his past that is haunting him. The villagers there need a myth and he fills the role of a Swami rather casually. The temple in ‘The Guide’ gives shelter to Raju as it shelters Savitri of ‘The Dark Room’ and Sriram of ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’. Raju, at the end turns to his new role with delight and the narration moves in the direction of fantasy as Raju indulges in the efforts to play a role which is over reaching himself. Raju takes a shelter in the temple on his release from the jail and in the temple Raju meets Velan the rustic who takes him for a holy saint. Reading holy Gita to the villagers Raju begins to play a role of spiritual adviser to them. His narrating of the story of his by Raju to Velan does not affect Velan’s attitude towards Swami. Raju remembers mother’s advice that if there is a good man, rain may come and the whole world is benifited by it. Hence Raju becomes ready to sacrifice his life for the welfare of others. His long fast for bringing rain changes his status form a sinner to a saint. On the twelfth day of fast Raju drops down and feels raining in the hills.

This event shows spiritual aspect of Indian culture which is presented through Raju’s growth into Swami. Raju’s interest in Rosie’s classical dance and his role as a Swami indicates intimate relationship between art and spirituality in India. Hence, Raju, Rosie and Marco are considered as the symbols of India’s culture. Marco is a cultural historian of the past, Rosie is a cultural messenger of present and Raju is a cultural prophet of the future.
The novel begins with Raju in a ruined village temple and ends in the same locale with death. Thus, the tale is completely rounded which has circular structure. Narayan’s mastery in using a literary device of ambiguity to seek balance in the diverse elements of realism and fantasy is demonstrated. The ironic comedy of the situation changes into a stage of self awareness that belongs to the sphere of tragedy. Some people view that Raju at the end dies and becomes a martyr. The novel, *The Guide* is fetched to a greatly fruitful end by the conclusive collapse of Raju. Uma Parmeswaran is of the view that Raju does not die but is saved by “glucose saline injections” (Chew, op. cit., pp. 70) He lives on to enjoy his reputation as a Mahatma. The last scene of the novel is sensitive balancing of seriousness and humour. The discussion about Raju's death or survival is immaterial as it is beyond what is “stated” in the novel. What is significant is that the “sainthood” that was initially “thrust upon” Raju has ultimately been attained by him. The status that Raju has acquired through his sacrifice is what counts as his process of self-purification through his fast.

The action of the novel springs out in two streams which represent Indian culture and tradition and they have been brought into a single whole by presence of Raju and parallelism and contrast. The first stream flows in the legendary Malgudi with its rich tradition of classical dance presented by Rosie- Nalini and the second stream flows in the village Mangala when the spiritual aspect of Indian culture is presented through Raju’s growth in to a Swami. Rosie has strong interest in the classical dancing. There is also parallelism and contrast in the stories of Raju and Rosie. As Raju narrates to Velan the story of his past, Rosie narrates to Raju the storey of her own experience with Marco. Rosie speaks for herself in the same way as the novelist has allowed Raju to tell the first part of his life that closes with his imprisonment.

Narayan describes setting in the novel in a suggestive manner. The instances are ‘Birds and monkeys settling down for the night’, ‘beyond the hills the sun was setting.’(Narayan, 1958:5) Being a painter of the scencs he paints appearance of Rose's husband. ‘He dressed like a man about to undertake an expedition with his thick coloured glasses, thick jacket and a thick helmet’. ‘A green, shuny water proof cover giving him the appearance of a space traveler.’ (Narayan, 1958:9)
3.4 THEME

3.4.1 Mr. Sampath

The theme of man to man relationship, illusion versus reality, innocence versus experience and the return of the native are kept on in ‘Mr. Sampath’ by Narayan through his characters of Srinivas and Sampath. One of the two central figures, Srinivas presents the attitude of acceptance and notion of reconciliation. The other character, Sampath is a moral deviant and he is called the rebel. He illustrates the wicked image of a rebel. Srinivas unconsciously acts as a rebel himself in a different way.

The theme of man to man relationship in ‘Mr. Sampath’ depends on intention and interest. The characters like Sampath and Srinivas are very close to each other only because of purpose. The relationship between these men moves around mercantile and financial context where emotional and sentimental values are being neglected. The requirement of the printer for ‘The Banner’ has brought them in contact with each other. The benevolent nature of Sampath is witnessed in the first encounter between them. Sampath says, “When a person becomes my customer, he becomes a sort of blood relation of mine.” (Narayan, 1949:68)

Mr. Sampath and Srinivas are the men of different attitudes. Srinivas is simple minded person who thinks deeply. Mr. Sampath is able to do many things. The industrial and commercial developments in the Malgudi have contributed to establish contacts between two men of contrasting nature. These provide them business opportunities in trade and commerce. Consequently, Sampath and Srinivas have started working as a printer and an editor a story writer respectively. In this regard Girla says:

The impact of materialism on the traditional world of Malgudi is projected unmistakably in ‘Mr. Sampath’. Mr. Sampath uproots himself from his traditional ethos to run after illusions of material success. (Girla, 1983:40)

Srinivas, an idealist, is restrained by the two coercionists at one and the same time. The one forces him to revolt and the other compels him to compromise and accept the situation. The eccentric rebel behaves completely opposite of what he declares. The
reading of ‘Upanishds develops in him an attitude of doing nothing. His thought of
detachment develops a negative attitude in him which further deteriorates him. It also
makes Srinivas’s revolting conscience ambiguous. In every part of the novel,
Narayan shows this conflicting attitude. If the editorial voice “thundered against
municipal or social shortcomings” (Narayan, 1949:30) immediately, his subconscious
voice went on asking “Life and the world and all this is passing why bother about
anything? The perfect and imperfect are all the same. Why bother?”(Narayan, 1949:
30)

Srinivas is presented as the philosophical rebel in ‘Mr. Sampath.’ Narayan focuses on
the negative attitude of his rebellion in the form of revolt. It is illustrated through his
living so much absorbed in the work of ‘The Banner’ that he forgets to remember his
wife and his son. His ardent desire of starting publication of the journal the weekly
‘The Banner’ leads him to neglect his family duties and that indicates his illusion of
idealistic work. Making himself free from the work of printing Srinivas is persuaded
to get involved into film making. Srinivas’s journey from printer to film maker
indicates the theme of innocence versus experience. In spite of Srinivas’s
contradictions as a rebel, he has a strong faith in the principle of withdrawal and non-
doing.

Sampath is the rough rebel. The rogue’s revolting inclinations are seen in a number of
scenes. The rebel, Sampath’s falsehood noticed at the Registrar’s office that ‘The
Banner’ will be a literary paper. His act of ‘cracking nut-shells’ and eating them at
court shows his violation of norms. The possessor of the myth of the staff at his press,
Sampath does not permit any one to put his feet across the curtain exhibiting ‘a lion
attacking a deer’ symbolizes fraudist’s image. The myth disappears as soon as
Srinivas understands the fact that the whole press was handled by Sampath and a boy.

Sampath’s film ‘The Burning of Kama’ reflects the rogue’s rebellion in the form of
deviation. When the man V. L. G., the Shiva of many films denies to play his role,
Sampath promptly removes Shiva and appears himself on the stage as Shiva. It is an
act of reviling God as Sampath stages himself as Shiva, goes very close with wicked
desire for Shanti playing Parvati. The act of deviation, Narayan emphasizes remains
important. The writer’s intention is to suggest karma consequence of the protagonist’s
departure from morality in the scene of great violence at the time of film shooting. Sampath gives a ridiculous description of Indian mythology. His acting of the role of Shiva may be elucidation as the rogue’s faithlessness. The artist Ravi wrongly took Shanti as his Beatrice. There are some instances of the known victims. One may observe the beginning of Sampath’s faithless attitude in his own home as he gets entangled into the thought of marrying his so called cousin Shanti. The other easily deceived persons by Sampath are Soma Sundaram, the financer of the film and the old landlord.

Despite his words to get Ravi married to his grand daughter, the swindler Sampath leaves him poorer by five thousand rupees. The character of Sampath is symbolic who emphasizes illusions of Srinivas. Unable to achieve success in the film production the rebel does not cease his plans. and ditched by Shanti, the rebel continues his schemes. He says: “well, I may probably try and save myself if I can interest them (Sohanlal and Somu) in a new story.” (Narayan, 1949:219) Srinivas stands for doing nothing and withdrawal suggests Narayan’s recurrent theme: the return of the native. Dismissing Sampath’s unreal influence for ever the narrator says: “He raised his hand, flourished a final farewell, and set his face homeward.” (Narayan, 1949:219) Through ‘The Banner’ he attempts to find values of life. Giving up the idea of the film-making Srinivas returns to his old work of publication.

3.4.2 The Financial Expert

The novel ‘The Financial Expert’, underlines themes like father-son relationship, mother-son relationship, man to man relationship, generation gap, modernity verses tradition and theme of rebellion. The theme of father-son relationship is presented in its complete form, in which Margayya; Balu’s father gives very much importance to nothing except money in his life. He admits his son Balu in the convent school to show people around him that he is a son of a rich Margayya family. Balu’s failure in S.L.C. examination and news of his death make Margayya disgusted and pathetic which underlines father’s emotional attachment. Balu’s mother Meenakshi is a woman of profound and broader heart who always worried about her son. She becomes extremely pathetic when her son, Balu disappears from parent’s roof. She merely said “Tell me about Balu. That is what I need, not clothes” (Narayan, 1996:147) when Meenakshi hears the news of his death she burst into tears.
The relationship between Margayya and Dr. Pal is complicated and it shows that they are attached to each other for their individual interests. Their financial interest in the initial stage is a reason of their successful relationship. Margayya’s excessive attachment to money leads him to propiate the goddess Lakshmi. R.K. Dhawan considers meeting between Margayya and Dr. Pal as the blessing of Goddess Lakshimi and says: “The Goddess of wealth, Lakshmi smiles on Margayya when, he one day, runs into Dr. Pal, the apostle of sex, the emissary of modern civilization.” (Dhawan, 1981) Understanding Margayya’s earnest desire for money Dr. Pal wins his heart and tells him that it is money that gives people authority, dress and looks. Margayya realizes that Dr. Pal is the only man equal to his disposition. Hence, he positively responds Dr. Pal’s statement. Dr. Pal forces Margayya to buy manuscript on ‘The Bed Life’ based on ‘Kamsutra’ which turns him into a rich man over night. He also helps Margayya in arranging his son’s marriage with a rich girl, Brinda.

Margayya, an illiterate man begins money-lending business under the banyan tree, with the old tin trunk as his only furniture in Malgudi. Evolving a technique by which Margayya, sets the rules of co-operative Bank at nought and makes it possible for the needy villagers to obtain extra loans from the bank even when they are not eligible to do so.

Violating the bank rules, Margayya supplies blank forms to the semi circle of the peasants. Subsequently, he finds a method to make money. With a bang, Margayya starts playing notion of rebellion, unconsciously. As a money lender, Margayya performs a scheme which frustrates the very purpose of the bank: the promotion of thrift and elimination of middleman. (Narayan, R.K.1952:2)

The corruption in the bank troubles the villager which compels Margayya to work for their welfare. Understanding their details of family, Margayya renders help in a very rude and haughty manner. He always tries to show them that he is their benefactor. For instance, Margayya’s transaction with the villager Mallanna from Koppal. ((Narayan, 1952:3)
Margayya’s rebellious tendency as deviation is seen in the instances such as when the head peon of the Bank, Arul Das requests Margayya to put an end to the business under banyan tree, and when Balu, Margayya’s troublesome son, brings complications for him by flinging account book into the Malgudi gutter.

Obsessed with thoughts of money, as per the direction of the temple priest, the forty days course of prayer and penance is duly completed to the Goddess Laxmi, by Margayya. It seems to have produced no effect on Margayya’s financial position. However, in his efforts to find a red lotus for the rituals to be performed during these forty days, Margayya has made acquaintance of Dr. Paul, a journalist who has completed a book, called ‘*Bed Life on Domestic Harmony.*’ Buying a manuscript of the book, Margayya publishes it and the book indeed sells like hot cakes and brings a large profit to him. Magayya does not remain an ordinary money-lender.

Deeply interested in building up a happy future for his growing son Balu, Margayya dreams of Balu’s becoming a doctor. Balu, despite of Margayya’s efforts to see that the boy gets through his examination, tears off the school record and throws it into the gutter. The climax of Margayya’s misfortune in this sphere of his life comes when the boy simply runs away from Malgudi. The overwhelmed grief is caused in the family by an anonymous letter in Madras saying that Margayya’s son is dead. The ‘loss’ of Balu may be considered as Margayya’s sacrifice of his son to the Goddess of Wealth. (Alphonso-Karkala, 66) Balu symbolically suggests Margayya’s less attention towards his family.

