CHAPTER-IV

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A. Western Influence on Narayan

Narrative technique, in the case of novelist, refers to his way of telling a story. Broadly speaking, there are two ways of telling a story representative and expressive, selecting a fable, creating a situation, setting an episode, and fulfilling the whole with appropriate human characters in a given fable, quite objectively is the method of a representative novelist. R K Narayan prominently emulated the example of innumerable novelists of England and America, who had provided the world with the invaluable traditions of novel writing. As has already been suggested, he inherited the art of novel writing from the prominent British novelists like Jane Austen, Bronte sisters, Charles Dickens and Mark Twain of America.

The manner in which R K Narayan narrates his novels has invention, warmth, humour, truth and miraculous lightness of touch. It has often been said that greatness of R K Narayan as a novelist lies in the convincing manner in which he conceives his characters and situationalises them within the fable in such a harmonious manner that it appears that Narayan is making a unique world of his own, which is full and complete in itself, with all its sublimities and banalities, just like the world around us. It is this touch of naturalness in his novels that really makes him a representative writer of the fundamental aspirations and emotions of people anywhere and everywhere in the world.

In _Swami and Friends_, R K Narayan very successfully builds a humorous story around the character of _Swami and Friends_. The humour lies actually in the attitudes and disposition of Swami as well as his friends towards education as a whole and towards the
rigorous school curriculum, as it was in its particulars. Education in the sense we have it as a serious mechanical curriculum, with the teachers excessively imposing themselves on the child’s psyche, is newly introduced by the British rulers in India. The modern educational system is a product of colonial subjugation and exploration. Narayan partly looks at it as a thing that has to be resistant.

Historically, there was a strong move and call given by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi to leave the British educational institutions in order to fight for the independence of India. Gandhiji wanted the students to come out of the schools and literally partake in the Indian National Movement. The very call given by Gandhiji was not liked by many intellectuals. R.K. Narayan is one of such intellectuals who reacted to the nationalist congress strategies in a mixed manner. While he takes up the depiction of school life in Swami and Friends very realistically, he introduces such ironic and humorous situation which become greatly interesting for a school going boy.

At the outset, the Britishers arrived in this country for the purpose of conducting business, gradually they established a sort of oppressive colonisation with the ostentious purpose of enlightening and civilising the Indians, whom they perceived as tribal, barbarous and inhuman. They invented a seemingly demographic theme of their mission for civilizing the people of India in accordance with the formula of the eighteenth century European enlightenment and the latter formula of progress through medievalism and industrialism. But the real purpose of the British rulers remained in their own material gains and personal profits after due exploitation of the abundant natural resources and the human resources. As Esha Dev, in her The Novel of Raja Rao The Theme of Quest,
rightly points out: "The Britshers came to the subcontinent as merchants. Everything they
introduced in the colonies, from railways to English education, was geared to the
commercial interest of the British people who were then at the penultimate stage of the
capitalist economy." (11)

The very success of otherwise of the educational system naturally depends upon
the acquiescence of the common people of the subcontinent. Because of the demographic
variations and linguistic differences, coupled with caste and creeds contributed for
fragmentation of the whole mainland of India. But however, we had a unique educational
system, earlier to the advent of the Britshers. There was a tradition of formal educational
institutions, primarily meant for theological and academic purposes in accordance with the
medieval Hindu traditions and the later Mughal training centres of muslims. The intriguing
manner of the Britshers in introducing their educational system is quite important. They
did not outright destroy or close down the native educational systems, they just offered a
viable alternative in the manner of primary, secondary and higher education.

The system itself is borrowed from the British mainland. It offered a sort of
gradual induction into the eighteenth century European ideas of enlightenment and
progress. At the same time, it also offered prominent venues of livelihood for all the natives
more or less equinoctially. In a way, it contributed for a potential change in the quality of
life. The professionally competent class emerging out of the new education of British
contributed for the rise of unified middle class, which ultimately became the central force
in fighting for the independence of India. At the same time, it is certainly a matter of great
importance that the Indian masses, otherwise getting traditional education through oriental
methods, acquired for themselves a relative evaluation of the great literatures of the East and the West.

Narayan, in his Swami and Friends, had a special purpose of showing how the British educational system, particularly in the primary level, reverts the attention and freedom of an average school-going boy in a sort of an unnatural and abnormal manner. It is a fact widely acknowledged that the British educational system has its own efficacies and deficiencies simultaneously. Depicting the adventures and rigors of an average middle-class boy at school, Narayan pungently wants to draw attentions of the ruling masters, as to how their educational system progressively contributed for rigorously conditioning the primal human responses of freedom and joys of childhood. The works of Charles Dickens in England (David Copperfield and Great Expectations) and by Mark Twain (Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn) in America. In this context, the words of Stephen Marcus, who introduced Stal and Co to the American readers in Kipling and the Critics by Eliot. L. Gilbert, are very important. Says Marcus,

"Although a serious concern with childhood is a common feature of all modern culture, in no other culture has that concern been so central and intense as in the culture of English-speaking world. In no other language the word for boy has the kind of resonance that it does in English. In what other language is there such an epithet as "Oh, boy" an expression of the very essence of spontaneous delight? Or in what other language are lines such as Shades of prison house begin to close Upon the growing boy Thought of as expressing the very essence of sadness, and of the human condition?" (153)

R K Narayan quite discreetly deals with the pleasures and pains of childhood, both in the school and in the house. In a way, he appears to consider the view that the
oppressive rigors of the elders, both, in the house and in the school ultimately contributed for Swami, constantly and continually struggling to escape and discover for himself the possible generic propoundations of joy and freedom. Narayan's concept of childhood is largely build on what Bernard T. Harison, in his "Literature for Children: A Radial Genre", Calls "... on the intelligent anti determinist concern for children that has long been enshrined in folk-lore and which was highly developed by Blake, Dickens, Charles Bronte and others" (365-379).

The contribution of Mark Twain and Lewis Carroll confirmed in him the child like naivety and innocence as proper modes of insights. There are innumerable different qualities of naivety and of innocence, which go to contribute for a sceptical kind of criticism and offers what John Rowe Townsend Calls 'Morally educative qualities of good children fiction'. Townsend's remark quite naturally, enhances our quality of enjoyment of children's literature. But what really provides us 'with a mode of insight' is essentially psychological play, fun, and dreaming which constitute the parametres of children's activity. This play, fun and dreaming in children become equal and opposite reactions to the oppressive modes of the world of elders. While the elemental lessons of asserting and exercising the fundamental mode of freedom in action is sum and substance of the naivety of R.K Narayan's child's characters, it also reflects as a primal instinct in children in the act of discerning (to borrow the expression of Harison): "The honest from the dishonest, plain from the pretentious, delightful from the depressing, kind from the callous, amusing from the dull, free from the captive" (365-379).
B. Dickens, Twain and Narayan

In *Swami and Friends*, R K Narayan prominently enumerates the examples of *The Arabian Nights*, *The Huckleberry Finn* of Mark Twain and *The David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens. Thereby he brought forth an enviable fictional version of the little adventures of an Indian boy in his typical Malgudi or Indian cultural environment of the twentieth century. Coming to the accomplishments of *Swami*, the typical manner of expressing and exposing his childlike innocence itself can be considered as a profound achievement.

