A civilized society assures a happy balance between man's elemental nature and his conduct as a social being. Human nature aspires towards the gratification of impulses and instincts which, in reality, are always thwarted. Celebration of the primary impulses in the Chief concern of the comic. As Robert M. Torrance observes, he is:

Comic not primarily because he is laughed at but because—-—- in the root sense of comes —- he celebrates life, of body and mind.

The comic hero has his own option to find ways for such celebration, independent of any rational or moral consideration. This obviously warrants an encounter with the world or the external reality.

The comic fiction shows the pathetic plight of man who has been put in a system that demands a massive instinctual sacrifice. This sadistic principle is so much entrenched in the fabric of social reality that man with an untamable nature cannot easily reconcile himself to it.
To quote Richard Wilhelm in this context, "tee is placed in the world en such a way that he can experience pain very readily," this fundamental disorder is built into the very pattern of the universe creating a hiatus between the ideal and the actual, between individual and society. The comics hero attempts, to an extent that makes him seem pathetic, to work out his life in a strange, hostile environment, led by unknown, uncontrollable drives of the self.

There being a fundamental incongruity in the scheme of things, man's existential encounter with reality appears comic. The conventions and customs of a mighty social order are threatened by the fond dreams of the comic hero. In the novels of R. K. Narayan, the accent is always on the ordinary man, with his small ambitions and passions alternating between the constrictions of an orthodox tradition into which he is born and the carnivals of a free world to which he is driven by his primal instincts and urges. Narayan's comic hero embodies a paradox: he has been reared by the religious rituals and beliefs of an age-old tradition, and on the other hand, he has been molded by the drives of his elemental self. As a result of this paradox the harmony of form in Narayan's novels emerges from an orchestration of two levels of reality - the social and the individual,
The details of nature, of environment, of customs, superstitions and costumes are juxtaposed against the details of the various states of mind— in varying moods of uncertainty, nostalgia, indignation and self-satisfaction. The individual reality and the social reality interact to
from the comic pattern. Dream and fact are set against each other with no intention to proclaim the supremacy of either, but to present a whole picture of life where the validity of each is recognized. To orchestration of realities which forms the comic pattern is embedded in the very process of living. The people in Narayan’s world represent varieties of life in all its manner and proportion, facts and fantasies.

From Swami and Friends to The Painter of Signs, his latest novel, Narayan depicts life in terms of innumerable aspirations and frustrations, successes and failures and oddities and idiosyncrasies. He does not exclude any particular age group, and within the bounds of the comic, every stage of life has got its own chalked-out place, reacting to the world outside in its own typical way. All the peculiarities, vagaries and villainies, however, irrational or unwise they may be, are the projections of the inner urges of life and are sincere human attempts to realize in terms of full pleasures of body and mind which are the basic objectives of the comic.
The Swami and Friends clearly illustrates the boundaries of the comic in Narayan's world of fiction. Swami and his friends in their innocence, transform reality of this world to conform to their childlike fancies and successfully live in their own world of make-believe, much as Don Quixote does. Their participation in the National movement by burning caps and by breaking glass panes of their schools, their M.X.C.C. and their serious business letter to messes Bins-- --all these and many more done in simple earnestness and in obstinate defiance, project an attitude that is essentially comic. Childhood impulses and instincts are juxtaposed in a spirit of jubilant conciliation against the world of grave business, the specter of which hangs large in Narayan's other novels. Blissfully oblivious, the innocent children alter the reality of a complex world into their own simple and peculiar terms and strive for a full celebration of their urges.

As the scene changes from an unpretentious childhood to a shrewd and calculative adulthood, the comic perspective also changes from conciliation to confrontation. The Bachelor of Arts Successfully presents this aspect of changing perspectives. In the first pages of this novel it is all happy, smooth going life for Chandra. But afterwards the
world becomes increasingly hostile to him. His adolescent yearning for Marathi and his emotional outbursts are dismissed by a reticent, realistic world. The events reach a point of fantastic absurdity when Chandra dons the garb of says, not out of genuine realization, but out of some fits of frustration-- - - - a situation typical of narayan’s comic ingenuity. But events move and change very fast offering ample scope to the comic hero to display the various facets and possibilities of his character in response to the demands of living. Chandra takes up the agency of ‘The Daily Messenger,’ marries social and becomes a man of the world as easily and quickly as he had renounced this world earlier. It is a crisscross of relationships between the individual and the world, sometimes opposing each other and sometimes coming to terms.