One may witness Margayya’s notion of deviation projected in his son, Balu’s marriage. In the course of his railway journey to Madras, Margayya, with the help of the police inspector, finds Balu in a cinema house working as an advertisement boy. Balu, with his father, returns to Malgudi where Meenakshi receives him with joy. The money minded Margayya feels greatly flattered and puffs up with pride when he receives a score of matrimonial offers for his son. At last, Margayya receives the horoscope of a girl who seems to be desirable from every point of view and the fact alone tilts Margayya’s mind in the girl’s favour Brinda, especially because the father of the girl is a rich fellow who has a tea-estate in Mempi hills. The astrologer who is called to study horoscopes is treated with contempt when he shows impatience by
Margayya, “Hey, Pundit, can’t you remain at peace with yourself for a moment.” ((Narayan, 195:152) Margayya’s disagreement with Pundit reflects his deviation against the Malgudi way of marriage engagements.

Resting himself on the peak of commercial world Margayya invites deposits from the well to do people of the town, offering them a high rate of interest, much higher than any bank would pay. In this new venture, he became a leading financier in the town, Malgudi. Ironically, however, the brilliant rise of fortune turns into the meteoric fall of misfortune as well. The fall of Margayya, ironically seems to have been acted quickly by his son, Balu. Balu’s important role in Margayya’s fall shocks not only his father but also everybody by asking for his share of ancestral property. Margayya declares insolvency as, there seems to be no end to the demands of clients for their deposits back. The ironic realization of insolvency, indicates Margayya’s total fall in life. The narrator explains:

“Margayya could sit up no longer. He just flung himself down on the floor beside the window. No air could come in. There were terrifying faces all around and babble of voices, and over it all came the cry of an ice-cream pedlar: Ice Cream. Ice Cream for thirst! as his bell tinkled. (Narayan, 1952:176)

The fall of Margayya, in true sense, resembles the fall of the king Midas in ‘In Golden Touch’ who found it impossible to eat the food. Likewise, Margayya also lost his desire for food. If the fall is considered the effect of Margayya’s rejection of Saraswati, it may equally be considered the consequence of Margayya’s indifference to his wife who in the Indian tradition is given importance as the Laxmi in the home. The wheel has come full circle, as the saying goes. Margayya’s decision to resume his old business under the banyan tree infront of the co-operative Bank has symbolic significance of the return of the native. One may observe, the protagonist’s strong will to be in the company of his grandchild.

Now get the youngster here. I will play with him. Life has been too dull without him in this house. (Narayan, 1952:178)
Margayya’s rebellious tendency may be taken as the symbolic realization of the repetitive theme of Narayan’s Malgudi novels: illusion versus reality. The four resources to picturise the theme are Dr. Paul, Balu, the rustics and the banyan tree. With his wide social and professional contacts, Dr. Paul helps Margayya to rise from the position. He is the pivotal cause of Margayya’s meteoric rise to the heights of the financial business and also of his abrupt decline. So to say, his role in the novel ‘The Financial Expert’ stands out to be symbolic.

One may realize reflection of Margayya in the deeds of his son, Balu, one of the symbolic characters in the novel. His engaging in fire project has resemblance to Margayya’s playing with the fire of money. In the state of rage, Balu’s snatching the register from father’s hand, and tearing its entire bulk into four pieces, and then without the least hesitation, throwing it in to the gutter has symbolic significance which denotes negligence of the goddess Saraswati. It reflects money-maniac’s contempt of Saraswati. Balu’s moving rapidly from the house and going with great haste to Madras and the news of his death results in Margayya’s leaving away from the family affairs and in the case of Balu the loss of his good self. Balu’s failure to take care of his wife Brinda and spending much of his time in the company of loose women may picturise Margayya’s negligence of his wife and his enormous involvement in the lust for money. Balu’s coming back to the town of Malgudi may project Margayya’s own return to the banyan tree and the peasants which indicates Narayan’s recurrent theme: the return of the native.

The rustics describe the life ‘Freed from confusing illusions and hysterics”, and symbolize normal and sane life of Margayya. Thinking of the rustics may be chaotic in the absence of the banyan tree which symbolizes the cultural ethos. The banyan tree, more prominently represents a primary source of ‘spirit of the place.’ It can be compared to the spirit of the place represented in Thomas Hardy’s Egdon Heath, pictured in ‘The Return of the Native.’ Hardy’s place, Egdon Heath, is symbolic of the primitively powerful elemental force which seems to be not inclined to hesitate to take the life of the person who does not behave according to the norms of the spirit. The character, in the novel Eustacia Wye, for this has to pay the heavy penalty-death.
The protagonist, Margayya does not undergo any change in his outlook. On the contrary he remains static. Margayya is always hopeful that the next turn of the wheel of fate will help him realizing and restoring his dreams. However, it is notable to see mysterious development in his consciousness suggested in his return. Narayan, in ‘The Financial Expert’ doubtlessly has used rebellion as deviation to emphasize the strategy of withdrawal and acceptance as the object worth wishing in human life.

3.4.3 Waiting for the Mahatma

‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ has characteristically a special theme and setting. It is a political novel. The back-drop has clearly some national and political overtones. Narayan’s ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ is considered as a Gandhian novel. The novel ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ is apprehended clearly through the national movement spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi. The characters in the novel are delineated against the background of the movement started by Mahatma Gandhi in India which has influence the people and their activities in Malgudi.

The theme of Gandhism is incidental which is not basic to the novel. The political background, though invigorating, does not have the necessity or immediacy as it has in K. A. Abbas’s ‘Inquilab’ or Chaman Nahal’s ‘Azadi’ Meenakshi Mukherjee’s comment here is worth-quoting:

Thus to condemn ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ as an inadequate presentation of the Gandhian movement is to condemn it for not doing some thing Narayan never set out to do.” (Mukherjee, Meenakshi; 1971:43)

It is pointed out that the novel, ‘Waiting for Mahatma’ as a Malgudi novel, is confined to the will and woe of middle class life as its milieu. Narayan’s portrait of Gandhi fails to carry conviction. The theme of Gandhism is treated in the novel to a certain context. It is viewed in relation to Shriram that the typical middle-class hero is a rebel in ‘waiting for the Mahatma.’ He is an idiotic type of rebel. The notion of rebellion is presented mostly through pre-Bharati period in Sriram’s life. In a true sense Sriram does not have sterling qualities of rebellion that rebels have. This “recluse grandson” has grown as the plants to be twenty. The only activity he has
done during these twenty years is “watching the street...morning to night.” (Narayan, 1955:2) On his twentieth birthday he received the amount “Thirty eight thousand and five hundred rupees, seven annas, and six paise” (Narayan, 1955:7) deposited by his grandmother, the perplexed boy not knowing how to go about spending money celebrates the occasion by purchasing a canvas chair for his Granny.

The day before A New Year’s Day, Sriram’s encounter with the pretty girl causes restlessness in him and he stands arrested by her eyes that sparkled with happiness. The collection of money for welcome of Mahatma Gandhi plays a vital role in the encounter between Sriram and Bharati. He almost repeats Chandran’s love at the first sight with the girl Malathi in ‘The Bachelor of Arts.’ They are called contrasting characters because their birth places, tastes, and their attitudes towards love and life are not the same. Sriram and Bharati become intimate only because of Gandhiji’s blessing. The inclination of love, in Sriram drives him to the thought of marriage but he broods over the hurdles that may come in marrying a girl in the Hindu society of Malgudi:

How old are you? What caste are you? Where is your horoscope? Are you free to marry me? (Narayan, 1999:22)

A boy of average quality, Sriram knows nothing about Mahatmaji. Gandhiji’s influence makes Sriram join the national freedom movement. The novelist, R. K. Narayan says:

Sriram suddenly came out of an age-old somnolent and woke to the fact that Malgudi was about to have the honour of receiving Mahatma Gandhi” (Narayan, 1955:22)

The ordinary, common place lad is unable to bear the hot sunlight setting on the sand wait restlessly for the arrival of Mahatma. Feeling thirsty, not able to get longitudinal cucumber slices, Sriram thinks “waiting for the Mahatma makes one very thirsty.” (Narayan, 1955:25) Prominently to say, it is enticing to compare Murthy’s enthralling experience of the first vision of the Mahatma in Raja Rao’s ‘Kanthapura’:
And he sat beside the platform, his head in his hands and tears come to his eyes, and he wept softly, and with weeping came peace. He stood up, and he saw there, by the legs of the chair, the sandal and the foot of the Mahatma, and he said to himself, “that is my place.” (Rao, 1938)

For Bharati, Mahatma Gandhi and the national movement are of greater importance than her affair with Sriram, who is simply a shadow of Bharati, who also for the sake of his love, follows her and gets innocently involved in the national movement willy-nilly. Therefore P. S. Sundram remarks that:

The novel is not a political novel. He (Narayan) is not concerned with projecting Gandhi’s image, but telling the story of an average young man and show he happens to fall in love with one of Gandhi’s followers and what happens to the two (Sriram and Bharati) of them. (Sundaram, 1973:84)

Covering the pages with events from 1941 to 1948 the action of the novel ranges from Malgudi to Delhi and the love story of Sriram and Bharati advances against the background of freedom movement. The answer, given by Sriram is amusing when the Mahatma asks him: “What exactly do you want to do?” Blurt out, Sriram before Gandhiji, “I like to be where Bharati is.” Sriram, instead of granting permission of his old Granny decides to leave her at the dead of night to join Gandhi’s camp because his Granny thought that:

The Mahatma was one who preached dangerously, who tried to bring untouchables into the temples, and who involved people in difficulty with the police. (Narayan, 1955:41)

Sriram’s rebellion is noticeable in his deed of leaving his old Granny and joining Bharati. Here the Gandhian principle of “truth” goes out of sight. Two objects are emphasized by his notion of rebellion. In spite of love and upbringing of Granny Sriram abandons his grand mother. He desires greatly to be in the company of Bharati and he reaches his earnest wish through the act of patriotism.
Sriram makes hold and leaves home to work for ‘Quit India Movement’ but he is ignorant of the ethics of the national movement. His stupidity is observed in his meditation over the tail of the letter “Q” as the Britishers’ evil intention of wasting the national Quit India Notices.

All these things make the teacher in the village to show his dislike for Sriram and he advises: “Patriotism is not your monopoly”, Sriram warns him with: “Be careful, you will be headed when Britain leaves India. We have a list of everybody who has to be headed.”(Narayan, 1955:70) Sriram warns Mathieson, “if the Indians decide to throw you out, it may be safe for you”. (Narayan, 1955:77) The warning rings false.

What Sriram did, was precisely against the Mahatma’s teaching. As the true follower of the Mahatma Gandhiji, Bharati experienced the doctrine of self-command. On the contrary Sriram was unable to control his desire. As the time favours Sriram, he “suddenly threw himself on her…held her in an iron embrace in his madness” (Narayan, 1955:89) The self-professed Gandhian follower was committing a sin of intruding the lessons of pleasures from strong feelings and neglecting ‘Brahmcharya.’

The instances of his idiocy are his terrorist activities such as Sriram’s involvement in derailing the trains and setting fire to the government buildings. In a true sense he was indulged in violence. On seeing the dead body of his Granny, Sriram does not feel guilty; instead, he feels hungry and enjoys food at Kann’s shop. In ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ the love story of Sriram and Bharati is enacted against the background of Gandhi and Gandhian movement. The normalcy of life is disturbed by Sriram’s joining the terrorists, by his indulging in acts of sabotage, and ultimately being sent to jail. However, normalcy is restored when he is released from jail and the Mahatma blesses their union.

3.4.4 The Guide

The ambivalent disposition of the novel ‘The Guide’ furnishes thematic elucidations like the relationship between mother and son, illusion versus reality, crime and punishment and the notion of rebellion. The novel may be considered as Narayan’s picturization of the triangular love story which is apprehended clearly through the Indian ethos.
The relationship between mother and son is presented in a normal way in the beginning of the novel but it becomes complex because of Rosie’s arrival in Raju’s life. It also indicates the theme of conflict between tradition and modernity. Even though she is educated the influence of traditional orthodox values leads to suspect Rosie. Being a traditional woman Raju’s mother does not approve a presence of a dancing girl in her house. The relationship between Raju and his mother is the relationship of contrary disposition. Instead of deviating the traditional norms she decides to leave the house because Rosie is a married woman. But Raju’s mother changes her attitudes towards her son and Rosie when she realizes that Rosie, a dancing girl comes to their house for practising dancing.