Mark Twain’s Huck’s life is full of adventure of a child where the world of grown-ups is quite maliciously oppressed towards his own sense of freedom. Thus, at the same time David Copperfield’s life itself is full of incidences emerging out of the world of elders and imposing upon him all the insufferable rigorous and constrains. In *David Copperfield*, Charles Dickens creates an anti-hero, who cannot save himself from the uncontrollable, authoritorial doings of the elders. Thereby, David Copperfield grows into a tremorous child, with shattered emotions and stricken feelings. However the self-restraints which David Copperfield imposes upon him, quite helplessly of course, is in itself a great humanistic achievement.

*Swami*, a typical child prodigy of Malgudi, prominently asserts his child-like transparent will to overpower and dominate the entire children world around him. This may be considered as a typical accomplishment of *Swami* as a child hero. He is a nine-year-old boy, tremorous and coward by nature. Whenever his little problems become too much for him, he decently escapes and takes refuge in his grand mother’s lap, where he gets all patting and security from the intermediating forces. In the school, he always aspires the
friendship of physically bigger and important classmates. But at the same time, he looks down on the boys younger and smaller to him. But he never hates them. It just satisfies his self-supposed, self-reflected and self-satisfying momentary ego of his superiority.

Swami is a self-important child coming from the humble and poverty-stricken surroundings of his fellow beings. In the British educational institution he always finds himself as an odd man. In the house, his force trumbled himself down in front of his dominating father. In the school, the teachers implementing all sorts of discipline becomes quite insufferable for him. As such he slightly grows into a mischievous child, who intends to discipline which he considers as a proud trait of individual. In a way, this struggle to individualise himself in order to withstand the intimidating world of elders, is a pride accomplishment of Swami as a child hero. But then he is not a proud or an arrogant boy. He is well aware of the importances of the 'primary activity' in life. Needless to say, that a child’s 'primary activity' is in his self-protection and in the protection of his race that is his friends. The self-important manner of Swami in all the moments were the surrounding life forces corner him, he always finds it occasional, to quite diplomatically, avoiding any conflict or controversy.

Narayan models the character of Swami in accordance with the characters of Huck (Mark Twain’s 'The Huckleberry Finn' hero) and David in the 'David Copperfield' of Charles Dickens. The manner in which R.K. Narayan adds a special Indian flavour to the child hero activities, becomes a matter of added interest to the Western readers. In this context, these words are noteworthy.

"Two things must have impressed the English critics, first the strange world of India seen through Indian eyes, and second, what is universal in the experience of every
little school-boy, whether Indian or English. In the school, the Scripture master was always in the habit of denouncing the Hindus and their religion. Idolatry, which is a prominent feature of Hinduism and its myths, is constantly hackled at by the Scripture master. At the same time, the extrafervent manner in which Swami prays in the Pooja room of his house, requesting the Gods to work a miracle in order to convert the pebbles into coins. These peculiar Indian socio-ethical infrastructural facets provide a glimpse into the interior of the average Indian boy’s habit of thinking. While the idolatry is denounced by everybody in the West, the Scripture masters’ manner of constantly and continually denouncing Hindu Gods exposes the manner in which the Missionaries are functioning in the Indian context, without respect for human dignities, which are universally acknowledged as available in all the religious percepts and infrastructures.

Swaminathan’s childish blind faith in the capacity of the God to convert pebbles into copper coins, while it is expressive of the ignorance of Swami, it simultaneously exposes the irrationality of myths everywhere in the world. In the Bible itself there are innumerable myths, which emanates out of a childlike wish fulfilment dream of all cultures in their primieval stages. Jesus turning the stones into bread is an example. But Narayan does not mean to slide the biblical myths. He is just suggesting that children everywhere and anywhere in the world are in the habit of indulging in autistic imaginations and dialectic thinking. Infact, a parallel incident is available for comparison in Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn. Jim, the Negro boy, has a hair ball with him, which he believes, is capable of making miracles.

Both in R K Narayan and in Mark Twain, the incidences reflect at the universal blind manner in which children invoke for themselves for supernatural powers, just in
order to serve their mind impossible purposes, at least in day-dreams if not in reality. The very impossibility of such possibility in real life makes all the more the children tenaciously and fervently invoking for themselves such supernatural powers. It is certainly a useless desire or dream. But then, there is a point of truth in its universality. Man anywhere in the world believes in the autonomy for his individualism. In order to serve this purpose of autonomy trait in his personality, he goes to the extent of accepting the supremacy of the supernaturals and to reason. Children everywhere in the world prominently nurture this trait. Narayan’s universal appeal is grilled in the above exclusive Indian facets of lives.

The suggestive influences of Mark Twain and Charles Dickens are plentifully available. Swaminathan resorting to hiding the wooden box filled with sand and leaves under the tree, with a fond hope of converting the leaves into money, has its parallel in Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*. Huck rubs an old tin lamp and an iron ring continuously, until he comes to a point of exhaust, believing that the Geness of the person “Built a palace forty miles long, out of diamonds, and fill it full of chewing gum, or whatever you want, and fetch the Emperor’s daughter from China for you to marry” (32). Needless to say that in the above context, both Narayan and Mark Twain, are fictionally guided by *Aladin and the Wonderful Lamp*, a world famous Arabian Nights stories.

C. Upholder of Humanist Values

Raju’s life story, incredible as it might look, particularly in his latter stages of life, the character of Ramani (*The Dark Room*) has terrorising effect on the readers of all ages. Quite meaninglessly he resorts to inflicting excruciating cruelty on his own wife and children. Ramani, as a character is a civilized parallel to the wicked and cruel wizards of the traditional folklore, the victims of his atrocities are his own wife and children. But, it
we make a close critical analysis of his character, he is quite meaninglessly and irrationally
revengeful, again like a thwarted child.

The original seeds of the character of Ramani are to be found in the awfully
revengeful trait of Swami (Swami and Friends), when he goes to the coachman's house
with a passionate motive of getting back the money that the coachman has robbed from
him. Here, Swami was exposed to the cruelty and atrocities of the slum-dwelling children,
who finally puts the street dogs behind Swami, when he was running away. This episode in
the life of Swami, contributed for a terrific revenge motive, which ultimately comes in the
form of the character of Ramani, just like the children of the slum, Ramani too is a patient
of mimic psychosis, a psychological disease. A person suffering from this mimic psychosis,
becomes a straddling problem for everybody around him. He maintains in himself all sorts
of cruel intentions with which he inflicts insufferable pain and atrocities on his own wife
and children.

