Chapter IV

THE SYMBOLIC IN NARAYAN’S NOVELS
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*What I would like to draw your attention to, is the function of this desire of the Other, insofar as it makes it impossible for the distinction between the subject and the Other to establish itself once and for all... What needs to be introduced and what is there from the start, latent from the beginning, is that, beyond what the subject demands and what the Other demands from the subject, there is the necessary presence and dimension of what the Other desires.*

*Jacques Lacan*

*The essence of our relations with other people is conflict*

*Jean-Paul Sartre*

In his famous novel, *The English Teacher*, Narayan states:

The law of life cannot be avoided. The law comes into operation the moment we detach ourselves from our mother’s womb. All struggle and misery in life is due to our attempt to arrest this law or get away from it or in allowing ourselves to be hurt by it. The fact must be recognized. A profound unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life. All else is false...No sense in battling against it (ET,177).

This is an exact reproduction of the Lacanian description of symbolic according to which ideology and social norms always control the behaviour and actions of a human being and despite one’s resistance to these social norms they overpower an individual and force him / her to yield for a normal and peaceful life.
Accordingly, one comes to the conclusion that all struggle and misery in life is due to false identification of experiencing self with ego that situates itself over and against the flow of experiences, and endeavours to arrest this flow or resent it\(^1\). Both Lacan and Narayan seem to propound Nietzschen innocence of becoming which implies separating principle of ego that is subject to experience of alienation or that gets hurt in its encounter with the impersonal and anti-personal world of experiences. Narayan asks us to throw aside the illusion of ego and to surrender our little self to the Law of life. Accordingly, 'a profound unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life or else is false...the law of life. No sense in battling against it' (ET, 177). Similarly, according to Srinivasa Iyengar the characters in R. K. Narayan seem to achieve a sort of transmigration from body to body, name to name and ultimately to blur the sharpness of the distinctions under the haze of a general acceptance.\(^2\) Here, one is reminded of Lacan's greatest Seminars, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, wherein he mentions that Desire is to be conceived as a function of the signifier, whose movement, leading from point to point infinitely, constitutes both what we are

\(^{1}\text{For more details see, } Seminar VI.\)

and what we are not, our being and non-being. Even Professor Ruth Parkin-Gounelas makes it clear that for Lacan pleasure or enjoyment (Jouissance) was a libidinal imperative, whose frustration, however, lies at the heart of human suffering. The subject does not simply satisfy a desire, he enjoys desiring. In lacking the satisfying object, desire endlessly pursues a phantom satisfaction, deriving Jouissance only from the pursuit.

Raghavacharlyu too asserts very aptly:

Narayan offers memorable vignettes of human personality by affectionately caricaturing the manners, postures and angularities of persons.

Both Indian tradition and Lacan's concepts are largely "structuralist" centered on the individual, the unconscious or the other of language or tradition. Both reject the autonomy of the individual as ego. Both see salvation in love. Both treat the world of desire as not really fulfilling for man. Narayan's comic ironic vision operates in a framework of traditions and social realities that are larger than the individual, his ego and oddities. Sooner or later,

normal reality takes hold of the situation including the aspiring transgressing individuals. Narayan has affectionately treated and pictured man's petty villainies, his innumerable temptations and resultant tragedies for depicting true human nature and psyche which throughout searches usually for desire domain.⁶

It is true that Narayan deals with common men and women 'with their human eccentricities, incongruities, oddities, follies and foibles',⁷ and succeeds in projecting the true Lacanian Symbolic Order in his characters who accept the Law-of-the-father and live a normal life that is full of aspiration and desires.

Among Narayan's novels The Bachelor of Arts, The Guide, The Dark Room and The English Teacher are important in the sense that the protagonists in these novels display a complete detachment from the accepted norms of life and even from conventional social restrictions. However, their partial, or even total acceptance of a meaningful engagement with life or with the living,

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⁶ In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory a literary text can be viewed as a kind of model of the psyche in that certain control systems together with different levels of consciousness or meaning can be discovered. We might perhaps see literature as a kind of super ego or alternatively as an expression of repressed desires and fears in the unconscious.

comes after their encounter with the Law-of-the-father. Running away from it is obviously a premature and futile exercise as is the case of Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts*.

A detailed study of the novel, *The Bachelor of Arts*, shows that Chandran's romance and sexual passion for Malathi flows like the water of river Sarayu that displays the continuous flow. He violates the strict codes of traditional morality because nowhere in our Indian culture, love at first sight has been encouraged or accepted. Though, we find him experiencing a timely shock yet he comes out of it when he is provided with a substitute, Susila. He goes on satiating his sexual drives or desires, in the Lacanian language, continuously till he returns to normality as a new man with 'his mind full of Susila'. Narayan says:

Thereafter, everyday, Chandran spent a large portion of his waking hours in writing letters to her or receiving her letters ... She has sent me

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8 For staying normal in a society, according to Lacan, one has to enter language i.e., Lacanian Symbolic Order which acts as an exterior police for an individual throughout his life.