In Mr. Sam path one finds a rendezvous of all comic forces. Sam path, Srinivas, Somu, De mellow, shanty, Rave and many others are frantically involved with one another in bizarre relationships. The characters of Narayan’s novels cannot exist independently. All their pranks and idiosyncrasies fit amazingly into one another have to form a total comic pattern. What john Kill ham says in connection with Dickens’ Pickwick papers seems true of Naraysn’s novels too?
The important thing to note is that the characters are only made possible by the sortie. Jingle cannot exist independently of Dr. Slammer and the widow, of Rachael Wardle and the white Hart.3

The characters in Mr. Sam path are at once contrary and complementary to one another. Revives’ metaphysical concerns are inextricably linked with the frenzied material interments of Sam path so my and de mallow. Srinivas, in spite of the philosophical disposition of his character unwittingly gets involved in the comic world of gross, mundane. He hovers between the. World of serious philosophic speculations and the world of philistine pleasures, being uncertain of the value of either. Rave’s impossible vision of beauty along with the concomitant frenzy sets the comic process in motion until the plot is carried to the point of resolution. In the grand portrait gallery of Mr. Sam path also exist numerous Other comic characters, like the miser landlord who “collected the rent on the second of each month, took away the entire amount and placed it in Sprays Street post office bank “(pp,7-8) and at the same time professed himself to be a saunas who “bathed at the street tap and fed himself on cooked rice which was distributed as charity in a nearby tem ply” .(p.7) In the character of this greedy, pharisaical old man the comic incongruity is self-evident.
Among all the comic heroes of Narayan, Sam path displays his existential potential to the full and till the end he remains a comic hero, unbeaten untiring in spite of the hostility of the world around him. Other characters in this novel like Some, De Mello simply vanish: Srinivas is restored back to 'The Banner. Narayan s comic heroes elsewhere fail to maintain their defiant spirit till the last against the scheme of things. Being battered in the process they switch over their allegiance from an imaginative world of unbridled freedom to the servile codes of a regimentative society and some like Raju attain a sublime transformation. But Sam path alone remains, to the last, true to the command. He can persuade people around him to his own way of thinking. He successfully dictates his own terms and demolishes the conditions of a moral world. The docile citizen in Srinivas becomes dumbfounded in his first meeting with Sam path:

They came to a costly furnished room upstairs -- a very special room as a board hung outside it said: "For ladies and families only" Srinivas halted before it, finding another excuse: "We are neither ladies nor families. How can we go in" "These rules are not for me," the other said. (p.67)
For Sampath no rules exist. Even when he suffers a setback towards the end of the novel, his spirit is not defeated and probably a new venture awaits him at the railway station. To a question of Srinivas, Sam nath replies, Thanks. I'm going to the railway station. I'll manage there. (p. 219) He takes up different roles in quick succession - printer, film producer and actor. His spirit cannot be confined to any particular role or framework and the options do not end for him. He challenges and ieers at all sorts of social institutions. He can crack and munch groundnuts in the court of a magistrate in a gesture of defiance at the judiciary, the most respectable institution of the society; he can ignore his family and first with the actress shanti.

Sampath cherishes an independence of spirit and in such cherishing lies his conflict with the external reality. The encounter exposes the comic incongruity; but every conflict has its inherent nathos. One does not miss the subtle of nathos in the characters of Sam nath, Raja, Marzagava and iae on. Various emotions and aspirations of the individual respond to the compulsions of the world in diverse ways.
san path and his colleagues. This unequal relationship drags itself to a point where it is no more possible to maintain the apparent equilibrium and consequently the comedy of it sprines to the surface in clear visual details. Ravi’s mad act of snatching Shanty away from the amorous Shiva (Sam path) in the most romantic scene of the film. The Burnine of kamr’, his rampage through the entire studio virtually creating total chaos are gestures of comic challenge at a world that has strangedulated his inner urges. His frenzied hide and seek with Sam path. Somu. De Mello and all the other film folk during this episode of kidnapping subtly suggests the eternal hide-and-seek game that the individual and the world play between themselves. In Ravi’s case it is the comedy of an individual’s unrealized dreams and his desperate attempt to exist meaningfully, a comedy of human helplessness in the face of cold objective world.