The relationship between Rosie and Raju is complex because it is based on emotions and ambitions. Marco’s passive attitude and mind in research allows Rosie to stay with Raju all the time which makes him believe that Rosie is the only reality in Raju’s life. She moves from town to town and city to city in the company of Raju to become a dancer of fame. As she ascends the glory Raju becomes her manager. It is underlined that the relationship between Raju and Rosie has rested on purpose and interest. She performs dance day by day to give money to the lawyer to rescue Raju from the jail. Raju’s attachment to Rosie is financial and sensual.

The theme of man to man relationship shown in ‘The Guide’ is the relationship between an innocent man Velan and shrewd saint Raju. Velan’s appearance in the life of Raju creates a commotion. Velan presents Raju as a saint to the Malgudian people. Impressed by Raju’s saintly appearance, Velan as a devotee shows obedience and respect to him. Marriage of Velan’s sister under Raju’s guidance leads him to tell people that Raju is a saviour of humanity. From that day people begin to believe that Raju does not speak but changes life of a person. Raju shows his affection to Velan when he is injured by saying, “Unless they are good I shall never eat”. (Narayan, 1958:87-88) On account of Velan’s devotion and affection Raju undergoes fast to save people from the disaster of draught. He says ‘I am prepared to fast and do anything for you people’. (Narayan, 1958:98)
‘The Guide,’ distinctive study of Raju’s rebellion, marks the deviation of the protagonist from the moral and social values in the traditional Malgudi. The triangular love story is the original source of the theme of rebellion which has characters like Raju the lover, Rosie the beloved and Marco the husband. Raju is the leading consciousness who appears before the eyes through his title role of the novel. His rebellion may be read as “the later Raju sober sees the earlier Raju drunk”. (Iyengar, 1987:379) The notion of Raju’s rebellion oozes from the event in which he begins to play a role of a tourist guide. The external influences like Rosie, Marco, Raju’s mother, Gaffur the taxi-driver, are entangled in Raju’s rebellion.

The rebellion of Raju initially takes place at the Malgudi railway station, and the train symbolizes one of the prominent elements in bringing Rosie to Malgudi and then to Raju. Raju in his unexpected meeting with Rosie introduces himself as a new type of lover in Malgudi. This makes Srinivas Iyengar to say Raju as the ‘romantic doubled with the rascal’. (Iyengar, 1987:378) Raju appears to play a new role of a lover which is offered by Rosie. He plays the roles because other people desire him to play. In this regard William Walsh says:

> It is Raju’s fate to be the projection of other people’s conviction.
> (Walsh, 1973:14)

The moment Rosie gets down from the train Raju’s first look at her makes him think that they are made for each other. As soon as Rosie has set foot in Malgudi she wants to see a dance of cobra. Marco, her husband does not like to go with her because he thinks he is unable to stand near a snake. Marco says her, “your interests are morbid.”(Narayan, 1958: 58)

The domestic disharmony leads Raju to understand that Rosie is unable to perform herself as the complete woman and to continue her traditional art of dancing. Marco neglects Rosie’s dance as ‘Street acrobatics.’ Frequent quarrels between an ill matched couple afford the rebel an opportunity to exploit the situation for his own personal advancement and to play the double role as a lover and a dance appreciator. Here, Raju does not want to lose a chance and he says to Rosie:
Don’t you know my voice? Didn’t I come with you yesterday to that cobra-man? All night I did not sleep…the way you danced, your form and figure haunted me all night. (Narayan, 1958:64)

Balarama Gupta views Raju as a “Sinner, is a sinner is sinner” (Gupta 1981:127-35). R.K.Narayan presents Raju a seducer, and Rosie as an unwilling partner of Raju’s sin. She also finds in him an intimate friend. Marco on the other hand is involved in the study of cave painting and archaeology leaving Rosie far behind, and the consequences takes place. Raju says:

At the door of No. 28 I hesitated. She opened the door, passed in and hesitated, leaving the door half-open...“shall I go away?” I asked in a whisper. “Yes, Good-night”’ she said feebly. “May I not come in?” I asked trying to look my sadist. “No, no. Go away;” She said. But on an impulse I gently pushed her out of the way, and stepped in and locked the door on the world. (Narayan, 1958:78)

The behaviour of Raju suggests the fall, which is the root of Raju’s complete negligence of the socio-cultured morality. One may realize Rosie’s involvement in the violation of the Indian womanhood. Freudian elucidation of adultery explains it as a natural reaction from Rosie’s attitude of mind, but the reality is that Raju betrays Marco’s faith.

Raju’s mother passes remark on Rosie as a snake woman. Despite it he is caught in fondness of Rosie which suggests Raju’s violation of sacred morality. Raju’s refusal of Gaffur’s warning “she is a married woman, remember” (Narayan, 1958:77) may be viewed as his ravishment of social codes and sacredness of the family institution. The deviant, Raju realizes that ‘No’ no, it is not right, Marco is her husband, remember.” (Narayan, 1958:69) Raju’s growth in traditional Malgudi and influence of social moral codes make him to realize that he commits a sin. One may observe double consciousness of the protagonist. Raju’s involvement in the immoral deed does not permit him to to cease it. Marco does not tolerate his wife’s adulterous behaviour.
Knowing faithless nature of Rosie, Marco leaves for Madras. He says, “I am trying to forget even the earlier fact that I ever look a wife. I want to get out of here.” (Narayan, 1958:134) He allows his wife, Rosie to choose her own way. “You are free to get out and do what please.” (Narayan, 1958:134) It suggests freedom given to a woman which she expects.

Revolting against the social norms of Malgudi Raju stays with the married woman, Rosie. It is considered as his rebellion. It gives the novelist, a chance to emphasize socio-cultural views of Raju’s rebellion. Gaffur consults Raju and advises him. “Send her away and try to get back to ordinary, real life.” Don’t talk all this art business. It is not for us.” (Narayan, 1958:144) Gaffur, intentionally, presumes to present an ordinary nature of Malgudi Milieu. His intention is to bring Raju to the reality of life from his world of illusion which may be treated as temporary. Kaul, A. N., pointing out that revolt, art and love are the true sources of temptation says:

The idea of life in Malgudi novels is reduced not just to this (middle-class) man’s life, but further, his ordinary life, which alone seems to constitute reality, all the rest being illusion, or aberration. (Kaul, 1977: 56)

R.K.Narayan presents the character of common man in the disguise of railway porter whose opinion about Raju’s departure from the right path is remarkable. Raju thinks that the porter’s son is responsible for ceasing his business on the railway platform. Hence he beats him badly. In order to react this event the porter mockingly says, “it is not he who has ruined you, the saithan inside.”(Narayan, 1958:138) Narayan presents the character of mother to symbolize the ideal image of the mother. When she apprehended that her son would not leave Rosie, she immediately abandons him saying that; “Don’t fail to light the lamp in the God’s niche…Be careful with your health.” (Narayan, 1958: 155) It presents her as a careful Indian mother.

In the act of Raju’s rebellion one realizes him playing double rebels His contribution to enhance the dance of the gifted dancer is memorable which underlines his devotion to the art. On doing so, he accepts his new role as an entrepreneur and performs it with relish and perfection. Raju’s devotion is underlined in his attitude when he says:
“I could honestly declare that while I watched her perform, my mind was free, for once, from all carnal thoughts; I viewed her as a pure abstraction.” (Narayan, 1958: 110-11) Rosie perceives Raju’s contribution regarding Bharat Natyam in the words, “even if I have seven births I won’t be able to repay my debt to you.” (Narayan, 1958: 104)

As Rosie reached the peak of dancing career, money, fame and everything came to them. By performing the role of the star’s impresario, Raju receives fame and the recognition. But very soon, Raju’s mind overflows with pride which makes him restless and envious of his beloved woman when she does not allow him to share her income. Raju also becomes very much uneasy to find Rosie’s change of attitude towards Marco, when his book is admirably reviewed in ‘The Illustrated Weekly’. She realizes she has committed an enormous sin and does not want anything in life. Rosie says, “After all he is my husband” and “it is better to die on his doorstep”. Without understanding the consequences Raju forges Rosie’s signature on a letter which is sent by Marco through his solicitor for release of jewellery from the bank. Raju’s deliberate act of forgery has sent him to jail which brings in the theme of crime and punishment. In the decisive rebellion of Raju, Narayan decides to present manifold reactions. Raju fundamentally wants to hide Rosie from the villain Marco.

Realizing the crime Rosie reacts as a traditional woman. She feels Raju has done wrong things. “This is Karma, what can we do?” (Narayan, 1958: 193) Raju’s mother has taken the crime as a shameful act and she prefers to see him dead rather than committing the crime. Rosie, Marco’s wife has a rebellious spirit. Her defiant deed after her marriage with Marco forms a decisive step in her life.

Rosie’s unhappy married life with Marco has been strength in the rear of her malicious affair with the tourist guide, Raju. It shows her moral deviation. Their interest and attitudes are different and life style shows contrasting nature. On account of these dissimilar interests they cannot enjoy real pleasure of life. Rosie is interested in dance and Marco’s interest is in the caves and research. Marco and Rosie have nothing common which they share together. Observing their contrary looks, Balaram Gupta says:
Rosie with her bright hued and gold laced sari, diamond earrings and gold necklace, and with her curly hair braided and deflowered, is a contrast to Marco with his coloured glasses, thick jacket, and a thick helmet. (Gupta, 1981:16)

In terms of nature, attitudes, and interests Rosie and Marco are different personalities. If Rosie represents human drama of happiness and strong feelings, Marco reflects unemotional life of man. Describing them Raju says:

The girl was in ecstasy...she ran like a child from plant to plant with cries of joy, while the man looked on with no emotion. (Narayan, 1958:66)

Rosie likes to spend her life in the open world and in the crowds of people. Marco seems to be away from the human world and he is interested only in being alone. Their interests are also dissimilar. Rosie’s interest in art is pleasure to her, Marco’s research moves within stone walls and stone figures which seem to be a source of joy in his life. Their attitudes towards each other are unfavorable. Marco considers Rosie’s dance as ‘street acrobatics’ ((Narayan, 1958:130) and she regards his archaeological research as the ‘rain collecting activity.’ (Narayan, 1958:73)

Rosie does not like the background of her family in which she feels suffocated. She hates life like a frog in stagnant water. Rosie’s physical and emotional life remains meaningless because of Marco’s interest in research. Hence, she desires to come out of it. The unsuccessful marriage enforces Rosie to peep through promising figure of Raju to the land of her dreams. Rosie apprehends clearly that Raju can fulfill her physical desires and she rises in rebellion. Narasimhaiah says:

“And no wonder we witness the awful daring of a moment’s surrender to the weakness of the flesh” (Narasimhaiah, 1979:184)

Rosie’s unfaithfulness is the emotional explosion of the exploited woman who is essentially nourished in the cultural and moral surroundings. For that reason, Rosie does not feel that she has violated the religious codes of behaviour. Her way of
thinking reflects her as a traditional woman. On Rosie’s exhibiting extreme respect to Marco, Raju says:

“In the midst of my cares she would suddenly free herself and say, ‘Tell Gaffur to bring the car. I want to go and see him. After all he is my husband. I have to respect him, I cannot leave him there.’” (Narayan, 1958:105)

Rosie wants to be in the company of her husband whose gestures show signs of friendliness. She does not receive warm response from Marco. When Marco censures her and leaves away Rosie’s dreams of life are shattered. She pursues him to his cave to express apology which indicates writer’s strategy of ‘rite de passage’. Rosie says:

I have come to apologize sincerely, I want to say will do whatever you ask me to do. I will do whatever you ask me to do. I committed a blunder.” (Narayan, 1958:133)

Rosie’s appreciation of her husband’s achievement reflects her womanhood. The Malgudi atmosphere is an eminent flow of thought where human being realizes his mistake and tries to seek again traditional pattern of life. Rosie comes to know about her husband Marco’s remarkable achievement, and once again thought of her disloyalty brings her back to life and she said:

I deserved nothing less. Any other husband would have throttled me then and there. He tolerated my company for nearly a month, even after knowing what I had done. (Narayan, 1958:179)

She puts into words her reaction to Raju’s ill-deed which suggests ‘karma consciousess’ of a woman. It seems a voice of Marco. Rosie does not want to protect Raju from his crime. It presents her real understanding of what is wrong and right. She says:

If I have to pawn my last possession, I’ll do it to save you from jail. But once it is over, leave me once for all. (Narayan, 1958:198)
However, abandoned by her husband Marco and betrayed by lover Raju, Rosie endures firmly and gets exalted and does her ‘dharma.’ Raju gave her a chance to live a better life. In order to show a sense of gratitude to her husband Marco, and for taking her out of darkness, Rosie takes his book with her when she leaves Malgudi. Rosie, like Savitri in ‘The Dark Room’ is considered as the victim of man’s world. In the beginning her unknown father, then Marco and at last Raju all played the game of faithlessness to her. She at her own cost tried to keep her life up with a sense of pride and dignity. If Raju’s rebellion emphasizes the moral and social deviation, Rosie as a rebel mirrors the complex mixture of tradition and modernity. She is not able to play the full rebel because of the mythic influence.