But, the fictional focal point in the Dark Room is not at all the terrific and
terrorising Ramani. On the other hand, the fictional kaleidoscope of R.K. Narayan is
directed towards Savitri, a meek, obliging, Indian house-wife, and her children. Her going
into the dark room is a clear symbolic gesture that there is something wrong in the inter-
personal relationship of Savitri and her husband. As a matter of fact Savitri's affectionate
self towards her children could not tolerate the irrational tantrums of her husband. But
there is no alternative for her as a meek Indian wife, she is under a cruel necessity to put
up with him all through her life, inspite of all the humiliating hazards in his companionship
in the house. Her frequent excists and entrances in the dark room all the more become a
matter of scandal amongst the servants also. In one house, he enters the dark room to see
servants as well as her own children know that the battlelines between Ramani and Savitri are drawn, and there is something unbearably wrong in between the wife and the husband.

Wife beating and torturing of children is the widest spread commonality amongst the illiterate and unlettered villagers. The startling irony in The Dark Room lies in the fact that this social evil is categorically implemented in the civilised and sophisticated folks like Ramani and Savitri. The entire strained relationship between the parents becomes a matter of startling concern for children. But they are equally helpless. The following episode confirms the sublime manner in which Babu tries to elevate and elevate his own inner pain, as well as that of his mother. The episode deserves to be quoted in total as follows:

"He was troubled about his mother. It was he who had received the slaps, so why should she go on lying there as if a great calamity had befallen the house? Perhaps he ought not to have cried like a girl. The memory of his tears hurt him now. He loathed himself and resolved he would never cry again in his life. Before starting for school he went to the dark room and said to his mother, ‘why do you go on lying there? It was only a slight slap that he gave after all. You make too much of it. I am going to school now: ‘Have you taken your food?’ she asked. ‘Yes, get up and go about your business’ (49).


At the same time, he could not willingly disown and extricate himself from the most comforting circumstances of his childhood. This is the reason why he builds all his characters and incidents with their origin in the innocent, free and frank surroundings of his childhood. In this context, the words of Ramesh K. Shrivastava are very important. Says Shrivastava, “The autobiographical element is so dominant in his novels and shor
stories, particularly in the characters of children that his own childhood reconstructed from them” (58)

Therefore, Narayan as a creative writer bring forth the live photocopies of his childhood scenes alive in his novels. The usual child’s imaginative escapist tendencies and his seeking a comfortable asylum and balance in the well-made stories of granny, prompted him to write his novels as granny’s tales. A child’s love of life is immediate; and so are his fears of the surroundings disrupting and destroying his well adjusted comfortable state of survival in his life and surroundings as they are. By nature, a child adopts for himself a few comforting fractions to escape from the constraining environmental particulars in his home as well as in the school.

Incidentally it is important to note here that the Western Missionary school systems were being prominently introduced into the Indian mainland during Narayan’s childhood. Earlier to the introduction of the British school system, Malgudi’s state of nature was primal and primevally unassuming. The life was simple, natural and true to the honest and humble aspirations of its inhabitants. There is a sort of Adamic innocent and simplicity. At the same time, it was also a system were no extrogeneous constrain were put on child’s manner of executing his own affairs. The Westernised school system brought forth insufferable constrains on his otherwise absolute freedom loving temper or temperament. Narayan’s conviction of relative happiness of the childhood can be gathered from the following statement of the Head master in The English Teacher. Says the Head master:

“Most of us forget that grand period but with me it is always begin there, a time at which the colours of things are different; their depths greater, their immediate greater...”
most balanced and joyous condition of life, their was a natural state of joy over nothing in particular” (167-168)

This natural state of joy over nothing in particular and everything in general is widest commonality shared by all children. Therefore, it is not merely his own childhood that he celebrates in his novels, he also brings forth some of his child time friends and rivals into the dramatic episodes of Swami and Friends. Autobiographically speaking, Swami is Narayan himself. His friends are characteristically delineated in Rajam, Mani, Somu, Samuel, Shankar. The life particulars as lived by these children are most winningly presented in his novels. The whole novel gives a picture of life which is innocent, free, frank and full of fun and profuse. The school curriculum was of course rigorous in insisting upon a straight jacketed discipline. Narayan himself emphasises that he hated the rigorous discipline of the school and "vect for fear" (9)

All through his writings, R K Narayan envisages pictures of life as comprehended from the kaleidoscope view of a child. Not only the novels like Swami and Friends, where the protagonist Swami is a child and the visions of social and cultural life as presented therein are the criticism of life from an innocent child. The other novels like The Bachelor of Arts, The Guide, The Painter of Signs, The Vendor of Sweets, Waiting for The Mahatma, present dramatic pictures of life that are profoundly instructive and entertaining as fictional model to child like appreciation. A child’s world of thought is invariably associated with autistic thinking and defective imagination. Moreover, a child likes to have fairytales and folklores repeated to him verbally by some elder, like a granny.

Almost all the novels of R K Narayan, including his auto-biography My Days, maintained in them a narrative technique that enchants the child like mind of the reader.
through chance surprises, winning fantasy, and charming ocuous discoveries into the introspective apprehension of the hopes, desires, expectations, and failures of ordinary people in their social and cultural interactive dimensions of life. That way R K. Narayan's themes are significantly pertinent to the life and life-styles of the modern Indian scenario, of that imaginary landscape called Malgudi

Narayan's Malgudi, in fact is conceived as an analogical demographic region, which gets fulfilled with the imaginary stories of the imaginary characters, in action and interaction. Literally historians tried to locate this Malgudi somewhere in South India in Mysore. Just because of the reason that its author is a native of the Mysore state. But the fact is, it emerges as a parallel world confectioned and characterised by Narayan's fictional imagination, which in all probabilities aims at achieving for himself a pleasant and loving picture of life, for his own child-like comprehensions of the world

Inspite of the fact that R K Narayan was living and sustaining his passionate dramatic themes of life in our time, he, somehow, does not divert his fictional art towards the problems of the modern world like invention of the atomic weapons, world wars, ruthless industrialisation, mechanisation and urbanisation that are rocking the order and stability of the world in our times, are never touched by R K Narayan in his fictions. On the contrary, he prefers to tell life stories of the so-called Malgudi inhabitants, who are conducting their life and life-styles in a far excellent primitive manner. In keeping with the activities of the people who care less for reality and more for withdrawing themselves into their own world of fancy and imagination

This does not mean that R K Narayan does not deal with the painful and tragic dimensions of life. There are innumerable characters in the novels of R K Narayan who
stoop to gross for this and his un-inhabited wicked actions. But such wicked characters like Raju himself in his famous novel *The Guide*, are prominently malevolent and evil characters from the general moral point of view. Like the evil characters of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain, they have their psychological reasons and unrest to take to evil directions of causing harm to their own people. R K Narayan prominently believes that the world is inhabited, both by good and bad people; and, there is always a sort of undeclared war between the good and the bad. For a child's aesthetic satisfaction, there should always be a victory for the good, in one form or the other. This victory is sometimes presented as a humiliating vanquishment and self-respect as in the ominous death of Raju, through drowning in the deep water.