Against the odds of life the comic hero proudly proclaims his belligerent selfhood. The heroes in Naravan’s novels suffer from a sort of ego-crisis and all their entanglements are the resultant effects of this crisis. Margery’s poverty and his inferior social status have made him challenge his fate. With wounded pride he snubs Arul Doss:
Arul Doss. I don’t know about you, you can speak for yourself. But you need not speak for me. You may not see a hundred rupees seven after a hundred years of service. but I think I shall do so very soon—and who knows, if your secretary seeks any improvement of his position, he can come to me. (p.11)

In Maragav's case money at first becomes an essential fact of existence, and then it becomes an obsession and nervousness. Successes boost his ego to a point when he considers nothing impossible for him:

He has immense confidence in himself now.

He could undertake any plan with ease.

he could shape his son’s future as if it were just as much clay in his hand. (p.87)

His burgeoning ego not only takes possession of his own self, but also of his own son and blinds him to reason and reality, thus destroying all of them in the process. He dwells simultaneously on two opposing planes---- the traditional and the modern. In the first pages of the novel, Maragavva's poverty, his dreams and aspiration are pitted against a rich society for which he madly craves. In the latter part, his ethical...
degeneration born of his own inflated ego leads not only to the
corruption of his son but also to the collapse of his business empire. In
the first part it is the comic challenge of a poor aspiring man at his fate.
in the second, it is moral suicide of an apparently invincible hero that
evokes a sense of both the ridiculous and the pathetic. In Margavva, the
ancient and the modern simultaneously exist effecting perpetual comic
tension. "The juxtaposition of the age-old convention and the modern
character". Graham Greene rightly suggests. "It provides much of the
comedy". The orthodox ritual of forty days, the publication of the of
the book 'Domestic Harmony', the cunning banking business through the succession of these events Margavva gradually moves
away from innocence to a shrewd sense of material success. Ironically
Margavva is caught in the coil of his own creations and is at last
betrayed by them. But all these events mirror his earlier derivations and
dreams. He successfully manoeuvres things to suit his own interest. His
fall is hastened by Balu's modern way of living which his orthodox
mind cannot endorse. But quite innocently he has long since accepted
the values of the modern, materialistic civilization for the promotion of
his own career. The comic incongruity can be perceived in terms of the
two phases of Margavva's career---- his struggle against the society
that loathes him for being poor: and his struggle against his son---- who
is his own replaced self – which has nursed and natured the modern
mode of living in violation of all traditional Hindu ethics that he has always held dear. With the denouement he moves a full circle and is back at his original position, chastened by his experience, wisdom and humanity. It is in this sense that Graham Greene speaks of Margayya as possessing "the hidden poetry and the unrecognized pathos we so often find in Chechov's characters who on his last page vanish into life."

The poignancy of the tragic-comic clash of generations is more acutely felt in The Vendor of Sweeta. The aged sweet vendor Jagon is a bundle of contradictions, who skillfully combines his business profits with exalted Gandhian principles. The comic incongruity is apparent in the unique blend of hypocrisy and sincerity in his character. The various urges in his character, that are often mutually contradictory, find their own ways of fulfilment, and conflicting though they may be between themselves, they exist in apparently wonderful harmony. He advises everybody to conquer taste in order to conquer the self. Spins for an hour everybody and wears which sandals made out of the leather of an animal which dies of old age because "he does not like to think that a living creature should have its throat cut for the comfort of my feet". (p.15) He has completely simplified his life, has discontinued sugar, and takes twenty drops of honey in hot water everybody instead. He has also give up rice and lives on "a little stone-
ground wheat with honey and greens." (p.16) He is capable of simultaneously managing both his spiritual and worldly affairs:

As long as the frying and sizzling noise in the kitchen continued and the trays passed. Jagon noticed nothing, his gaze unflinchingly fixed on the Sanskrit lines in a red bound copy of the Bhagvad Gita, but if there was the slightest pause in the sizzling, he cried out, without lifting his eyes from the sacred text," what is happening."7( p.18)