3.5 CHARACTERIZATION

3.5.1 Mr. Sampath

In ‘Mr. Sampath’ Narayan satirises materialistic culture by presenting the characters like Srinivas and Mr. Sampath. The hopes and aspirations of the middle class people are effectively focused on and the novelist witnesses the depressing influence of money on the ‘middle class family’ (Singh 2002:94)

Malgudi, a typical Indian town, deeply rooted in the past and ancient culture, at the same time is jumping in the direction of modernization. In ‘Mr. Sampath’ the Old Park, roads and colonies undergo changes. The new colonies like ‘New Extension’, Lawley Extension, new printing press and new hotels have brought Malgudi on the map as an important city in South India, but Malgudi does not lose the old look of the town with a past. Ostensibly, Malgudi is both old and new and therefore inhabitants of Malgudi are both conventional and unconventional in their beliefs, thoughts and actions. Their modern way of life and attitudes are shaped by the traditional Malgudi.

The protagonist of ‘Mr. Sampath’, Srinivas is presented by the novelist as an idealist. He is at the center of the plot and all the other characters in the novel are known to us because of their relationship with Srinivas, which is based on commercial perspectives. Continuous reading of the ‘Upnishadas’ has made him to know importance of work. Without it he realizes human life is meaningless. Srinivas is especially philosophical in his attitude towards life in the commercial world of money
and business. It also makes Srinivas neutral to his family and leads him to ask “Is it right to be family centred?” (Narayan, 1949:48) It shows that he is free from the tensions of the family world. He has neither time nor inclination for the normal husband-and-wife relationship, “the caress and the silly idiom softly whispered in the ear.”(Narayan, 1949: 48) Narayan wants to show the importance of joint family system in the Hindu community in which we find distribution of work and responsibility. His act of deviating from the joint family system leads his wife and children suffer in their life. Coming from Talapur to Malgudi, Srinivas intends to make his career by publishing his journal ‘The Banner’ which reflects his ambitious and hopeful nature of his initial life. In the middle novels ‘Mr. Sampath’, ‘The Financial Expert,’ and ‘The Guide,’ Narayan portrays the characters who have faith in their over-confidence. Iyengar commenting on them says:

We enter an exotic world at a half-headed or half-hearted dreamers, artists, financiers, twisters, adventurers, eccentrics, cranks, cinema-stars, sanyasis, several of them not Malgudi product at all but staying or imported from out-side.(Iyengar, 1973:373)

After his meeting with Mr. Sampath, Srinivas starts publishing the journal. Greatly absorbed in the work of ‘The Banner’, a thought regarding his wife and children does not appear in his mind. It suggests his devotion to work and not to family. Narayan’s association with the Puranic tradition of passing from unreal world to the reality makes every one know the truth of life which is considered as the base for the structure of human life. The struggle for ‘dharma’ and correct action in everyone’s life is of highest rank. Consequently, his view regarding life and the world:

Life and the world and all this is passing-why bother about anything?
The perfect and the imperfect are all the same. Why really bother?
(Narayan, 1949:30)

A strike in the press has caused suspension of ‘The Banner.’ Becoming the script-writer, Srinivas with Mr. Sampath’s initiative gets involved in the plan to produce a film ‘The Burning of Kama’. As he is drawn into the film world, he begins to grow free from illusion and feels missing his true-vocation-his search for truth and self
realization which he chased through his journalistic career. Srinivas and Mr. Sampath are portrayed as the contrasting characters by R.K. Narayan. Due to intellectuality, he fails to help Mr. Sampath in the matters of money. Srinivas is a person who cares for human emotions, sentiments and suffers from a sense of morality. He feels, “he had been involved in a chaos of human relationships and activities”. (Narayan, 1949: 188-89) After his plunder in the film world, he returns to his paper and revives the publications of ‘The Banner.’

In the beginning Srinivas is found engaged in the social reality and eventually discovers that he has been drawn into activities which appear ‘illusory.’ Realizing meaningless of the ‘illusory’ world Srinivas returns to the world of his former activity. Hence, the novel ‘Mr. Sampath’ comes to an end with an acceptance of the world as it exists.’ (Goyal, 1993:112) It underlines his philosophy of withdrawal from illusory world and acceptance of real one. His revolt against his profession and family is temporary and Srinivas’s return to Malgudi shows beginning of normal life in Malgudi.

During the period after independence, people have lost humanity, morality and charity and these have been replaced by money, commerce and sex. Developments in the field of industry and materialist advancement have influenced Indian life. Commercial thinking and materialism of living have become the prominent characteristics of the modern era. In the middle novels by Narayan published after independence, the characters are not innocent. They have started looking at everything from a critical point of view. More opportunities and challenges have made their life more complex and complicated. Harish Raizada rightly observes:

With ‘Mr. Sampath’ Narayan delves into intricacies of more complex life and character. The maturity and skill he acquires by his early experience stands him in a good stead and he succeeds fully in delineating even these mysterious specimens of human existence. (Raizada, 1983:84)

A conscienceless rogue, Mr. Sampath, obsessed by over ambition lost in indecision that “the question of career seemed to him embarrassing as a physiological
detail.” (Iyengar, 1973:373) The characters in ‘Mr. Sampath’ are seen attached to each other with some purpose and interest. The emotions and sentiments are destroyed by commercial and economic curiosity and benefit. A victim of high ambition and over-confidence Mr. Sampath is presented as a man of excessive desire for ambition, money and sex. With his helpful, kind and polite attitude Mr. Sampath ‘The Printer of Malgudi’ is willing to publish everything. His style of simple words is impressive and gives pleasure to everybody. In search of a printer for the weekly, ‘The Banner’ Srinivas comes into contact with Mr. Sampath. Even in the materialistic world the human side of Mr. Sampath is observed in his decision of printing ‘The Banner’ and helping Srinivas in legal matters. He says:

When a person becomes my customer, he becomes a sort of blood relation of mine. (Narayan, 1955:68)

Commercialism and materialism, the sources of modern age and development in the Malgudi as we see everywhere in India bring men together but behind it intention and concerns play a significant role. They contribute in forming two human beings of opposite habits, morality, attitudes and thinking. Srinivas needs a printer and Mr. Sampath an editor and both of them come together as a matter of purpose and interest. In order to seek financial happiness they violate the traditional morals of Malgudi. In this regard Shiv K. Girla says:

The unsettling impact of materialism on the traditional world of Malgudi is projected unmistakably in ‘Mr. Sampath.’ Mr. Sampath uproots himself from his traditional ethos to run after illusions of material success. (Girla, 1984:40)

In ‘Mr. Sampath’ Narayan uses myth. Knowing that epics and myths are the popular stories with the audience, Sampath, Somu and Srinivas have decided to film ‘The Burning of Kama-God of Love.’ Tempted by Kama, Shiva loses in meditation at Kailash and forgets the attention of Parvathi. He opens his third eye to burn Kama who was to hurl an arrow at him. Shiva begins his meditation with complete detachment. But in the novel ‘Mr. Sampath’ the temptation of Shiva is dealt with in a wrong way, Lakshmi Holmstrom says:
The myth is progressively mishandled and its meaning dissipated. The director gives the film a vulgar and provocative slant, the central scene becomes the climax of Ravi’s and Sampath’s infatuation and jealousy. (Homstrom, 1973:52)

Ravi, who has lost his job in the bank, is ambitious as other Malgudi characters. Ravi, an artist and a bank employee is in love with a girl at first sight. He begins painting a portrait of her but unhappiness comes in his emotional life as she leaves Malgudi. Consequently, it remains incomplete. Seeing the climatic scene with Shanti as Parvathi and Sampath as Shiva who embraces each other, Ravi a lunatic hurls Shiva and takes Parvathi away. The picture is ruined and the studio is damaged. Consequently, Ravi is sent to the police lock-up which suggests punishment caused by his violation of moral laws of Malgudi.

After the shooting of mythological film ‘The Burning of Kama’, Mr. Sampath runs off to a bunglow in the Mempi Hill with Shanti who goes away to Madras by leaving Sampath alone to suffer from regretful loneliness. The story of Sampath’s life is a consequence of his extreme attachment. The succession of events following upon the wheel of life is the pivotal problem in the novel, which is summarized in the holy ‘Gita.’

Grow attached and you become addicted;
Lose discrimination and you miss life’s only purpose.
(Prabhavanand, 1955:42)

The old Land-lord, investor of money in the film making has studied ‘Bhagavad-Gita’ and ‘Upanishads.’ Making a show of his desire to study these religious books under his guidance, Sampath agrees to pay fee to his Guru for he holds the view: “… any piece of learning accepted becomes worthless, ineffectual, unless a man has given a Guru Dakshina’ (master’s feet)” (Narayan, 1949:107) Narayan attempts to show importance of guru in the life of every human being.

Family system in India is important in which man has his initial responsibility to look after all members of the family. The ideal of the Hindu wife, Srinivas’s wife, shows
dependence of a woman on her husband. After emphasizing the significance of the responsibility of the family the novelist says that ‘family duties come before any other duty.’ (Narayan, 1949:35) Realizing the fact Srinivas fails to remember his life partner and son. His wife comes to Malgudi. As a wife she devotes most of her time in the kitchen room which is symbolic of her pleasure. Kamala, wife of Mr. Sampath, is an honest woman who has faith in the status of the family tradition. Being shy, she does not want to show herself but after due persuasion from her husband, she appears before Srinivas.

Srinivas, at the end of the novel arrives to the conclusion that self-realization is the correct answer to the gimmicks of life. Thus the wheel has run full circle and ‘detachment follows attachment’. (Sharan 1993:138)

Shanti, Sampath’s cousin lands in the Malgudi from Madras to make a career by playing a role of Parvathi in a film ‘Burning of Kama-God of Love’. Her possession of a hand-bag which is made of cobra-hood symbolizes subordinate part of a beautiful woman. Shanti’s unchallenged beauty at the climax of the film makes Ravi more emotional which causes disorder in their film making. Inspite of her widowhood Shanti uses fashionable garments in order to enhance her beauty. It reflects that she violates the code of widowhood. Hence she has to leave traditional Malgudi.

Ravi’s mother symbolizes Indian womanhood who has devoted her life for the welfare of her husband and children. She may be called a devoted wife and ideal mother. She suffers from poverty but does not speak a single word about it. Being superstitious she believes that evil spirit in a man brings him to an ordinary state of life. Hence she desires to take her son, Ravi to the temple at Sailam to make him free from evil spirit.

‘Pencil sketches’ are portrayed in ‘Mr. Sampath’ by Narayan; Ramu, Srinivas’s son is a one liner, whose entrance is pathetic, caused by total negligence of father: Sampath’s numerouse daughters, their worn-out dresses, and their mediocre presentation of dance make the reader feel pathetic and pity towards them.
The myths and characters of the two epics ‘*The Ramayana*’ and ‘*The Mahabharata*’ help the readers in deepening their awareness of the timelessness of Malgudi. Srinivas, in ‘*Mr. Sampath*’ discovers the origin of Malgudi in the puranic times. Sri Rama, hero of ‘*The Ramayana*’ passed through this village on his way to Lanka. He made the Sarayu river flow by pulling an arrow from his quiver and scratching a line on the sand and ‘water instantly appeared (Narayan, 1949: 206).

Buddha came this way preaching his “gospel of compassion”. (Narayan, 1949:207) Even Shankara established his goddess here and “preached his gospel of Vedanta: the identity and oneness of God and his creatures. (Narayan, 1949:207) In ‘*The Guide*’ it is told that the Goddess Parvathi jumped into the fire and produced the river of Malgudi. In the same way in ‘*The Guide*’ Marco is led by Raju to see the remains of the old civilization preserved in the caves and ruins.

Malgudi has got recognition as a microcosm of ‘Hindu’ India. In ‘*Mr. Sampath*’, R. K. Narayan portrays characters and presents stories from Indian epics and ‘Purana’ that exist in Malgudi even in the modern times. Mr. Sampath’s coming film focuses mainly on the Burning of Kama, the God of Love, and reducing him to ashes by Lord Shiva’s third eye. (Narayan, 1949:101) Srinivas asks his son:

Like Shiva, open your third eye and burn up love, so that all its grosseness and contrary elements are cleared away and only its essence remains that is the way to attain peace, my boy…. (Narayan, 1949:103)

### 3.5.2 The Financial Expert

‘*The Financial Expert*’ has the family scaffold, particularly of the middle-class in a progressive town like Malgudi which forms the central description of life. “Narayan’s characters and setting are drawn from the urban middle-class of south Indian town.” (Parmeswaran, op cit., p.49) Narayan picturises life of the average men like Margayya who aspired to touch the sky in a jump and in the process crashed to the same old ground. (Singh, 1977:60) ‘*The Financial Expert*’ is a story which is based on the “get-rich-quick” plan and narrates graphically rise and fall of Margayya, the central character of the novel. The name Margayya has a symbolic significance. Margayya is a derivative compound of ‘Marga’, means ‘the way’ and ‘Ayya’ is honorific suffix
Margayya, denotes one who shows the way. He shows the way to those peasants who are in financial trouble.