Speaking from the child's point of view, Raju's death is an insufferable orgie. But then, Raju being a bad man in being a deceiver of Rosie, a child's sense of justice comes to the portrait in the death of Raju. All the readers and critics of R K Narayan agree that he was at his best in (to borrow the words of Ramesh K Shrivastava), "His Portrayal of children and the depiction of childhood of some of his mature character." (73-86)

**E. Autobiographical Streak**

For a while, it can found that there is no great difference, practically speaking between the procedural aspect of 'love and then marry' and 'marry and then love'. The end results are more or less the same. It all depends upon the married partners as to how best they involve with each other in being man and wife (The English Teacher) after marriage. Krishnan became a teacher of English Literature in the Albert Mission School. His wife Sushila and his child Leela joined him in a corner house in Sarayu Street. For quite sometime they lived happily. But quite suddenly Krishnan was referred to face
sudden excruciating agony. During the weeks of Sushila’s illness and the ominous death that followed, the last journey to the cremations ground, as Srinivas Iyengar points out in his Indian Writing in English “is one of the most moving and flawless pieces of writings in modern English fiction. Not a word is wasted and not a word rings false” (369).

It is in the second half of the novel that we have the painful story of a father, who is simultaneously forced to be the mother also, to a growing child, that is Leela. It is in this second part of the novel, that the autobiographical content of R.K. Narayan becomes painfully but vibrantly available. Like Sushila, the fictional prototype of Rajam, the fond and loving wife of R.K. Narayan, dies quite early in the life. Rajam also gives birth to a girl child, Hema, and dies. Particularly the manner in which Krishnan starts communications with Sushila with the help of a medium, introduces a whimsical and fantastical element in Narayan’s true life story.

Automatic writing and attempts at sarcency contact with the dead are not at all uncommon. India is particularly embedded with such idealism and eccentricities. For a while, Narayan appears to be totally convinced with the idea that the real self, which inhibits the living creatures is permanent and indestructable. Transmigration and rebirth or excumatic facts of the Indian ways of thinking in ascetic dimension. Inspite of all such faiths in transmigration of souls and prospects of rebirth, the second part The Bachelor of Arts does not emerge as a unified whole in the novel. The second part is, again to take the words of Srinivas Iyengar “a piece of subdued ecstasy, seasoned with humour that hurts but not, but rather emphasises the affictions between prose and poetry in everyday life” (368).

There is a way of interpreting the whole novel as an artistic whole, despite of the fact that the first and second half of the novel are obviously contrary to each other. In th
first half, the exact and literal presence of Sushila as a wedded wife to Krishnan. In the second half, it is her ever continuing presence of her memory in Krishnan that concludes the unity of the novel. But, however, the love story of Krishnan taking quixotic turns and passionate endowments, both in the first and second parts reveal the child like necessity of Krishnan to be possessed by some agent all through his life. A child can never withstand the idea of loneliness in life. His gregarious nature always compels him to have a companion of his heart by himself. Even if it is the fond memory of a dead wife, it does not matter.

A support, that too of an affectionate member in life, is all that a human being only desires. It is this gregarious streak in man that ultimately becomes a ground-swell of the family institution everywhere and anywhere in the world. As we have it in The Bachelor of Arts, it is the fond content of child like affections that ultimately leads to a true and soul filling redemption in life. This redemption is not metaphysical. It is the redemption of this art that children feel and inculcate in themselves as an only way to survive in an atmosphere of assuring familial affections. If so, R K Narayan reiterates and substantiates the formula that ‘child is father of man’. And in one form or the other, this streak of childhood permanently lives in the nonconspicuous contents of the human authenticity and the self.

F. R.K. Narayan’s Projections of Life

Somehow, R K Narayan, as a fiction writer, all through his life, progressively involved himself into the world of children. That way, the practical life of Narayan is full of innumerable tragic incidences and crises. For example, the untimely death of his dear wife after the delivery of a girl-child, is the greatest tragic incidence of his life. It is just
possible that he developed a 'characteristic empathy' towards children as a matter of his emotional love and affection towards his orphaned daughter from the mother's side. In addition to this autobiographical fact, there is abundant evidence to believe that R.K. Narayan, as a novelist, was prominently influenced by the child portrayal techniques of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain.

Mischief is motivated manner of a child attempting to drive away the impending strain of the monotonous life. As a matter of fact, regularity of life imposed by the circumstances upon him. Both in the school and in the house, children resort to mischief as a matter of deviated instinctive device to save themselves from these imposing psychological constraints. Very often it remains as a personal secret programme within the child's imagination. A child usually feels odd and uncomfortable within the domestic and school surroundings, usually dominated by the presence of the elders like parents and teachers where the child becomes psychologically incapable of withstanding monotonous familiar atmosphere in the house. He suddenly runs away in the street for play along with his friends, these friends usually radiate out.

In the whole novel of Swami and Friends, there are innumerable incidences and episodes, where Swami, the chief protagonist of the novel, invents such deviated preoccupations for themselves in order to lighten the burden and strain. One day Swami and Mani go to the house of Rajam secretly. They have their own prearranged codes of alerting and drawing the attention of Rajam to their presence. Swami mews like a cat and Mani barks like a dog. All this is with the purpose of notifying their arrival without being sensed or observed by the other members in the house of Rajam. If the elders come to know of the gangling process of the children, they usually dissuade them through threat.
and punishment from joining their children with their friends. So the children invent for themselves their ingenious methods of doing things aside to their elders.

R K Narayan’s stringent reactions to the treatment of the native students in the Missionary schools are true to his personal experience. In such schools, the first casualty is the self-respect of the concerned students. With the loss of this self-respect, self-security, and self-importance too vanish. In such a situation, according to the modern psychologists, inferiority complex makes its inroads into the personality of the child. According to Jung, this inferiority complex in any particular person, automatically leads to a superiority complex. This kind of tangle of inferiority and superiority complexes ultimately makes children to take emotional decisions and inconquerous perceptions.