The author finds in Narayan's work the eternal saga of human life and the poetry of human existence.

twenty thousand kisses though I sent her only fifteen thousand in my last letter..." (BA, 165).

This can be termed as Chandran’s living life in a state of Lacanian *Jouissance*. The novel ends on a true-to-life-note with Chandran finding new resources of love in the conventional setting and welcoming his new obligations as a householder and this way accepting the Lacanian Law stating:

I don’t believe in love… There is no such thing in love (BA.156).

Narayan whimsically points out that renunciation here has been immature and skin deep. No doubt, Chandran is still the romantic lover and his impression about Susila is that “Her figure is wonderful…Her face must also be wonderful…”(BA, 160) but he is also looking forward to marital bliss:

He saw her face now. It was divine; there was no doubt about it. He secretly compared it with Malathi’s and wondered what he had seen in the latter to drive him so mad...(BA. 161).

He even accepts the fact that “people married because their sexual appetite had to satisfied…”(BA, 123).

In *The Bachelor of Arts*, we see the hero, Chandran, is a promising college student who falls blindly in love with a girl ignoring the traditional norms of society, wants to set an example by marrying this girl, Lacanian desire evident, whatever her caste
or sect might be which hardly matter in love. Very interesting is also the fact that Chandran’s desire for the girl increased day by day and his mind got very obsessed with the girl and her beauty. It became his habit to think everyday about her only. He says:

He would often speculate what hour she would go to bed, what hour she would rise, and how she lay down and slept and how her bed looked. Could he not just dash into the house, hide in the passage, steal up to her bed at night, crush her in his arms, and carry her away?...The thought of her melted him. He clutched his pillow and cried in the darkness: “Darling, what are you doing? ...The thought of her melted him. He clutched his pillow and cried in darkness: Darling, what are you doing? Do you hear me? (BA, 74-79).

Chandran’s mother like all Hindu mothers intends on marrying her son to the most desirable young girl with the best Dowry, again desire for wealth is evident and the girl Susila satisfied all the tests. Chandran’s last year at the college, and the first year of comparative freedom thereafter from the setting of this intimate domestic sketch and living characters are vividly portrayed. Chandran is almost unhappy to pass his B.A for then the problems appear.11 His plans for future, multitude of counsels, lack of opportunities; failure in love and frustration that changes his mind to the extent of converting him into a wandering ‘Sanyasi’ for

a while - all these challenges could happen to meet any young man in India. But he soon realizes his mistake, eschews the idea of going to England and settles down in a routined life with her wife Susila and works as the local agent of *The Daily Messenger*.\(^\text{12}\) Towards the conclusion of the novel, we find Chandran ‘forsaking his adolescent fancies’\(^\text{13}\) in order to accept the Lacanian Symbolic Order wherein

> For the rest of the journey the music of the word ‘Susila’ rang in his ears. Susila, Susila, Susila. Her name music, figure, face and everything about her was divine. Susila, Susila – Malathi, not a spot beside her (BA, 162)

The novel shows us the norms, manners and conventions of a South Indian middle class family, the society and Lacanian Order. Accordingly, he accepts the pattern followed by his forefathers or counterparts living in the society based on an accepted ‘order’, norms, and ‘values’. William Walsh rightly says:

> The family is the immediate context in which his sensibility operates and his Novels are remarkable for the subtlety and conviction with


which family relationship are treated that of son and parents and brother in *The Bachelor of Arts*.\textsuperscript{14}

The rule of family is the rule of the Lacanian Father. Later about Chandran’s return to the routine life accepting the Lacanian Law-of-the-father K. Venkatachari remarks:

What follows such a critical event is the ordeal of consciousness on gradual awakening on the part of the protagonist to the need for acceptance of the life in spite of all its trials and tribulations, which is suggestive of fatalism that marks the common Indian attitude to life.\textsuperscript{15}

Chandran accepts the Lacanian domain of Symbolic in order to be a normal human being of his society. He realizes what he is giving up for becoming a hermit. Soon, he comes back to accept the patriarchal authority and live with his parents.

It may be one of the important reasons why Narayan chose Malgudi, “a world within a world”\textsuperscript{16} for describing the events and characters. According to Rajalakshmi:

Malgudi ... has become a metaphor.... The inhabitants... share their kinship with all humanity. Human nature scarcely undergoes any


\textsuperscript{15} Venkatachari. *R K Narayan’s Novels: Acceptance of Life*. Sahitya Academy Indian Literature, p.76.

considerable change, either with the passing seasons and time or with varying geography...17

Malgudi is a symbolic landscape, a metaphor, a language, the unconscious as well as the discourse of the ‘Other’. Everything must dissolve into Malgudi. Life, of which Malgudi is a symbolic name, doesn’t respect every ambitious self. According to Narayan life is a nightmare comedy and Malgudians suffer because of their unending chain of desires, wants and aspirations in which they are caught. He advocates surrendering to larger transcendental reality, tro or “Fate”. They search for their ‘lost other’ which since long they have been chasing but fail to catch it permanently for satiating their domains of desire and dreams. Narayan points out how misery results every time when the circle of conformity, of acceptance, is transgressed.