He superstitiously counts the 'free cash' which “is entitled to survive without reference to any tax”. (p.20) Jagon’s idealistic ritual in nicely woven into the shrewd pragmatism of a business man to form a unique comic personality. When Jagon is betrayed by his own fond dreams for his son the comic hero just becomes a pathetic stumps of life. Before Mail’s story producing machine, his half American, half Korean wife Grace, and his friends and foreign transactions. Jagon’s cherished notions of marriage and morals crumble. With the approach of the Modern, his apparently religious stance is reduced to a ruin.
Through long flashbacks the sweet past of his adolescent and marriage days is brought to his forefront of the narration offering immediate contrast to the long days of his widower's life. Jagon's dreams and ideals are pitted against a hostile world of fleeting time and of fast changing values. The long nostalgic recollections convey in poignant terms life's inherent sadness of time passing aways and one's dear world gradually receding with it. His sadness, his existential agraony, in a way, becomes the lot of the entire an emotional report with Jagon in a common understanding of life.

In the Guide such understanding is made possible by allowing the reader a glimpse into life's mysteries and myriad colours, into its depths and possibilities. Raju, the reckless and the romantic hero is poised against a whole set of hard realities represented in the forms of Marco. Velan, his kother, Gaffur and many others. He graduates from a small boy helping his father at the shop to owner of a railway stall and then successively to a guide, a romantic lover, a fake swami and ultimately a martyr. In Raju's character, the ego-crisis is sensitively rendered. On this aspect of Raju's character William Walsh comments.

.....the events in the novel also have a

thematic significance in that they suggest
the apparently hopeless struggle of Raju’s submerged individuality to achieve an independent identity. This is why we are aware so often of a rather frantic quality in Raju’s actions and meditations, for all that he keeps up throughout his off-hand, youthfully cheerfully manner."

The innate urge of man to find a meaning of life, to assert his identity in an imperious world, takes up an urgency in the character of comic hero and the greater the urgency, the greater is the dynamic of his actions and reactions. He can defy the ethical injunctions of the society to satisfy his existential needs. This comic clash with the external reality presents life’s depths and colour in kaleidoscopic pattern.

Raju, in quite characteristic way of a comic hero, becomes the architect of his own fate defying the compulsions of the traditions or of society, the forces outside and alien to his instincts and urges. He is an ever-aspiring young man, and his ambitions make his abandon his father’s humble shop, the railway stall and the vocation as a guide. His romantic morality, are set against the cold reality of a social existence represented by the apparently invincible characters like his mother,
uncle, Marco and his trusted friend Gaffur. Raju, Rosie and Marco have all broken away from normal way living and all of them are involved in a curious triangular relationship. Dream and fact, within and without, are entangled with one another in an existential equation. The comic hero marches over reasons and rationality in a defiant spirit of adventure to have a grant his own where he can nurse his desires.

For this he cute himself off from his family, he even robs Nalini and her husband of their original identities with whom he is engaged in immediate relationship. Nalini becomes Rosie and for her husband, Raju invents the name of Marco. His inner urges and the corresponding actions are set against a host of forces against the cold professionalism of Marco, against the orthodox morality of his mother and the aggressiveness of his uncle, against an unpredictable Rosie and at last against an alien and indifferent crowd during his spiritual ordeal at the riverside. Raju gets entangled with the world on a multi-dimensional plane, and on each plane his actions are aimed at subverting an orthodox and rational world that puts bridles on human instincts and impulses. The reader feels a compelling sense of admiration for Raju for the independence of his spirit and the tenacity of his actions, in spite of all its implication of social impropriety. The tragic-comedy of the individual’s helplessness in the face of awful
external reality becomes abundantly clear when Velan, even after hearing the entire history of Raju’s life, accepts him as “Swami”. What makes Velan behave so is left ambiguous. But in the figure of Velan all the weights of the world come to crush Raju and force him to maintain an utterly inconvenient mask. On the first day of his fast, quite in the guileful way of a comic hero, he searches for food in the aluminum Vessel in vain. His indomitable ego, which hitherto has been responsible for all his crises, once again comes to assert itself as a challenge to the pressure of the world.

He felt enraged at the persistence of food Thoughts.