In his novels, short stories, as well as in his biography, one can see mischief making forward children acting on the immediate impulses and resorting to cruelty without any specific motive or known purpose. The child’s protagonist mind in question becomes a hectic workshop of devils. From the child’s innocent point of view it is only just a fun and frolic, condensing to mischief. This fun and frolic as well as mischief are capable of satisfying the child’s inner-felt necessity of superiority leading him to a self-important hero on the occasion. This mind of heroism in a child stuffed with self-doubt and inferiority complex renders him into an insufferable agent for his friends, as well as for his elders in the house.

If this kind of inferiority complex is coupled with pampering, and excessive love-making in the domestic surroundings, the child almost becomes inadvisable and uninstructable in the school and in the society. In the whole novel dealing with Swami and Friends, has innumerable examples of creating mischief by the students in the name of
sheer fun, usually pieces of slips crumpled with "Are you a man?" or "You are the son of dogs, if you don't answer this" (20). This kind of exchanging slips and humiliating the students at the receiving end is analogous to what used to happen to the young urchins in crickle schools in Charles Dickens' David Copperfield.

Once Swaminathan was given a punishment of standing on a bench. Instead of feeling humiliated, Swaminathan set aside this humiliation and pain. He again resorts to a mischievous manner of over-powering his shame and humiliation by way of hectically classifying several heads in the classroom. Four red caps, twenty-five Gandhi caps, and the likes. The red caps and the Gandhi caps imaged here is probably an unintended manner of suggesting at the social and cultural revolutions taking place in the society. While the red caps suggested the Communist Movement, the Gandhi caps suggest the Independence Movement. The numerical polarisation speaks for the relative intensity of both these movements. Needless to say that this counting of caps is suggesting at the social revolutionary movements, is far fetched and speaks for the unwanton manner of Swam quiet unintentionally, drawing the Communist and Nationalist movements and the relative dimensions of importance. This is certainly the authourial suggestive interpolisation of R.K. Narayan as a creative artist.

The mischievous fun and frolic and its intensity comes to the forefront in the character of Balu, in his quarrels with Margayya. Balu introduces a piece of paper into the burning lamp, gets his fingers burnt and there onwards weeping hectically demands for a peppermint or an elephant. This shows his frowardness in resorting to non-serious but harmful things. His kicking at the ink pot, spilling the ink over the register, dancing revengefully over it, and finally running away with his father's most important red book.
the ledger, confirm the fact of a prodigal and spoiled child, astutely went upon having the
things the way he liked.

This leisure is the only documentary evidence of Margayya. From Bala's point of
view this may be his way of treason his elders in order to serve his own clandestine
purposes but for Margayya Bala and his mischievous instincts are astutely waxing. In
there incidents, the real authorial intentions are as well and all together different from
those of Bala and Margayya. For R. K. Narayan and his generous intentions, money-lending
and resorting to meekly qualities are obnoxious social evils worth exposing and
denouncing. The dramatic manner of exposure and denouncement of this evil becomes
more eerie from the following passage.

"The boy dashed down the front steps, with his father following him. Margayya
was blind to all his surroundings. All he could see was the little boy with his curly hair, and
the small red-bound book which was in his hands some passers by in Vinayak Mudali street
stopped to watch the scene. Margayya cried shamelessly "Hold him! Hold him!" At which
they tried to encircle the boy. It was evident that by now he had become completely
intoxicated with the chase presently he found that he was being outnumbered and
cornered. As a circle of hunters hemmed in, he did an entirely unexpected thing--he turned
back as if coming into his father's arms, and as he was just about to grasp him, dared
sideways to the edge of the gutter and flung the red book into it." (32)

Here is in an idyllic picture of a real cruel mischief of a child. The import of 'the
red book' fringing into the 'gutter again' is suggestive of the aversion to the crude
commercialisation of Margayya. Money making was the only pre-occupation in his life.
The other pre-occupation is, his excessive fondness and pampering of his son. It is
interesting to note that with all his meticulous ability of maintaining his monetary transactions, Margayya could not really make any enviable financial status. He was a miser and was capable of cheating the innocent customers, by way of posing himself as a middleman in getting loans from the co-operative banks. In The Financial Expert, Margayya appears like a financial wizard. How the story fulfils the contingent emergence for black humour at the expenses of the crude and stingy persons like Margayya in the Indian village sides, and how the illiteracy and the innocence of the poor masses is the ground of the operation for their ruthless manner of making money for themselves.

In the above instant, the dramatic episode substantiates the childish manner of wrecking revenge on the inauthentic character types like that of Margayya. When the revenge talking agent is his own little innocent child, who has his own personal ways of black mailing his father in all odds and sundry manner. In order to serve his pampered desires for sweets and toys, the irony and humour is immensely heart-filling. But then Margayya is presented like a foolish miser, in whose exposure there is always a joy. The manner in which R K Narayan exposes the dogmatic and specially harmful characters like that of Margayya is justifiable only in fiction since it offers a momentary immense relief of dispensing justice from the point of view of a child.

The whole humour is in the category of cruel prank, the but end of the prank, is Margayya cornered in his own cruel imaginations in a broad way. He is more sinned against sining. But in the real social circumstances, the two in the rural planes, such incidents of teaching lessons to the confirmative and socially useless blocks of characters like that of Margayya’s life is cheating the innocent public by way of standing as an
important middleman. The superfluousness of the middle-manship of Margayya is what is being exposed and laughed at.

Margayya is a humorous character built upon the typical manner of the comedy of humour. Balu, the innocent sibling of Margayya is fictionally used as the revenge-taking agent. Quite interestingly, the story exposes the excessive fondling manner in which generally the elders contribute to spoiling the characters of their own children. Precisely speaking Balu is an innocent spoiled child, who does not know nor has reason to know the gravity of his characterlessness, as a blackmailer. If the father is cheating the innocent villagers, the son is cheating the father himself. This is where the humour and satire lies.

The idea of the exposing Margayya in this novel, came to him as a casual conversational emergence in the family surface. Referring to the incident itself, S. Krishnan has to say as follows.

"The idea for The Financial Expert was given to him by one of his brothers during the after-dinner sessions devoted to family conversation. The brother talked about an employee in his office, who, though dismissed, operated from outside the building as a middleman for rustics who needed money but did not quite know how to go about acquiring some." (ix)

Innumerable mischief making children can be catalogued from R K Narayan's works. While they are mostly autobiographical in their character, they are always innocently playing, giggling and mischief making, just like children of any land. Ramesh K. Shrivastava provides us with the synthetic catalogue, says Shrivastava.

"Swaminathan, a young teenager, Sumu, the Montier, Mann, the mighty Good for nothing, Sankar, the most brilliant boy of the class, Samuel the Peri Ram, the Fresh..."
arrival, in Swami and Friends, Babu, Kamala and Sumati in The Dark Roof.


list could go on—these children win our hearts as we see ourself nostal…mischiefs” (73-86)

In so far as we see ourself nostagically in their mischief, there may be a reservation for some serious readers. But in so far as humour is concerned, there can be no two views. Moreover, as almost all his characters are emerging out of the biographical personality of R K Narayan and out of the characters and personalities perceived by child time acquaintance and pranks, they envisage the exerting facets of the personality of R K Narayan himself.