R. K. Narayan presents Margayya’s routine life and work in Malgudi which is ordinary. Margayya sits under a banyan tree with a little box and transacts business with keen insight. Misleading the poor into borrowing, Margayya keeps an eye on commission. He can be termed as selfish, greedy and diplomatic in using a handy tool for making money.

In the banking institutions people are respected because of their cash deposits and human relations are turned into money relations. Arul Doss, the peon in the bank insults Margayya for possessing nothing which rouses in him his consciousness about prestige. The circumstances and the state of affairs around the man influence his social status. Money and property give shape to the relationships. The traditional harmony in the community is disturbed by money.

The environmental influences have contributed to affecting his social consciousness. This intrusion of private property into simple traditional mode of living is reshaping social relations around money, shattering the traditional harmony in society. (Gautam 1993:152)

The influence of war is tremendous on the Malgudians which enhances the strong desire in them for making money. It also enforces them to blackmarketing, hoarding, profiteering and bribery. In this materialistic culture Malgudi locale remains dominated by old traditions and moorings. In order to seek richness Margayya propitiates Lakshmi the goddess of wealth for forty days and says:

“A man whom the Goddess of Wealth favours need not worry much. He can buy all the knowledge he requires. He can afford to buy all the gifts that Goddess Saraswathi holds in her palm.” (Narayan, 1952:51)

Margayya’s mind is obsessed with the power of money. He can not enjoy sound sleep without money. He thinks money is the basic need of a man in order to keep him alive. Margayya believes: ‘Money was men’s greatest need, like air and food.’
Margayya’s confrontation with the eccentric Dr. Pal, a journalist seems to be the blessings of the goddess Lakshmi.

Dr. Pal is considered as the prominent mediator in Margayya’s prosperity. Within a short period he has reached the Everest of financial progress. But in Hindu religion such type of prosperity is not permanent. Realizing Margayya’s lust for money Dr. Pal wins his heart by giving Margayya the manuscript on sex named as ‘The Bed Life’ based Vatsyayana’s ‘Kamsutra’ which includes chapters like ‘Philosophy and Practice of Kissing’ and ‘The Basic Principles of Embracing.’ A huge demand from the public for a book of this type turns Margayya into a wealthy man. Margayya’s prosperity is an illusory one, for it is not based on any real gains of money but on accumulation of money.

Dr. Pal’s help in the improvement of Margayya’s financial condition is undeniable who also tries to settle his son’s marriage with a rich girl, Brinda, the daughter of the owner of a tea estate in the Mempi Hills. Dr. Pal has become an important person in the family matters and financial progress of Margayya. Margayya once finds his son Balu in the company of Dr. Pal and two flippant girls. Knowing that Dr. Pal is not a good person, he does not want to see Balu in the company of Dr. Pal is indicative of real Indian fatherhood. The love of Margayya for his son intends to break the relationship between Dr. Pal and Balu, Margayya’s son. It indicates that Margayya is an honest caretaker of his son, Balu. For the best future of his son Margayya spoils his friendship with Dr. Pal.

Hence the thought of revenge does not allow Dr. Pal to remain silent who has been waiting for the opportunity to bring down Margayya’s status in the town of Malgudi. The news of Margayya’s financial problem is spread by Dr. Pal which is taken as an act of revenge. It invites a huge crowd of depositors to withdraw their amount from his bank. Consequently, the whole money is blown like a house of playing cards. The richman, Margayya has lost everything and returns to his own profession of a small financer with his tin-box under a banyan tree. It underlines R.K. Narayan’s strategy of return of the native. It is an irony of fate that the financial expert who has desire to reach the height of success comes back to the place from where he had started. M.K. Naik rightly points out:
It is evidently ironical to call a man, who is barely literate, a ‘financial expert’; and again, what sort of a financial expert is this man, whose business crashes suddenly, making him a pauper overnight. (Naik, 1982:46)

Margayya’s ‘get rich quick scheme’ is an illusion and the moral values win over material prosperity. H.M.Williams observes: Margayya risks his happiness for the sake of his son who rewards his father by coming in his own home. (Williams, 1976:74)

The Narayan protagonist finds the acceptance of life as it is a desirable goal and his final return to sanity seems his return from an illusory world to the real life. One may witness development of the character, Margayya from an ordinary money lender to the money-wizard. Every father in India thinks of his son’s happy life which is governed by social morals. He sacrifices everything for his son’s happiness. He thinks excessive desire for money and peace of mind can not be possible in man’s life. Margayya emerges from a queer combination of the traditional and the commercial. He passes through various stages of development-the small money lender and financial adviser; the ‘money mystic’ and doctor, the insolvent ‘wizard’going back to the starting point. Margayya is not the character of type, but an individual whose paternal love oversteps his lust of money and his financial collapse is compensated by his son’s return to his father. S.B.Sharma thinks:

The end shows chastened but by no means broken Margayya preparing to resume his first humble occupation. The ironic reversal brings home to him the age-old lesson that prosperity and peace do not always go together. (Sharma, 1986:52)

Margayya rises to the height of abundance. In a tradition bound society a man like Margayya possesses an essence of progressive idea that doesn’t bother astrologer’s prediction that the horoscope did not match. Margayya’s financial prosperity makes him violate opinions of astrologer regarding his son’s marriage. He views the advice
of the astrologer was just a formality and not a need. It reflects Margayya’s modern outlook. Margayya’s rising in business is a result of his ceaseless involvement in affairs. This unfortunate decline seems to have the element of chance which emphasizes that fate decides man’s life. His rise and decline in life depends on fate. Consequently, Margayya has to return to the traditional Malgudi by accepting his old profession of a money lender.

Meenakshi, a middle-class wife, the embodiment of Indian womanhood, is often anxious for the welfare of her husband. She feels uneasy over Margayya’s appearance when he works on banking business. She does not like her husband’s profession of earning money because of her moral attitude towards life. Narayan has reflected sufferings of women community through the character of Margayya’s wife, who bears everything patiently without reluctance. Meenakshi is seen on the brink of uncontrollable nervousness when her son leaves the house disgusted at the idea of schooling. Her worry about her son presents not only her ownself but also the spirit of every mother in India. It also portrays her as an ideal and careful Indian mother.

The youthful Balu in ‘The Financial Expert,’ the developing child Raju in ‘The Guide’ and the school boy Mali in ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ receive the writer’s treatment of innocence and fall in a category of a ‘group’ because of the act as adults. Balu is presented as the ‘infant terrible’ who requires careful attention and ceaselessly cries loudly till he gets what he wants. He is known as an eccentric infant and it is seen in getting his finger burnt by putting it on the hot metal plate which is rested on the lamp. It shows Balu’s ignorance of reality. It may be apprehended as Alphonso-Karkala suggests projection of Balu getting burnt in the fire just as a young man. (Narayan, 1952:67) It shows Balu’s adult behaviour.

Balu wants ghee into his food. He turns in to ‘a rebellious child when he does not find ghee in his food. Consequently, in a fit of anger Balu throws away the rice and strikes the plate of food with foot. Margayya, Balu’s father becomes very angry but his mother, Meenakshi feels very sorry and cries. Here one is reminded of the story of Gora Kumbhar the potter who was worshipper and devotee of Vishnu and so paid less attention to the wife and children. A big span of life he used for reciting verses in praise of his Vithala.
R. K. Narayan presents Balu’s eccentricity and rebellious nature through some instances. The careless child flings Margayya’s account book into the gutter, which is considered as an innocent act of the boy. The book is Margayya’s one of the valuable possessions of life because it is Margayya’s source of bread. Tearing off the progress card and throwing it into the gutter may be treated as an eccentric act of Balu and end of his innocence. Balu remains a ‘typecast’ and plays a ‘catalyst’ for Margayya. The character of Balu provides psychological implications of child’s growth against the growth of Malgudi. He dramatises world values, domestic relationships and ceaseless existence.

Lakshmi and Saraswati, the two goddesses of Hidnus represent enormous wealth and intelligence are constrasting symbols used in the novel in the guise of Margayya a man in pursuit of money and Dr. Pal, the journalist and worshipper of goddess Saraswati. Ironically, Margayya starts his money making through the help of Dr. Pal. For Margayya ‘money is something to accumulate and not to be spent’ (Narayan, 1952:20) which made him blind to the family responsibilities. Margayya shows ways to others but he himself is lost in Maya (illusion).

It is true that money is a need for oneself, for material comfort but excessive desire for it leads to peril. Ironically the financial wizard returns home as an insolvent from the court towards the end with correct and healthy view. “Money was like a gem which radiated subdued light all around.”(Narayan, 1952:177) It reflects Narayan’s strategy of ‘rite de passage’ through Margayy’s realization of reality. He has restored his right to personal life and embraces his grandson affectionately. (Narayan, 1952:177) He acts like every grand father in Indian families.

Growing individualism, lust for wealth and Western ways caused breaking of the traditional joint family system. Margayya and his brother do not exchange a single word for a long time, and the relationship is “essentially thriving on crisis.”(Narayan, 1952:143) The strained relations between Margayya and Balu compel Margayya to make Balu and Brinda live in a separate bungalow. This scene makes one to realize importance of joint family system in which the members of the family are linked emotionally and the child’s behaviour is controlled and guided by the elders.
The corrupt ways of politicians and their indifference to public problems befool people at the time of elections by making false promises. It shows that Malgudi people are not free from corruption. Once in a while the municipal officials inspect the miserable condition of the gutter saying something among themselves. It was a stock cynicism for people to say when they saw any one inspecting the drains: ‘They are looking for the election votes there’ (Narayan, 1952:32-33) which indicates attitude of Bureaucrats towards their work. They forget that they are paid for the welfare of the town, Malgudi.

The newly emerging town life symbolizes fierce attack of dirty values on the traditional life. Lust for money becomes the kernel of the new world and has a strange power over the Malgudians. Degraded by the greed for money, Malgudi people do not waver in making money out of collection for the funeral of unclaimed dead bodies. ‘They collected enough money at the end of the day to give a gorgeous funeral to the body. They even haggled with the grave-digger and were left with so much money at the end of it all that they drank and made merry for three days. (Narayan, 1952:22) It suggests loss of humanity for the sake of money. But it is significant that money does not mean everything in the life.

3.5.3 Waiting for the Mahatma

The period which forms background to the novel ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ is India’s national struggle—the 1940s. Narayan dramatises Sriram’s love for Bharati against the background of Gandhi’s struggle for freedom. “It is the story of an average young man and how he happens to fall in love with one of Gandhi’s followers and what happens to the two (Sriram and Bharati) of them.” (Sundaram, 1973:84) It is however reflected that a girl lands him to have the strange experience and lastly restores him to the original self. Representing the whole generation of youth Sriram and Bharati, despite their affair of personal feelings, are concerned with the fate of the country suggests man’s involvement in the social predicament.

Listening to Gandhi’s talk about loving one’s family, Sriram’s mind has engrossed in Bharati and his youthful activities remind of Chandran in ‘The Bachelor of Arts’ and Ravi in ‘Mr. Sampath’. The influence of Mahatma Gandhi is so powerful that Sriram
eventually involves into the national movement and undertakes efforts to make the Gandhian movement powerful in Malgudi. It shows Sriram’s urge of freedom as the citizens in India once had.

Gandhiji’s thoughts of revolution and actions are presented against the traditional views of the remarkable persons in the town and Sriram’s grandmother. Narayan wants to point out that the impact of Gandhi was different on the different strata of the society. Their views about Gandhiji’s philosophy are not the same. The teacher of Sriram appreciates him for joining the Congress, “I am proud to see you here, my boy. Join Congress, work for the country, you will go far.’ God bless you. (Narayan, 1955:22) On the contrary Sriram’s Granny thought that “the Mahatma was one who preached dangerously, who tried to bring untouchables into the temples, and who involved people in difficulty with the police.” (Narayan, 1955:41) Granny, the traditional woman does not want her grand son separated from her by sending him into the jail as other Indian grand mothers expect. She has looked after Sriram since his parents’ deaths.