With a sort of vindictive resolution, he told himself,"

I’ll chase away all thoughts of food. For the next ten days I shall eradicate all thoughts of tongue and stomach from my mind.”(p.213)

with this resolution of Raju, in forsaking a hedonistic life and in accepting martyrdom, the narrative moves out of the bounds of the comedy and enters the portals of a religious drama, but the comic incongruity persists, though now outside the character of Raju. Raju’s lone, rigorous penance and the loony crowed around him are in ironic
proximity to each other. They are, in effect, an encounter between an extremely private self and an indifferent world lying outside:

...... each day the crowd increased. In a week there was a permanent hum pervading the place. Children shouted and played about, women came carrying baskets filled with pots, fire wood and foodstuffs, and cooked the food for their men and children. There were small circles of smoke going up all along the river bank, on the opposite slope, and on this bank also. It was studded with picnic groups, with the women's bright coloured sarees shining in the sun, men too had festive dress. Bullocks unyoked from their carts jangled their bells as they are the straw under the trees. People swarmed around little water-holes. (p. 210)

Raju undertaking the penance in order to eradicate the drought and thus mitigate the suffering of the people. becomes a part of the people in a spiritual sense. Yet, he remains his solitary self amidst all there merry making and religious festivities. The objective world looms large with the special trains carrying passengers. Gaffur's taxi, the khaki-clad inspectors of the Health Department and the D.D.T. the film shows about Malaria, Plague and B.C.G. Vaccination, the swarming press reporters and the American film producer, the gambling booth and
peddlers and onlookers. A serious religious mission generating such
propaganda and festivities that belong absolutely to a commercial world
is of course a comic spectacle.

While the commercial world goes on exhibiting itself Raju
shrinks inward.

The hum of humanity around was increasing. His
awareness of his surroundings was gradually lessening in a sort of
inverse proportion. (p. 214)

what seems to be funny collaboration between innocent village folk and
an imposter working for an impossible end, takes on serious dimension.
Against the trepidations in the inner depths of existence of a sinner
experiencing the metamorphosis into a saint through self-mortification,
the flirtations and flippancy of the curious crowded, of the vast network
of commercial and governmental activities are juxtaposed. The
government’s silly telegraphic advice to persuade Swami to resume fast
later comes as a comic relief at the height of a tense situation. Beneath
the comedy of the entire scene, an awful anxiety lurks about Raju, who
faces the most crucial tryst with his destiny, Narayan, here, not only
depicts the state of Indian society in a period of transition, on the
existential plane, he seems to suggest the bewildering relationship between the individual and the world.

The human situation is portrayed in a sort of uncanny atmosphere in The Maneater of Malgudi. Vasu, the arrogant taxidermist lives a gross philistine existence. His highly inflated ego does not brook and challenge, and the humble society of Malgudi can only build a relationship of tame submissiveness with him. He virtually creates a parallel world where he reigns supreme. He has his own ideas and logic that confound our moral sense and the time-honored social values. He considers marriage to be an unnecessary social institution. For him ‘meals’ are arranged in our country so that thousands can die in cholera or Smallpox or just get trampled as a result of which the population of the country can be kept in ‘manageable limits’ (p.196) and shooting is not at all terrible and it just a ‘give and take’ (p.176) between the shooter and the object who receives the bullet. His immense physical strength, his fantastic logic and way of life and the very nature of his profession set him in immediate contrast with the docile folk of Malgudi. He becomes a menace to the smooth flow of life and has his own will and terms. The spirit of independence has taken an exaggerated form in him and he brooks no moral or social barrier while celebrating the urge of his self Even though Nataraj is embarrassed and
overawed by Vasu he feels "a sneaking attraction"7 for the latter's spirit of independence and his mainly defiance. Nataraj's predicament springs from his transaction with the fantastic Vasu. From the Vasu–Nataraj relationship, the scene moves to the sphere of the community when Vasu decides to shoot at the temple elephant. The comedy of Vasu's relationship with the people of Malgudi is sustained with continuing anxiety till the man-eater is undone by the mere mosquitoes. Vasu revolts against all routine habits of mind, against all accepted beliefs and patterns of human behavior, with such an attitude his transactions with a normal world produce a bizarre spectacle.