G. R.K.Narayan’s Portrayal of Children

Almost all the readers and critics of R K Narayan agree that he was at his best in his portrayal of children and in telling the stories that quenched child like enthusiasm and universal passion for something unique, magical and astonishingly surprising. The novels are episodic in progress, and the episodes are usually stuffed with contingent irony, abundant humour, and harmless satire. All these episodic structured situations are humorous, in a way that they become quite enthusiastic and thought provoking, ultimately converging into a child like grasping, of the particularly intended wish for instructions as well as for the entertainment. Needless to say, that Narayan's writings, including his autobiography My Days, contain in themselves, a vision of life, and of course, a criticism of it, in a child like manner. In this connection, the words of Ramesh K. Shrivastava are worth quoting. Says Shrivastava, “It is undoubtedly true that Narayan gave most significant contribution to Indian writing” (73-86)
While his ‘Protrayal of Children’, is abundantly expressive of his intentions to cater something in the form of a story that enthusiasts and involves a child into creative imagination, coupled with child like innocence and contrary manners of thinking, his ‘depiction of childhood of some of his mature characters’, indicates and substantiates that Wordsworthian romantic antithetical stand, that “Child is father of man” (Wordsworth, Williams: Prelude or Intimations of Immortality).

It is therefore significant to state that what all Narayan had written, presents a child like annular vision of life. Children like to hear stories. If these stories are studded with immense surprises, magical eventualities and miraculous adventures, children enjoy the most. Even the grown-up readers re-enliven in themselves, a creative prospect for a sort of child like enjoyment that becomes momentarily exerting in being an imaginative reminence of their own childhood. All the novels of R K Narayan are studd by his own imaginative structural passion for telling a story, by way of reconstructing the characters, as well as the episodes from the ‘airy nothings’ of his daydreaming eclacticism emitting out of his own life. Thus, almost all the novels of R K Narayan are profoundly autobiographical.

R K Narayan’s penchant for a child’s eye-view of life in his novels is born of his autobiographical introspective nature. As an artist he maintained a unique personal temper or temperament to look back on his own childhood and his child time experiences with the aesthetic purpose of recapculating for himself, what all that stuck to him as self-important for the purpose of telling a story. Critics like Ramesh K Shrivastava and P. S. Sundaram felt that Narayan’s early novel like Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts and The
English Teacher, are out and out autobiographical in content and structure. According to P. S. Sundaram, in these novels, “The autobiographical element is unmistakable” (27).

Even the other mature novels of R K Narayan, in so far as they emanate from his own imaginative cast of mind as a story-teller, maintain in them a powerful streak of imaginative temperament of a child, quite autistically searching in the world around him, for perfect answers to the possible questions and doubts that strike to his innocent and unobtrusive state of looking at the world like a child searching for immense happiness and freedom in his life of imaginations, R K Narayan finds it occasional to look at the world, for a sense of freedom, a handful of enjoyment and a little bit of moral deduction in accordance with the prompting of his own conscience thereby.

Even the story of Raju and Rosie in The Guide, to the extent that it contains the elusive fanciful imagination of R K Narayan like to fairytales and folklore as might have been told to him by his granny, abundantly contains an aesthetic height of satisfaction that his innocently anxious mind could like to have the world for him. Precisely speaking, the story of Raju and Rosie has all the vissitudes, hazards and obstacles that the characters in fairytale have to face. But the fairytale structure of the novel, with its unpredictable and uneventful terminations, is uniquely stuffed with real characters and persons that are available in any society in any age. But, both, Raju and Rosie and all other characters of the novel are emerging out of that imaginary fairytale landscape called Malgudi. It is with the presence of such characters like Raju and Rosie that R K Narayan wheels a realistic and realistically possible story in any given society.

A child, with his temperamental imaginative lines, skill, miracles and moral endowments, finds for himself a very satisfying, imaginative and sympathetic world.
studded in the fairytale structure of the story. Raju is a sinner turned into a sage. The
portions of the novel that depict him as a sinner are highly enthusing and interesting for a
child like curiosity of mind. In any given practical society they would have been dubbed as
moral characters, condescending to ruthless criminality that meets due punishments in
accordance with the law of the land. But the hero and heroine of The Guide quite
magically, even surprisingly, escape in all their moral and legal shackles, prominently
because of themselves, as enviable achievers of distinctions in their forbidden ways of life.

Rosie becomes a renowned artist and Raju becomes a prominent high-prolife
capitalist and entrepreneur. This portion of the rise and development of Raju and Rosie in
the novel, is quiet in accordance with the dreamy hopes and desires of a child hoping to
have the moon. Modern world with its innumerable ways and means of coming into
prominence, limelight and popularity, quite suddenly and seemingly effortless, is no less a
fairytale fabric than the Granny's stories about fairies and princess. But it is in the fall of
Raju and relegation of Rosie into analogous obviousness in the middle, that again arises
immense surprise and curiosity. In this surprise and curiosity there is a moral lesson. But,
however a child, as a reader receives this with a great urgency and curiosity of mind.
Whereas a grown-up reader, takes it all as a usual casual phenomenon of the modern day
common place phenomenon of life.

The Guide is probably written by R K Narayan to show that various readers,
depending upon their variances in age and maturation, receive it variously. From a grown-
up mature point of view, it all provides a sort of mechanical and not very important facet
of life of every day life around him. The story of Raju and Rosie is neither a surprise, nor
does it contain any viable message for him. But for the innocent child like imaginations,
there are series of discoveries in the story in the name of the lessons to be learnt in the phenomenal sequences of life in the modern day world.

An inevitable and inescapable moral subsits in the undertone of novel; and that undertone is quite ingenuously projected from the child's eye point of view of R.K. Narayan. The Guide also contains such a flected and diversified appeal to the readers of different age groups. But in all probability, by way of containing enthusiastic particulars and miraculous episodic terminations, they successfully present an inner current of streak in the name of child's eye-view of life.

Some of the best statements of entry into children's experience and their specific visions of living are abundantly present in the novels of R.K. Narayan. Strictly speaking only his Swami and Friends is written exclusively for children. But then in almost all the other novels also, the visions of living that are presented have a significant appeal to children. His major novels are versions of perfect innocent 'romantic' child like attitude of the author towards life, as a consummate fairytale.