The freedom movement becomes a back-ground to Sriram and Bharati’s love affair. The collection of fund contributes to bring them toghther in which he is tempted by her beauty and desires to marry her. But non-western thought regarding marriage shows that a modern man in the industrially developed background of Malgudi still is rooted in Hindu culture custom and tradition.

The collection of money for Harijan fund by Bharati indicates a turning point in Sriram’s life. Gandhiji’s singing a song ‘Raghupati Raghava Rajaram’ is absolutely authentic. (Narasimhaiah, 1967:71) Gandhiji forever speaks of loving one’s enemy, Sriram is thinking of loving Bharati.’ It indicates influence of spiritual songs on a young man who is modern in his outlook. It is observed that the people in Malgudi have become one with the Gandhian thoughts and principles of freedom stuggle.

The image of the spinning wheel is called up by the nationalism of Gandhiji. Dressed in hand made cotton Indian people gathered into masses for singing in protest against the shops selling foreign made biscuits. Requesting to boycott foreign made goods Sriram expresses his views to the people. Sriram’s moves towards the terrorist

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movement and begins to participate actively in their activities after Bharati’s arrest which reflects his deviation from Gandhian path of non-violence. Coming under the influence of Jagdish, Sriram has involved in wrecking trains or burning railway stations and paralysing the work in schools. (Narayan, 1955:113) Consequently, Sriram is put in jail for his terrorist activity which suggests that the young man who rejects Gandhian principles and involves in violence has been punished. Terrorism, Sriram feels, may perform activities that hit the natural course of his right action, self-deception and self awareness. The normal course of life in Malgudi with awareness of change is seen in ‘Waiting for the Mahatma.’ Gandhiji is a saint for Malgudians who is gifted with spiritual powers.

The beloved-guru, Bharati, an embodiment of Gandhian concept of love and non-violence brings changes in the whole life of Sriram. In fact, the Guru “gave his whole life a new meaning and a new dimension” (Narayan, 1955:162) By realizing his terrorist activities against Gandhian principles and confessing them to Gandhiji he goes on fast for purification which strongly shows that the “purposeless youth at last turns into a powerful character.” (Sharan, 1993:188) Having a fast once or twice in a week is a tradition in India. It is believed that the fast gives strength to a man to purify his body from the sin he has committed.

Being released from the jail he received consent of the Mahatma for marriage which shows tradition of India and respect towards the elders which is customary in the Indian context. Gandhiji even promises to do ‘Kanyadan’ himself, which is considered as the signal of complete marriage according to Hindu moral laws of wedding, the ‘grahastashram’ stage in the life of every youth.

‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ is not like ‘Waiting for Godot.’ Sriram waits on for Mahatma’s permission to marry Bharati and Godse waits for Mahatma with pistol in his hand. It indicates constructive and destructive thought which is depended on psychology of person’s mind. The subcontinent is confident that Gandhiji will bring Swaraj for its millions. In the death of Mahatma, Bharati finds a national loss and a sense of fulfilment in Sriram’s personal life:
There is a loss at the national level in the death of Gandhi, but there is a sense of fulfilment in Sriram’s personal life. (Mukherjee, 1971:42)

An epitome of a devotee of Gandhiji, (Banda, 2010:115) a powerful force in the novel, is an Indian girl, strong in character and heart. Bharati is devoted to the Gandhian movement. She is a brilliant activist despite her ignorance of politics. For the hand of Bharati, Sriram jumps in the political activities and gains blessings of Gandhiji. Making a right assessment of her H.M.Williams says:

Unlike Sriram she is a genuine, dedicated, intelligent Satyagrahi, though quite blind to any ‘truths’ other than those of the political cause she champions. (Willams, 1976:58)

Marriages of the girls and boys are decided by the elders in the Indian families and they have to remain obedient in accepting decisions taken by them. Bharati spares all the life time for the freedom movement. Therefore the decisions in her life are not taken without Gandhiji’s consent. When Bharati meets Sriram during his work of ‘Quit India Movement’ in the village she declares that without the sanction of the Mahatma the marriage between them is impossible. She cannot give consent to Sriram’s proposal of marriage unless it is accepted by the Mahatma.

In India the children follow the profession of father which is presented through the character of Bharati. Being a daughter of a freedom fighter, Bharti becomes a zealous follower of Gandhiji and plays a role of a soldier, in the struggle for freedom by clinging to Gandhian principles. Sriram is made a master spinner by Bharti and she seems to be treated as guru. When the young hero acquaints with the Mahatma his emotional outburst “I like to be where Bharati is” (Narayan, 1952:46) On hearing this Bharati tells him not to misbehave and wait for the right time to marry and to receive the blessing of Bapuji, reflects her good conduct, who does not like to behave like a woman haunted by sex. It also underlines that Bharati has grown into a complete woman in the spiritual surrounding under the cultured guidance of Gandhiji.

The lover, Sriram asks her a question “will you marry me after we are out of all this, will you promise, if Bapuji permits?” She answers, “Yes, I promise…..” (Narayan,
1955:95) Bharati’s response to Sriram suggests that she is morally good and elegant woman. Her reservations are sacred and have association with the Indian tradition of womanhood. When in a changed appearance he goes to meet her in the jail, Bharati frustrates Sriram by saying ‘It seems degrading to have a meeting under these conditions.’(Narayan, 1955:116) The dramatic scence shows that Bharati does not want to act against the norms of traditional Malgudi she has fear in her mind about the Malgudians. She does not want to degrade herself in the eyes of the neighbours.

The desire in Bharati’s mind regarding their marriage compels her mind to inform Mahatmaji. On coming to Delhi Sriram feels homeliness in the company of Bharati and says to Gandhiji: “We are waiting for your blessed permission to marry.”(Narayan, 1955:117) Gandhiji wants to know the will of Bharati. “Bharti bowed her head and flushed and fidgeted”. (Narayan, 1955:117) The consent for the marriage is shown by the guarded manner by the beloved which is in keeping with the age old tradition of India.

The character of Bharati in ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ emerges out of the traditional inhibitions and dedicates herself to the service of Gandhiji. Even though in pre-independence India the orthodox taboos still hold, Bharati does never become an object of ridicule.

Sriram’s Granny, a woman of frim and powerful desires and great rectitude brings her grandson up in her own way and in the traditional circumstances of Malgudi. Being a conscious lady she wants Sriram to receive the virtue of the family as an heir. Granny seems to be a religious Hindu woman who has faith in the rebirth which reminds us of W.B.Yeats ‘windening gyre’ in ‘The second coming’. Believing in the cycle of nature she says to Sriram:

Your grandfather, you know how clever he was? They say that the grandfather’s reincarnation is in his grandson. You have the same shaped nose as he had and the same eyebrow. His fingers were also long just like yours. (Narayan, 1955:3)

Granny is a conventional type of woman who does not imagine touching rind of the dead animal particularly of cow. Purchasing a canvas chair, Sriram brings it home and
presents it to his granny. She rejects to accept because it is made of some kind of leather. Granny avoids polluting herself and the atomosphere in home. She is of the view that if man sits on the skin of the dead animal his body will become unholy. She tells her grand son: ‘It is no use for me. This is some kind of leather, probably cow hide, and I can’t pollute myself by siting on it’ (Narayan, 1955:12) Granny is so orthodox that she protects herself from a scavenger and does not allow the scavenger to enter nearer than ten yards.

Blindfaiths, religious notions and rites of society are exhibited by Narayan through minor characters like Kanni and priest. Kanni, a shopman believes that queen’s picture in the shop has brought prosperity in his life. He says, “ever since I hung the picture there, my business has multiplied by ten fold.”(Narayan, 1955:2)

At the funeral of Granny the old priest demands more silver coins to put on granny’s eye, which will go in his pocket. When Kanni objects, he replies prudently. ‘Don’t think I am after money. I only do things in order to satisfy a great soul known to me for several decades now…. It is my duty to suggest what the shastras say.’ (Narayan, 1955:122) When the people set fire to the funeral pyre the body of the lady starts moving. The doctor injects her and the old Granny comes to life. According to the superstitions she came to ‘life after death’ (Singh, 2002:76) and the priest warns returning of Granny to Malgudi will bring calamity. Consequently, honouring the taboo she goes off to Banaras. The peasants of Malgudi and relatives being frightened of disaster decide to wipe out the town by fire.

Narayan presents evil practives in the Indian society through the characters of the bank manager and Sriram. The Bank Manager doubts evil like pick-pocketing. He tells Sriram to take care of money. The manager supports Granny when she advises Sriram not to withdraw a huge amount from the bank because it may be stolen by the pick-pockets. Therefore he tells Sriram, “its better if you carry less cash about you now-a-days with pick-pockets about”. (Narayan, 1955:9)

The children as the nameless figures in ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ are the most static and appear as the innocent victims of communal riots at the refugee camp. Bharati
plays a role of ‘mother’ towards them and they are named after the names of flowers and birds. (Narayan, 1955:167) The children remain completely airy.

3.5.4 The Guide
Raju in ‘The Guide’ is portrayed with child like qualities, who has enjoyed love of parents. A deciding influence of father in Raju’s life is witnessed in sending him to the school despite his discomfort. It is again the father who asks him to mind the shop. It shows Indian village where Raju grows under the father’s discipline and mother’s love in the traditional Malgudi. Raju’s father is presented as the strong supporter of Hinduism. Hence, he does not like to send his son to Albert Mission School fearing that it may convert Raju into a Christian. Raju’s father is moderate in his approach to education that his son is stripped of a good learning. Hence, he sends Raju to Pyol School. He is an obedient Indian man who respects the Station Master while looking after the shop at railway station.

The arrival of Railway station at Malgudi makes Raju get excited. He starts spending a lot of his time at the sight in front of the house. Raju develops a sense of possession for it. Raju’s childhood instinct to possess things may be realized in his wanting to possess another man’s wife. Here one may notice symbolic projection of Raju’s inclination for forbidden things. On the other hand Raju’s fascination for train remains a ‘temptingly foreign object’ to his future affair with Rosie.

The mother tells Raju a story of ‘Devka’ in the evening. Her intention is to let Raju realize importance of tradition, culture and moral aspects of life. It seems to be mother encouraging the son for the role of a saint. The stories are Indian and they have positive concern. Hence Raju’s learning of first lesson begins at home with his first teacher, the mother. It reflects evening atmosphere of every home in India. Raju, a son of a middle class family grows under the care of his mother, a tradition bound old woman (Girla, 1984:49) and of father a small shopkeeper, a strict guardianship in the traditional atmosphere of Malgudi. Mother’s shifting the sugar tin pot to a higher position beyond the reach of a young boy suggests two things: care taking mother and Raju’s fascination for sweetness in life is later noticed in his attraction for Rosie.
Narayan presents social tradition through his novel, ‘The Guide’. Experiencing good and bad events Raju attempts to develop his own personality. The hero of the novel rises from average to the most distinguished position and then reverts to the original position passing through different stages in the society (Singh, 1999:41)

As a child Raju seems to have enjoyed love of his parents. “The father in particular, seems to have a deciding influence in every sphere of the young boy’s life.” (Dnyate, 1996:44) Raju, is sent to school by his father, but feels discomfort and is immensely delighted in men and vehicles, boys, and dogs, bullock-cart rides, games and wandering. However, he is not so good at studies and his father condemns him as “clayheaded.” Malgudi railway station gives his father the privilege of running a shop. Raju the romantic is thrilled and it is a pleasure for him to stroll on the station watching the trains, as they arrive and depart, and the people they bring to Malgudi.

A significant step in his life occurs when his father leaves it to Raju to manage his affairs. Lastly, he decides with his mother’s consent to close down the sale of ordinary consumer goods. R.K.Narayan seems to explore through Raju the various means of education to learn in general. In particular, “he appears anxious to explore the possibilities of rising a socially under-privileged individual higher in the social ladder through self-study. (Singh, 1999:42)

Narayan’s innocent characters are treated as group characters. They are not full-fledged child characters. In action, they seem to play like adults. The characters which are included in the group are the young Balu in ‘The Financial Expert’, the growing child Raju in ‘The Guide’ and the school boy Mali in ‘The Vendot of Sweet.’

The death of Raju’s father has a symbolic significance. After the death of father, Raju’s looking after the railway shop and playing the role of adult underlines the end of Raju’s innocent life and beginning of the life of experience. He wants to climb the social ladder of his life to the highest point through self-study and he begins to face more challenges. The character of Raju is understood as a child-type and his deviation seems to be remarkable. The death of Raju’s father symbolizes disappearance of a controlling hand and the figure of authority. Raju is apprehended as a child-type
exhibiting the traits of that age. His inborn tendency of deviation seems to be noticeable.