Vasu jeers at all sorts of social institutions. He belittles the world that does not allow the individual full sovereignty. He breaks the arm of the Police Inspector, flirts with any women he likes without caring least for the public opinion and shoots according to his whims. In all his actions he brings down the world around him to its knees. But in spite of all his apparent successes, he remains a solitary, mysterious figure. A proper study of his character and his strange relationship with the world, is not possible unless the working in the inner depths of his existence are probed.
K.R.S. Iyengar thinks that Vasu is the symbol of "anti-life". But on the individual plane, Vasu lives his life to the full, even to an enviable extent, whereas Nataraj and his sort are just ordinary people living a life of bridled aspirations and instincts. Vasu just can’t be dismissed as inimical to the spirit of living, once the darker recesses of his unconscious are understood. Vasu is forlorn figure having no kith and kin—— for reasons unknown to us—— and is discovered from the mainstream of life. Possibly the monstrous actions of Vasu that we witness are results of his injured ego, the evitable consequence of some deprivations in the earlier part of his life. Behind the violent facet, he still natures some of the dream of life. His possessive affection for Rangi and his desire to build a cosy home with her provide a glimpse into one part of his inner self that is tender, that cares for the simple, elemental values of life. In his young days, inspired by patriotism, "he had joined the civil disobedience Movement against the British rule, broken the laws, marched, demonstrated and ended up in lies concealed beneath the surface monstrosities. In his violent actions, he tries possibly to compensate what he has lost, what he has been deprived of. Here is grotesque figure driven by violent impulse of his own character, and in the end when these forces reach their ultimate point, he meter his doom."
This is, of course, depending too much on psychoanalysis. But Vasu’s conduct and character cannot be explained without it, as very little is known about him. As Erich from observes.

........the human passions (such as striving for love, tenderness, freedom as well as the lust for destruction, sadism, masochism, the craving for power and property) are answers to existential needs which in turn are rooted in the very condition of human existence.9

The character of Raju, Sampath and Margayya can be looked at with sympathy when viewed from this angle. And Vasu, failing to find satisfaction in the higher levels of life. "creatures for himself the drama of destruction." 10 Sastri’s mythological interpretation of Vasu’s death---- "Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment."(p.242)------ closely correspondence to this line of analysis of human character. From has summed up this paradoxical phenomenon thus. "....... life turning against itself in the striving to make sense of it.”11

Vasu’s response to this world takes up a terrifying form. The awesome personality of Vasu, the docility of the Malgudi folk and
revered Indian tradition facing, an apparent threat—all act and react with one another to form a comedy of the grotesque. Various existential problems are posed and not only Vasu, but also Nataraj, the monosyllabic poet, and others meet these problems in their own ways. Nataraj shares Vasu’s libidinal instincts to some extent. He reflects in comic bewilderment on the temptations of Rangi’s body.

When I tiptoed back to my place besides the grille, there she was, ready as it seemed to swallow me up wholesale, to dissolve within the embrace of her mighty arms all the monogamous chastity I had practiced a whole lifetime. (p.159)

Against Vasu’s defiant manner of living a life of instincts, Nataraj, the orthodox moralist looks ridiculous.

In the drama of Malgudi we find life in all its totality, where man tries to assert his status and lives by various designs, however, puny and evil these may be. To quote Erich form again.
The truth is that all human passions, both the 'good' and the 'evil' can be understood only as a person's attempt to make sense of his life, and transcend banal merely life sustaining existence...... Even the most sadistic and destructive man is human, as human as the saint. He can called a warped and sick man who has failed to achieve a better answer to the challenges of having been born human, and this is true, he can also be called a man who took the wrong way in search of his salvation.12

Thus sampath of basically no different from Srinivas. Raju is very much like us, and Vasu also is like Nataraj or the monosyllabic poet in so for as basic human aspects are concerned.