Accordingly, the grown-up characters like Raju, Rosie, Balu, Chandran of R.K. Narayan maintain in themselves certain typical romantic and adventurous virtues. Innocence, vulnerability, transparent truthfulness on instances, coupled with honest laughter and formidable grief are some of the qualities of his characters. They excite from the reader, a far too sympathetic attitude towards them, inspite of the fact that they are immoral from the traditional point of view. The immoral access in the characters of Raju, Rosie, Margayya and the like, arouse in children a curiosity, coupled with dramatic and ingenious insights into the false footing modalities of elders in decision making and executing the same, quite thoughtlessly in a curiously thoughtless emotional manner.
Their actions provide for children particularly, and to the readers of all ages, a typical guide book of do's and don'ts. On the same analogy the ultimate manner in which Raju and Margayya are exposed gives a great sense of justice and satisfaction.

Needless to say, the children are dreamers of their own thoughts through pleasant stories about fairies and fairy-like characters, it is easy to crisp a vision into the thinking modalities of the child. It is sufficient if the characters are arrestingly quaint, even if they are ridiculous and oddly set into equal surprising and arresting environment. In so far as the story is concerned, a child’s curiosity is always looked on to mysteries and miracles. Such mysteries and miracles need not be necessarily on the lines of ancient myths and folklores. Even the modern world, if held up to a concave or convex mirror, reflects the images which are abundantly extranormal and carriagistics in proportions. Extracting such extranormal, paranormal, and carriagistics visions out of the immediate present surroundings is always a matter of fun and frolic for a child.

Even the incidents can be turned into mischievous facets and pranks, not exactly condescending to hardcore satire. A little bit of irony, a surprising satire, in the narrative style becomes highly enthusiastic. In order to make the child’s visionary enthusiasm credible and reasonable that too for a child’s instinctive curiosity, the characters and incidents must be laid in a composite cloud cuckoo land. This cloud cuckoo land that appeals to a child is distinctly variant and analogous to the specio-temporal parameters of his own habitat. In order to make this cloud-cuckoo land realised in fiction R K Narayan invented his Malgudi as a fanciful legator to the world of our own mundane experiences. It is necessary that R K Narayan’s Malgudi, in order to be appealing to children and to the child like imaginative engagement of readers of all ages, must have it’s own geography.
While answering the immediate question that occurs to every reader of R K Narayan’s ‘Where is Malgudi ?’, R K Narayan clarifies the question in his My Days. According to him, Malgudi

“--- is the background of my novels and short stories. I’d like to take this occasion to answer it. I didn’t consider too long when I invented this little town. It had just occurred to me when I started on my first novel Swami and Friends, about fifty years ago, to be exact in September 1930, that it would be safer to have a fictitious name for the background of the novel, which would leave one free to meddle with its geography and details as I pleased, without incurring the wrath of any city-father of any actual town or city. I wanted to be able to put in whatever I liked, and whenever I liked a little street or school or a temple or a bungalow or even a slum, a railway line, at any spot, a minor despot in a little world. I began to like my role, and I began to be fascinated by its possibilities, its river, market-place, and the far-off mountain roads and forests acquired a concrete quality, and have imprisoned me within their boundaries, with the result that I am unable to escape from Malgudi, even if I wished to ---.” (56)

H. A Sceptical Opposition and Criticism of Life

In his portrayal of children and the depiction of childhood of some of his matured characters, Narayan meticulously followed the British and the American writers like Lewis Carroll, Charles Dickens and Mark Twain. Needless to say, that all these great fiction writers of the West were complexly influenced by the eighteenth century European Enlightenment, according to which individual’s freedom of thought and action is most important for the future establishment of a humanitarian and an enlightened society.
Quiet ironically, and in pursuit of pure humour, of course, Dickens and Mark Twain often derived these tools of their times as awfully painful restrainers of the natural freedom of children. Moreover, the public schools of England, as against the Liberal Schools, with their harsh discipline in curriculum turned out to be virtual prison houses, substantiates the in given passion for all sorts of freedoms in children. R K Narayan, who closely follows these Western creative writers, prominently applies his mind to the ‘freedoms’ of thought and action amongst the school going children. The Western system of schools as the line places of learning was the award of the British rule in India. These British schools propagate a sort of stern military discipline in the name of creating the responsible and committed citizens, but, ofcourse, to the British rule in India.

For Narayan and many such like-minded liberals, the rigorously implemented Public school morality of the Britishers became insufferable, particularly from the point of view of the then raging Revolution for the Independence of India. Referring to Rabindranath Tagore’s essay on education, R K Narayan in his My Days, says that Tagore “... confirmed my own previous conclusion on the subject. I liked to be free to read what I pleased and not be examined at all” (56). What R K Narayan says here is quite laudable as a momentary sentiment prompted by romantic imagination. But, our experience says that a child would not go for reading without some sort of enforcement of discipline and training.

In the above context R K Narayan appears to be making a surmise of his revolutionary stands against the excesses of Public school morality in forcing a strict discipline condescending to wild corporal punishments and mental harassments of the tiny tots in the then schools. Moreover, in the schools managed by the Western Missionaries,
there used to be a sort of variegated and differentiated treatment to the native children as against the Christian students in the classrooms. His child characters, Swaminathan, Balu and Raju acutely felt the agonies of this variegated and differentiated treatment meted out to them. In fact, Narayan in My Days himself “Vexed in fear” (9), on his first day in the school the initial experience of Swaminathan in Swami and Friends quite clearly elucidates this weeping “in fear”. The cohesive manner in which the Christian Missionary Schools used to implement their double standards in the emotional matters concerning religion.

The opinion of R.K. Narayan in this context is worth quoting. Says R.K. Narayan “The Teachers were all a prelude to glorifying Jesus” (12)

The glorification of Jesus in Christian schools is understandable. But what pained R.K. Narayan was attacking and lampooning the Hindu Gods’ and heaping up of ‘violent abuses on the idol-worshippers’. R.K. Narayan’s personal experiences as a child in the Missionary schools are highly motivating. There are many other Indian writers who felt the absolute pinch of the Christian Missionaries using their schools as places of rigorous Christian propaganda. Kamla Das in her My Story had to say the following about the Anglo-Indian students, who are, of course, Christians and their harsh and painful manners of behaviour towards their native Indian counterparts in school. Says Das:

“My brother was plump and dark. His eyes were bright and circular. Although he was the cleverest in his class, the white boys made fun of him and tortured him by pushing a pointed pencil up his nostril. One day his short-friend was covered with blood. He was stunned by the cruelty but even the tears seemed inhibited, stumps suspended on his lashes. While William the bully explained ‘Blackie, your blood is red.’ I scratched his face in mad rage, but was soon over-powered by the tough Anglo-Indians, who were always on the
otherside, fighting for the white men's rights. We did not tell our parents of the tortures we under went at schools for wearing, under the school uniform a white twill, a nutbrown skin.” (2)

Compared to Narayan's expression of his grievances against the Missionary Schools, the above statement of Kamla Das is more stringent in being a tortuous high-handed treatment of the native students by the Anglo-Indians. It is quite obvious that the Anglo-Indians too, in those days maintained in their hearts of hearts, of, the evil imaginations of the White rulers towards the natives. The manner in which the Britishers, as rulers, used to humiliate the un-lettered, ignorant and poor Indian natives was categorically stated by E. M. Forster in his "A Passage to India" in a very hard rendering manner.