The novel, ‘The Guide’ is the story of Raju “and the rise and fall of his fortunes as a guide, love, impresario” and then his end as a saint who is neither born nor made but simply happens almost like the weather.” (Girla, 1984:49) The central figure in the novel, Raju known as ‘Railway Raju’ has nothing heroic about him. He is a common man with a touch of the uncommon. Narayan sketches him just ordinary certainly not ‘so great’, unformed, shapeless character who all the time, takes into consideration the suggestions made by others. Consequently, it may be said that his personality is the product of other people’s convictions. A turning point in his life comes when he takes upon himself the job of guiding tourist “I came to be called Railway Raju” (Narayan, 1986:55) From a stall-keeper, Raju gradually moved into playing the role of a tourist guide.

The career of Raju is determined by his inability to say ‘no to anybody’, which does not exist in his nature. One of the distinctive features of his personality is that Raju knows his customers by their faces, and shows them places of their interest. As a tourist guide, Raju knows all places where exactly a particular thing can be obtained or what suits most at a particular moment with a ‘monster’ like Marco, or the divine creature, Rosie or the ignorant villagers of Mangala. He has ‘the water diviner’s instinct’ (Narasimhaiah, 1987:151) and self confidence, coupled with a delightful nature which comes always to his rescue. He is a grotesque character almost fantastic for those who believe in human industry and cause-effect theory. William Walsh remarks in this connection:

Much the most vivid part of Raju’s life was lived in public places: first the streets, the shop, the railway station, and later, concert halls, Jail, the temple. He was always in some sense an institutional figure.

(Walsh, William)

Raju cannot be left alone because he is felt to be naturally a public character. One of those who hardly exist in private. It is the compulsion of such people to respond in the way the audience wants, whatever Raju does for them, he does with certain detachment, not for any private gain, but simply because they ask him. Anything that
interests his clients is also his own interest. The question of his own interest is secondary. He learns as he earns, and soon acquired not only intimate knowledge of Malgudi and its surroundings but also of human nature. Indeed, throughout his career he shows an amazing understanding of human psychology.

A dramatic turn in the life of Raju occurs when he sets his eyes, for the first time, on Rosie with her husband on the platform. Rosie is an educated girl whose parents traditionally devoted themselves in the service of the temples to perform the dance. She marries Marco, who is rich and has interest in the study of archaeology. She marries him through an advertisement in the newspaper. Their marriage was not decided according to social norms of society. Horoscope and caste were not taken into consideration. It was totally against the system of marriage in India. In this regard Singh views:

Their marriage was a revolution against the social norms and customs such as the horoscope matching and the caste agreement which decides most of the arranged marriages in India. (Singh, 1999:43)

Rosie married him only because of his social status. She wants to rise in social status. Hence, Rosie, an educated girl from the family of the Devdasis, rejects her traditional love for the art of dance and marries Marco the archaeologist. Even the women in her house give importance to Marco’s property and social status. Ignoring other inherent human qualities, and marrying only for “a big house, a motor car and a high social standing”, Rosie invites disputes and quarrels in her life. It reflects Rosie’s deviation against the society and her suffering as its consequence. The insight and nature of the couple does not match at all. This gives a chance to Raju to develop close acquaintance into an unlawful love affair. This violation of the social code and sanctity of the family institution makes deviant Raju conscious of the unfair act of seducing Marco’s wife and he says, ‘No, No.’ It is not right. Marco is her husband, remember. It’s not to be thought of. (Narayan, 1958:69) It shows that he fears of his unfair deeds. He feels guilty of breaking the moral laws of family institution of Malgudi society.
Raju enters and seeks romance disrupting the conjugal life of Marco and Rosie. The conjugal unhappiness results into an illicit relationship between Raju and Rosie. Narayan presents Raju as a rebel whose thinking on happiness in marriage is positive, which also suggests his progressive attitude towards marriage. Hence, it would be not fair to call him “a romantic doubled with a rascal” (Iyengar, 1983:378) or “a likeable rogue” (Singh, 1999:61)

Inspite of his mother’s opposition and a traditional society of Malgudi, Raju inspires Rosie to continue her interest in dancing. The conflict takes place in Raju’s home because Raju lives with a dancing girl which is not approved in traditional middle class family life which has its moral values. Raju strongly asserts his mother when she protests one day:

You can’t have a dancing girl in your house. Every morning with all that dancing and everything going on…It can’t go on like this for ever. What will people say? (Narayan, 1958:135-136)

Raju’s decision to stay on with a dancing girl in a traditional society full of conservatism is a bold step. Narayan seems to suggest that “one has to be an enemy of the people in order to preserve human dignity in order to raise the Devdasi (Rosie) and give her social status at par with the so called socially respectable” (Singh, 1999:45)

With Raju’s support, Rosie succeeds in developing her art of dancing and gains recognition. Raju changes his role, and becomes an “impresario to Rosie”. (Girla, 1982:52) She is reborn as Nalini-the dancing sensation. In the hands of Raju Rosie turns into the source of money making machine, but he does not know that his romantic world is a temporary house of cards which can fall at any time. The effects of the deed are noticed immediately afterwards. There is a kind of logic in the reversal. It collapses as Raju forges Rosie’s signature on a document claiming her jewel-box, which is in her husband’s keeping. Consequently, Raju is sentenced to two years in imprisonment. He is called a model prisoner because he guided other prisoners in the jail.
On coming out of jail, Raju finds a shelter in a deserted temple on the bank of the river Sarayu. Raju’s counsel on Velan’s family matters leads him to take Raju as a saint. The change in Raju’s nature makes him read ‘The Gita’ before the Malgudi peasants. The sainthood that flows out of his deceptive behaviour removes the past thoughts from his mind. The draught affected peasants visit him believing that if he observes fast there will be rain Raju has no feeling of revenge. “Some are born saints, others become saints, but sainthood is thrust upon Raju.”(Iyengar, 1983:381) As a matter of fact, there is an unbroken connection between. Raju, the guide, who lived for others, whose character and activity were reflection of otherness, and Raju the prophet is surrounded by the devout villagers waiting for a message or a miracle. “It was in his (Raju’s) nature to get involved in other people’s interests and activities” (Narayan, 1958: 8)

Physical appearance of Raju, a face having a long beard and disordered cloth entangles Velan to consider him to be a ‘Sanyasi.’ Complexities of Raju invite obvious comparison with Bhabani Bhattacharya’s novel ‘He who Rides a Tiger.’(1984) Both are the stories of a man who is in the guise of a spiritual man. Kalo attempts to organize a revengeful force against the society. But Raju does not have a thought of revenge Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly points out:

In the novel ‘He who Rides a Tiger’ Kalo’s deception is a deliberate act of revenge against society. Raju in ‘The Guide,’ drifts into the role of a sadhu willy-nilly. (Mukherjee, 1971:123)

Kalo is presented as a helpless figure by Bhattacharya but in Narayan’s novel the hero Raju is portrayed as a true saint at the closing point of the story. Routine activities of Raju such as eating and sleeping are like those of an ordinary man. The peasants around him have considered him to be a saint. Hence it is wrong to call Raju “mischievous Rougue”. (Singh, 1977:61) He confesses to Velan:

I am not so great as you imagine. I am just ordinary.(Narayan,1958:55)

The distinctive features of the two individual personalities Marco and Raju in ‘The Guide’ exhibit contrast between the two, which is clearly observed in their deeds. An
enigmatic person; Marco, Rosie’s husband, stern, self-centered devotes his full-time to his archaeological studies. When Raju realizes Marco’s decision to stay on to explore the cave painting, he takes charge of Rosie, becomes her ardent lover and seduces her. Blaming Marco’s failure in developing husband wife relationship M.K.Naik makes Raju-Rosie relationship acceptable in the words:

Her husband, Marco, too is so much a slave to his self-chosen professional roles as a scholar that he is incapable of playing his other human and social- role as a good husband, with serious repercussions on the lives of both his wife and Raju. (Naik, 1983:59)

He expects in Rosie, right awareness, understanding, good and mature conduct. Marco also desires her independent life in certain circumstances. Marco’s more involvement in his research does not chain Rosie within four walls. His faith in Rosie allows her to move freely, enjoy life and even permits her to go with Raju. She even has accepted the great qualities of her husband, Marco and one may notice a sharp pain in her conscience for faithlessness to her husband:

After all, he has been so good to me, to give me freedom and comfort. What husband in the world let his wife go and live in a hotel room by her-self, a hundred miles away?’(Narayan, 1958:106)

The two disputable views are expressed by the critics on the character of Raju. According to some of them Raju is a rougue while others feel that transformation takes place in the character of Raju. The characters in Narayan’s fiction do not show any sign of development, on the other hand they remain flat, only cards.

In order to support this view Uma Parmeshwaran states: Vasu remains a villain until death and beyond it, Margayya the Financial expert, Raju the Guide and Mr. Sampath remain rougues. (Narayan, 1958:51)
3.6 WORLD-VIEW

3.6.1 Mr. Sampath

The social contradictions of middle-class Hindu society are witnessed in the novel, ‘Mr. Sampath’, and they tend to be traditional and forced by situation to be modern. These contradictions exist in the inner world but progress in the outside makes the hero problematic. Like Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Shrinivas meets with contrary forces and finds himself in confusion.

The period 1938 had a strange stab of the puritanic middle class and the press was looking forward to a world war. All this was reflected in ‘The Banner’ which attacked many evil institutions and forces in the world. According to Srinivas perfection is not possible without destruction of the pig-headness of the people and pursuance of perfection. The editors were interested in inner reality of human being and disregarded world a practical life. Srinivas has been caught between the conflict of the practical and the spiritual life. His earnest desire for self realization and the question ‘Who am I!’ is recollection of ‘Upnishads.’ Srinivas, as an editor attacks the Municipal inefficiencies and social neglect.

It is quite impossible for ‘him to create harmony between the inner reality and the outerworld. The external reality appears to him illusory and trivial. Being sensible of the existence beyond the world of appearances, he does not investigate the secret of the temple as he does not examine thoroughly beyond the curtain in Sampath’s press. The opening of window of his office on the top floor is prevented by the court. In the same manner, there is a strange injunction of inner court on investigating into anything in life. It shows tendency of withdrawl and he inclines towards renunciation.

An extensive view of humanity contributes one to get right view of the world. The balance between right and wrong is possible. Srinivas views that contrary forces keep working together in a boundless concentric circle in order to maintain a balance of spiritual power. The right deeds are equated by the wrong-doers. The discovery, causing great changes in the sphere of human existence suggests indirectly Hindu fatalism. Hegelian justification of the ‘status quo’ by equating with the real will stroke the base of social change.
An escape is a solution for Sriniwas whenever chained by the crisis. This seems to be an escape into visions an eternity by unfastening himself from the real crisis. A refusal of the external for the sake of the internal is a concrete Hindu solution to any crisis. The ideology is stirred up by the Hindu view of life that change is unreal and truth does not exist in the outer world of space and time but in the internal world of spirit. The Hindu predominance is that any change in existing order is misfortune to its interest. Completely modern in his behaviour and disposition, Sampath is hardworking and polite whose managerial power enables Srinivas in finding solutions for numerous legal and technical problems of ‘The Banner’.

‘Mr. Sampath’ brings into juxtaposition the two incorrigible world views one of Mr. Sampath and the other of Srinivas. The former is the central driving force of the new order, the modern society, rationalist, money-minded, daring and disciplined. The latter is crowded by metaphysical visions, looking to the past and being suspicious of base in modernity, which desires to dwell in abstractions and makes great efforts to remain on the worldly work a day level. The two views subsisted in India during pre-independence period and thereafter even though modernity of the middle-class society showed its strength. The middle class people in India absorbed orthodoxy which contributed in collecting ready money. The theme ‘The Burning of Kama’ symbolically suited Mr. Sampath which becomes a source of earning money on Indian mythology and its moral deterioration.

The third view introduced in ‘Mr. Sampath’, is the aesthetic view of Ravi, who confounded in dreams and fantasies and ruined its relationship with reality. None of this view has strength and possibility to re-establish reality. Srinivas possesses incongruity of the Hindu views of life which is incorporated by the sight of endlessness and absolute. It toils to survive on the average practicality and its unpleasant situation is caused by its inability to get entangled in the experience based on reality. It does not have resolute hold on life or insight into it which happens to be informed into great fiction.
3.6.2 The Financial Expert

The continuous rise in materialism after independence influences life of people, which affect traditional values. Margayya’s son Balu tortures his parents because of money and sex. Meenakshi is the particular kind of mother who approves good and bad acts of her son. She represents the Indian mother who always thinks of betterment of her son. On the arrival of her son from Madras Meenakshi becomes happy and decides to fulfil her son’s demands.