The focus shifts from the bellicose egoism of Vasu to a sort of baffling individualism of Daisy, an inspired family planning worker in The Painter of Signs. This novel is a comedy of adolescent Visions of romantic love and of fanatical idealism. Apart from Raman and Daisy, the various pranks and idiosyncrasies of Raman's customers, the superstitious beliefs of the village folk, the lawyer who wants a left slant in the letters in his signboard, the bangle seller who sells profound messages soft feminine hands, the town hall professor who sells
profound message for only five paisa each, the old priest of the temple who can read one’s past from a number of a colour and numerous others with their individual peculiarities exist in Malgudi making it almost a human zoo. The Painter of Sign follows the characteristic comic pattern that one finds in the other novels of Narayan. Raman’s romantic yearning not only face an opposition from her aged aunt, the repository of all the traditional values, but he has also to encounter the uncertain responses from Daily. Daily remains an enigma for him. He, with his most private longing build a queer relationship with Daily who ultimately proves to be an embodiment of indifferent for him. On the otherhand, Daisy alternately responds to and rejects her own instincts. For her Raman represents the emotional aspect life that hardly aggress with her strong individualistic temperament. Daisy’s abandonment of the proposed marriage in preference to the family planning campaign in some distant hilly village is an sudden and absurd as Raman’s quick acceptance of this reversal with a desire to drive a nail into the tire of Daisy’s vehicle and with the carefree act of throwing the key into the dry fountain. Daisy’s unrealized instincts and her fanatical idealism make her character an entity of incongruities. With the gradual unfolding of the Raman- Daisy relationship, the contours of the comedy become clearer and clearer as the incongruity of the situation gets exposed. The suffocation of a
crowded joint family have heavily weighed upon Daisy's childhood which has resulted in the built-in aversion in her character for any sort of private relationship. Raman, on the other hand, tries to weave his life into that of Daisy. Who is utterly incapable of any emotional relationship. The individual's instincts and aspirations confront an inhospitable reality of things.

Narayan's protagonists are out to assert their identities in the face of a cruel world that never comes up to individual's expectations. Margayya knows that he has been thrown into a world that "seemed with dark powers" (p.30), a world that" treated him with contempt because he had no money". (p.11) It is not only Margayya who has to face the odds of the world, it is also Raju with his instinctual yearnings for Rosie, Sampath with his ambitions projects, Ravi with his impossible vision of beauty and Raman dreaming to marry a women who pathetically confesses. "Married life is not for me. I have thought it over. It frightens me. I am not cut out for the lifeyou imagine. I can't live expect alone." (pp.178-179)

K.R.S. Iyengar surveys the scene from a social context and finds Malgudi "a field of unpredictable forces, a theatre where farces and tragic-comedies are played without end". "the net result being the
enthrone 5" the net result being the enthronement of the Absurd". This 'Absurd' is not only the outcome of "war and the post-war years of hectic striving, chronic uncertainly, expense of spirit and lust in action "... It is there entrenched in man's fundamental existence right from the time of Dr. Faustus, Don Quixote and many others right from the time of man's birth into this universe with his instincts an yearning, wishes and dreams.

The comedy in Narayan's novels carries a subtle sense of pathos. Both the socio-economic as well as question pertaining to man's very existence haunt him--- question such as the silent process of ageing, the temporality of our existence and the futile search for some stabilizing factor in life. For Margayya, the illusion of marriage days no more sustains him.

He had thought that the world continue for ever.

What a total false view life one acquired on one's wedding day. (p.18)

And for Jagon the charm of married life is also long since lost giving place to the forlorn days of a widower. The old miserly landlord in Mr. Sampath dies with his dream of seeing his grand-daughter's marriage
unrealized. Man by his puny efforts tries to create impression of permanence in a transitory existence. The dreams fall flat to the ground and there comes the shock of recognition, the pathetic awareness of the fragility of an impermanent universe.

Narayan’s protagonists, who are ordinary men and women, move out their ordinariness in their quest to make life more pleasurable or meaningful. They passionately cling to a life that time and again betrays and batters them. Thus his novels are tiny worlds where the Lilliputian man with his dreams and suffering is celebrated, where one finds man untiringly limping across the boundaries of life with the beauty and bruises of existence.

A comic vision embrace the multifarious facets of human life. Narayan operates in a framework of traditions and social morality which is much bigger than the individual, his ego and oddities. Sooner or later, normal reality takes hold of the situations including the aspiring and erring individuals. Hence man’s encounter with the world appears ludicrous. The comic vision always offers the consolation of a reconciliation. Man’s small villainies, his innumerable temptations and tragedies and the frequent abysses and heights in his life——— all these that form the totality of life are affectionately treated by Narayan with a humane understanding of life’s complexities. Raman in The Painter of
Sign declares that "people are moved by strength, inexplicable drives."

... (p.64) ------ a statement that serves as a key to Narayan's comedy in The Painter of Sign as also in his other novels. He explores subtly the psychic depths of man, brings him close to a world outside himself, and from this orchestration of realities, Carves out a human comedy.


5. Ibid., p. VIII.


10. Ibid., p.30.

11. Ibid., p.32.

12. Ibid., pp.31-32.

14. Ibid., p. 373