I. Use of Humour, Irony, and Satire

Referring to R K Narayan's Swami and Friends, Graham Greene in his Introduction to The Bachelor of Arts by R K Narayan says as follows:

"It (Swami and Friends) brought India in a sense of the Indian population and the Indian way of life, alive to me... Swami is a story of a child written with complete objectivity, with a humour strange to our fiction, closer to Tchekhov than to any English writer with the same underlying sense of beauty and sadness" (v-viii)

While the 'humour' of the sort that Narayan gives is not at all 'strange to our fiction', the nearness of his craft to 'Tchekhov than any English writer' is not at all convincing. In fact R K Narayan had Charles Dickens of David Copperfield and Great Expectations and Mark Twain of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. It is not only the narrative techniques that he borrows from them but also the underlying seminar.
childhood and its joys gets emulated. So far the 'underlying sense of beauty and sadness' is concerned Greene's observation is certainly right. Moreover, the autobiographical manner in which Narayan conducts most of his fiction is one aspect of perennial critical interest.

The novels are prominently emerging out of the supposed personal experiences of the protagonist. But the real beauty of Narayan's fiction emerges out of the Henry James 'Central Intelligence' emerging out of the authorial shadow that actually fulfills the fictional purpose. The authorial presence is as prominent as it is in the novels of Dickens and Mark Twain. They are passionate childhood recollections confectioned from out of the 'urchin days' (to borrow the expression of Narayan himself) that he spent in his grandmother's home. The impressions themselves of the urchin times are haphazardly impoverished in such a confused order that it depresses the chronological manner of the narrative technique.

The incidents themselves are made exciting and self-absorbing that they do not need any plausible story growing out of them from the beginning to the end through the middle. But, however, they in the final analysis compound in the minds of readers a well-made story. While the stories are in the nature of folk renderings, the anonymous authorial voice ultimately connects the stories in their order. The novels that prominently concentrate upon the childhood and the urchin days are impressionistic in the sense that the laconically juxtaposed incidents are interesting in themselves.

Swami and Friends, as a novel of childhood does not have any strong packed dramatic interest emerging out of adventures, exploits and unusual incidences. Swami himself as a boy is quite young and prominent. Thus the stories become essentially
and evaluate his own experience. The most interesting aspect of the novel is that it emerges out of the most casual everyday routine, in the life of a an innocent child anywhere in the world. The pitty drudges of the school and shattering up of the day-dreams of Swami are prominently recaptured and presented in an order in the manner that an adult comprehends and evaluates his own childhood memories from a mature grown-up angle. It is in this concerned visualisation of the incidences of childhood life, there emerges that inevitable sadness, which emerges out of the painful feeling of the loss of charming innocence itself, simultaneously along with the inevitable loss of boyhood.

In almost all the novels of R K Narayan, the central theme is the painful loss of innocence, the unforgettable autobiographical past invariably makes it visitation on the memory plane. The novels themselves are poignant and compact relief from the unforgetting memory plane. All the novels are built around this unforgettable memory plane, and they come out in the manner of different characters, varied incidents and the joys and jest of life lost into the past.

_Dark Room_ is a novel which has “a touch of social consciousness for its background” (39), to borrow the words of S Krishnan in his preface note the novel _Malgudi Landscapes_. Inspite of the fact that the theme of the novel is domestic disharmony in an average middle class family, the maximum pain is on the psychological health of the children in the family. The average middle class family, particularly in the South Indian context, has innumerable problems of adjustment amongst the members of the family. This lack of adjustment and harmony tells heavily on the children of the house. Savitha is a traditional Hindu wife, and her husband Ramani is terribly an egocentric executive. He is very proud of his official status. He is a valuable macho who treats his wife and children.
literally as slaves. Savitri was forced to put up with her husband's temperamental anomalies. He is usually put to inordinate humiliations. The fact is Ramani is psychologically prone to vexitious anger because of his abnormal superiority complex. He usually raves and rants and inflicts corporal punishments on his wife and children, quite relentlessly. Being an ideal Hindu wife, Savitri neither protests nor dare raise a resentment for fear of Ramani creating nasty scenes. Whenever the temperamental waivy of Ramani become unbearable, Savitri walks silently into an adjoining dark room and sits there for quite sometime until she regains normalcy in her mind. This is the silent manner of her show of protest. Ramani never comes to know of it. Even when he knows it, he does not care at all. It seems Ramani is a mild psychopath, whose natural fonds of love got exhausted under the stigmatic superiority complex that he nurtured in himself. He has least concern for the sentiments of his wife and children. It is quite natural that a psychopath breeds in himself, a few traits of sadism.

The overall effect of the abnormal behavioural patterns of Ramani, has a telling effect on the young children. Inspite of the fact that they are very young, they understand and sympathise with the painful manner in which their mother suffers in the house. But, as they are just children they cannot show any kind of rebellion or resentment towards their father. There is a very interesting reason as why they succumb to the authoritarian autonomous onslaughts of their father. Even a slight show of protest or resentment, either in gestures or in words, is most likely to cause more and more pain in the heart of their mother. It is so because of the simple reason that Ramani becomes more brutal and authoritarian. If only he is contented in any manner, the mother has to bear the brunt severely. On such uncommotatable painful occasions, she seeks refuge in the dark room.
going into the dark room is in itself an evidence for the children that there is something wrong between the elders. Very often they do not come to know of the particular of the conflict between mother and father. But they implicitly understand the gravity of the situation, the moment their mother goes into the dark room.

It is here that R.K. Narayan shows a great psychological suffering and defeatism in children, whenever there is something wrong in the relation of their elders. There natural love and sympathy for the mother on one hand and the fear of father inflicting more and more punishments and corporal punishment, renders them into nude sufferers of the agony in their heart of hearts.

Children by nature are in the habit of constantly and continually remaining in the grip of fears. As a result their sense of freedom and joy gets totally smashed. But, however, their inherent love and attachment to their mother makes them ready enough to suffer the onslaughts of their fathers, which are very often severe corporal punishments. The manner in which they prefer silently to suffer, the anger inflicted upon them shows quite vibrantly that they are capable of all human nicety of sympathy and goodwill. The following episode confirms the fact that children can maintain in themselves a sort of natural love and affection, particularly towards the suffering mother. They may not have any feeling of love or sympathy towards their father, but even then they do not show their lack of affection and love towards father because the father is a ruthless autocrat.