In ‘The Financial Expert’, the novelist notes entrance of a cunning business shark, Margayya into the bourgeois social order and his exit from it at the end. The hero, Margayya, a middle aged money-lender earning his business as a commission agent in front of the co-operative bank finds that a new value sets itself up in social life. Realizing that status and honour of a person depends on his enormous wealth. Margayya has “touched the sky in a jump” (Singh, 1977:60) by collecting money from people on high interest. The change from feudalism to capitalism was replacement of old values by new. Money power and prestige were the main concerns of the new society. Strongly refusing Dr. Paul’s disregard for money, Margayya says:

Money is the greatest factor in life and the most ill-used. People do not know how to tend it, how to manure it, how to water it, how to make it grow and when to pluck its flowers and when to pluck its fruits. What most people now do is to try and eat the plant...itself. (Narayan, 1952:108)

Margayya wants to be something more than a banker, he wants to be a maker of money, and educate society in using money profitably. He is of the opinion that human relations are reified and marriage match is counted in terms of potential prospects of the property. Margayya desires to be on the top of the bourgeois order not by the advantage of birth but by using his wit and intelligence. He believes that man becomes what he aspires to become and can carve out his present and future by hard work. Margayya is not enticed by vices because he has worked for his success. When his house of cards breaks into pieces, Margayya tells his son Balu, to build it
again near the old Banyan tree. When he finds his son for status hesitates and declines, Margayya replies:

Very well then, if you are not going, I am going on with it, as soon as I am able to leave this bed. (Narayan, 1952:178)

The character of Margayya may be considered from the two points of views positive and negative. When he desires to have more money in order to gain social and financial status Margayya consults the temple priest. On the advice of the priest he performs the puja to the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi for forty days. All this shows Margayya a conventional man who values spiritual power. He seems to be selfish and optimistic. Margayya obliges and respects Hindu rituals and rites. He wills to go to Banaras on foot. He disrespects astrologer’s opinions on Brinda’s horoscope. Margayya decides to marry his son with Brinda even though the two horoscopes do not match. He is of the opinion that consulting the astrologer is just a formality. Margayya’s progressive ideas and modern outlooks are noticed.

Margayya is projected under the influence of materialism. He is haunted by the thought of money and estimates everything in terms of money. His wife, Meenakshi is always worried about her son, Balu. Her anxiety is the welfare of her husband.

The novel, ‘The Fianancial Expert’ strives to describe vividly a man with a typical world-view produced by the changing society and at the end facing his own creation. Margayya earns a lot of money by lending it to the needy at higher interest and works hard. On the other hand, his son squeezes money from him and refuses to work. All this indicates natural end to which the false values of modern life would unavoidably lead. Easy earning of money and moral perversion are the major consequences of breaking life from norms of moral conduct.

The writer is not hindered by any existential problems which disturbed Srinivas in ‘Mr. Sampath’. On the contrary, his sense of irony goes with his Puritanism and his realism reconciles with his detachment. Margayya, returns to the banyan tree with his tin box from where he started. ‘The Financial Expert’, is a human drama of a man, Margayya in the locale of Malgudi which projects the cyclical view of life. Margayya
succeeds through the different stages of development in the life—an ordinary money lender under the banyan tree; prosperous publisher; the financial expert; the money mystic and wizard going back with his old trunk to the old banyan tree. The novel has compactness of structure which contributes to its dramatic power. Margayya’s life, his son Balu, and his brother are skillfully intermingled to give remarkable intensity. The other characters like Dr. Pal, Balu’s mother, Madan Lal and temple priest appear as functional characters.

3.6.4 Waiting for the Mahatma

‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ moves around the life of middle-class people in the locale of Malgudi. The leader Gandhiji is not given justice in his novel. The growth of the love story of Sriram and Bharati is the main interest. Gandhiji’s Freedom struggle brings them very close and they reach the final stage of marriage.

We cannot label it as either a comedy or political novel. It cannot be called political novel because there is no projection of political idea or political milieu. If we look at it from the positive point of view one may call it a political novel because Gandhian ideology is spread here and there and the title of the novel conveys the message that it is political in nature. Though political milieu is the prominent factor in the novel the novelist fails in shaping political aspects. The political theme becomes superficial because Narayan has related it with love story between Sriram and Bharati. Gandhiji is presented in the company of children, Harijans and villagers.

The construction of ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ is indistinct even though the novel is ambitious in conception and setting. Sriram is the weak and unheroic hero. Due to the efforts to focus attention on the love pair: Sriram and Bharati the greatness of Mahatma goes out of realization. The character of Mahatma appears in a vague magnified form as a backdrop against the love story of Sriram and Bharati.

Gandhi’s character, the readers feel impressive because of the distinguishing qualities of his character, simplicity and humility. The character of Gandhiji becomes invisible as the second part of the novel begins. The young man in this part of the novel jumps in the Gandhian movement for the love of Bharati. The readers witness reappearance of Gandhiji at the end of the novel for blessing the union of the lovers.
The richness and diversity of India and her people are shown in ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’, and the author has taken the most expensive social panorama as the backdrop. Sriram, witty and romantic undergoes variety of experiences but responds to only the experience of love. Narayan remarkably chooses a hero who is entirely impenetrable to the experiences that the Indian society had. ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ is free from an ideological meddling and the writer, Narayan upholds a detachment from the sociopolitical upsurge of the period before Gandhiji’s death.

There is no other person in the novel except Bharati who is capable of ideological understanding of the critical situation, even Sriram does not respond to any radical change on account of his participation in the national movement which is led by Gandhiji. On the other hand Bharati, the heroine of the novel reveals extreme change in Indian womanhood under political tenor. A courageous girl, Bharati, an embodiment of Gandhian ideals and discipline is a capable woman to face the problems of new India. As soon as she was released from the jail she goes to Noakhali to join Gandhiji.

If Sriram symbolizes the uninfluential object of traditional Indian life Bharati represents the force attempting to change it. She symbolizes the emergence of the new woman and also meaningful change in social attitude in Indian life and the interaction between the two on the spiritual level is presented here. The human beings are not changed either by men or women or by deeds. In Narayan, the influence of revolution is not seen on his hero or people. Narayan, due to ironic idealism, does not believe easily in a significant event in the history of the country. He is not successful in observing the possibilities in the situation.

Narayan in his fiction presents India and the Indian way of life which the readers feel quite alive and active. The characters of Narayan are drawn from the middle class family whose habitation is in South India. R.K. Narayan in ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’ has projected the traditional and superstitious characters and the society. Being orthodox Sriram’s Granny does not like to use canvas chair. She does not want to pollute the house because it is made of leather. She also keeps the scavenger ten yards from her. Narayan has chosen Natesh only the character that is from upper class
society. The sweepers are the Harijans who live on the bank of Sharayu and they make a loud noise for their financial and social justice. The characters in the novel also present the politics of the country. Gandhiji’s freedom movement is shown based on ‘ahimsa’ and ‘Satyagrah’. Sriram and Bharati are the followers of Gandhian principles and they go from place to place to spread Gandhi’s Freedom Movement and his ideology.

Sriram and Bharati are the two contrasting characters. He is against the rules and regulations. Sriram is a man of powerful emotions who thinks his life is meaningless without Bharti. Bharati is a woman of strong will power who as a true follower wants to obey Mahatma Gandhi’s teachings. She is under the influence of Gandhji’s way of life and she attempts to live according to the principles of Gandhiji. There is no place for the personal emotions and ambitions in her life except Gandhiji’s non-violence, truth and self discipline.

3.6.5 The Guide

The novelist’s maturity is noticed in ‘The Guide’. His growth as a novelist is parallel to the growth of Malgudi. A small town Malgudi has become a crowded town by the arrival of the Railway. The Town Hall tower and maternity home mark other developments in the Malgudi. From the terrace of the Taj a person can see the river Sarayu. “Malgudi had many things to offer, historically and scenically, from the point of view of modern developments’. (Narayan, 1958:55)

The Guide- Raju, the central figure of ‘The Guide’, a complex character, is destined to play various roles in life, particularly fated to be a railway guide–playing the roles of a shopkeeper, a guide, an entrepreneur, a prisoner and a Swami, Raju drifts from one role to another, which causes his instability of mind. His association with railway is basically liable for instability. He moves from place to place, from situation to situation. Raju observes:

The railways got into my blood very early in life…I felt at home on the Railway platform. (Narayan, 1958:10)
Raju, even in his childhood does not desire to restrict himself to the four walls of his home. He said “while the birds were out chirping and flying in the cool air, I cursed fate that confined ‘me to my father’s company.’ (Narayan, 1958:12) He observed people buying and selling, arguing and laughing, swearing and shouting; the panorama of life enchanted me.’ (Narayan, 1958:13) Thus, the personality of Raju was formed by the environmental influence he underwent in his childhood. The railway platform was a source of joy to him which he enjoyed by moving up and down and it contributed his sensibilities to absorb spectacle of life.

Interest in people, detachment from persons or situations and involvement in life inspired Raju to play a role of a guide. It is written on the brow of some that they shall not be left alone, (Narayan, 1958:49) he thought. His love for Rosie in the beginning was a romantic sentiment. Raju was then dragged in miserable time of life that he had to be separated from Rosie. Being a master of showmanship, Raju made a deliberate effort to appreciate the art of dancing. Raju decided to make money out of her art and he changed the name ‘Rosie’ into ‘Nalini’. Though the change in Rosie was merely in name, the real change was in Raju. He became the man of the world and he became infected by the corrupt world. Rosie yielding to moral fall did not change at all. She was the same innocent and simple woman who lived in Mempi Hill Guest House, and did not desire self-indulgent life and money was a secondary thing throughout her life. Rosie, wanted people who possessed the benediction of the Goddess Sarawati, considering that, Raju liked those who had money and power.

In the changed situations, Raju’s new desires were money, influence, power and position. The corrupting forces that spread fast in higher society are observed in Raju’s rise in society. There was no inbuilt value structure in his mind; consequently, nothing prohibited him from sin. He was unable to realize Rosie’s unexpected affection for her husband and agony which was in a Hindu woman. As he received the letter of Marco’s advocate, he was obsessed with the thought of restraining the jewellery. Raju’s ravenous attitude resulted in committing forgery. Rosie’s comment in this connection was revealing:

I felt all along you were not doing right things. This is ‘Karma’ what can we do? (Narayan, 1958:196)
Raju was more of railways than home. His connections with a railway platform increased love for changing action but it does not develop fear in him for instability, either material or mental. The art of showmanship led him to obtain success as Swami very easily. As a Swami he experienced being surrounded by the villagers led by Velan. The villagers treated him as a God and have persuaded him to make a sacrifice for a collective cause. If rains did not arrive to Malgudi his death could be said to have changed nothing except addition to superstition. If he was dead and rains have come, there would have been a greater faith in a fasting, a myth around his name.

R.K. Narayan’s opinions regarding people in the society have great significance. According to him the villagers donot want him to lead a peaceful life. They want to do something fruitful for themselves or others. The village Mangala is proud of Swami in the temple. He is compared with Mahatma Gandhi by the villagers. To them, many things took place in India because of Gandhiji’s fast. Hence, there is rain because Swami has undergone fast.

If Raju was a changed man it was ironical that the changed man had no place in the life. If Raju had gone through change, he had to quit reality, leaving it behind totally changed. Change for the author, is completely impractical, it is futile at the same time.Rosie, a simple orthodox Hindu girl, helplessly wept over her sin:

She started crying- After all...After all...Is this right what I am doing?
After All he has been so good to me, given me comfort and freedom.
(Narayan, 1958:106)

She felt that the duty of a wife was to help her husband whatever the way in which he dealt with her. Rosie did not obey herself to the corrupting influence of modern life. Living in isolation Rosie resigned from practicalities of life. Under these situations, she revealed a ‘touch of resignation’ like Indian women.

Raju’s transformation from ‘Railway Raju’ to, a spiritual guide is one of the important themes in ‘The Guide’ Raju plays a role of double character in the novel. As a lover and a tourist guide he is sensitive, immoral and lenient. But as a holy man he is
attentive, careful of others and self-disciplined. It is comprehended that ‘The Guide’ is a remarkable study of rebellion, in which Narayan projects two rebels: Raju and Rosie. Their rebellion springs from the story of love. Raju’s moral and social deviation in the traditionally framed society leads him to the act of rebellion. He projects complete rebellion. The character of Rosie may be called a blending of tradition and modernity that is not able to establish her as the full rebel. Realizing a role of a wife and Indian womanhood Rosie returns to Madras. Raju’s jail for forging Rosie’s signature indicates the theme of crime and punishment which reflects the principle that virtue is rewarded and evil is punished. Narayan presents conflict between tradition and modernity in ‘The Guide’. Raju’s mother considers Rosie’s education but does not think of a dancing girl in her house. It suggests her orthodox tradition. Being traditional she doesnot want to deviate from the traditional norms and ethics of the Hindu society.