The palpable Malgudi is, therefore, completely Lacanian Symbolic and bears upon us as more than a peripheral contingency. It is a complex defining set of forces that Krishnan, the English teacher, calls ‘law-of-life’. Through this imaginary landscape and various fictive situations, Narayan in his each novel seems to explain the need and necessity of the Lacanian Law-of-father in the

human development, particularly when the child enters into the symbolic realm. His characters, drawn from the ordinary walks of life, portray life as it is, a nightmare comedy and an unending ride for satiating unending chain of different desires and drives. However, he emphasizes throughout his novels that the law of life cannot be avoided, and there is no wishing away at its own plane, the realm of symbolic. The law, while telling us about the mixedness of life, of joy and sorrow, also informs us about the significance of acceptance, of resignation to fate. *Karma.* Chandran, for example, has to accept the dictates of his parents and his society to rediscover his resources of love in *The Bachelor of Arts.* His bumbling and stumbling throughout the novel is perhaps due to acceptance of what Lacan terms as the symbolic realm. He feels that 'people are married because their sexual appetite had to be satisfied and there must be somebody to manage the house!"(BA, 123)

In the novel, *The Guide,* Raju, 'an institutional figure'\(^{18}\), remains almost throughout the novel hankering after material pleasure in diverse ways: in the shop, as a guide and as a lover of Rosie in Malgudi. He experiences joys and sorrows in quick

succession. However, at last, the quick succession of joys and sorrows along with his degeneration creates in him intense material conflict and suffering. He wears different garbs a tourist guide, lover of a married woman, impresario, impostor, jail-bird, fake Sadhu and finally a martyr. William Walsh is very right in saying:

It is Raju's fate to be the product of the other people's convictions.

The novel clearly exposes how Rosie transcends chastity to satisfy her starved sex and finds its possibility in an equally recalcitrant Raju. While searching for her 'Other', Rosie finds in Raju an ardent admirer of her art who would boost her confidence to such an extent that she is emboldened to revolt against her husband's orders. However, she suffers from noticeable pangs of guilt and appears mostly sure about what she wants from life. Marco dubs her: "A woman who will go to bed with anyone..." (TG, 152), words which appear true in view of her submitting her body to Raju for realizing her passion, artistic talents and Jouissance. We know that she herself even knew that her relationship with Raju is a sinful one but she couldn't do anything and hence she escaped from her sexual drives that prompted her to say:

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19 Ibid, pp. 116-117.
“I felt all along you were not doing right things. This is Karma. What can we do?” (TG, 216)

When she sees the shift being made from sex to money, she revokes her revolt and contemplates on her husband who could give her restrained sexual satisfaction. She says:

After all, after all, he is my husband (TG, 201).

A thorough study shows that *The Guide* is fully pregnant with *Lacanian desire domain* which becomes evident in the different scenes and dialogues of the novel. Some of the remarkable assertions highlighting the presence of Lacanian desire are: “Because life is so blank without your presence” (TG, 73); “I viewed her as a pure abstraction. She could make me forget my surroundings ... Suddenly she stopped and flung her whole weight on me with ‘what a darling. You are giving me a new lease of life’ (TG, 125); “She needed my inspiring presence” (TG, 182).

Malgudi stands for the Lacanian symbolic or ideology and Order or what Lacan said the Law-of-the-father according to which a character suffers either because of his desires, ambitions or because of the society and social norms / values of which he / she is an important part. Any deviation from it results in a comic or even disastrous situation, and characters are therefore bound to come back to the folds of Malgudi. Here love and romance,
adolescent adventurisms do not continue for long. Chandran’s infatuation for Malathi, his frustrated escape into \textit{sanyasihood} is all illusion, momentary fits of life which must be discarded. Therefore, towards the end, we find that Chandran comes to Malgudi accepting a practical view of life, rejecting the illusions and hysterics of earlier days. The proposal to go to England is dropped and Chandran confines himself to ‘The Daily Messenger’ and Malgudi because Malgudi remains the only law of legislature that appears as a symbol, a law, a language and complete society. It is a place where all characters or humans celebrate their drives, dreams and desires only to remain caught up in Lacanian symbolic domain by entering into the realm of language for emerging as normal human beings or citizens. According to Mohammad Ejaz Alam:

\begin{quote}
Malgudi is an intense, emotional curiosity of R. K. Narayan; it is not merely a background of his novels – a leading ‘hero’ which is present in one way or the other ... Malgudi is a place where ordinary people live; they … do not have any control over events although it seems as if they control everything. They are helpless creatures torn by desires and led this way or that way …Malgudi emerges as the real “hero” of the land.\textsuperscript{20}.
\end{quote}

It is important to note that Narayan views his protagonists with affectionate amusement secure in their Olympian heights but

within the confines of the rules of *Karma*. For him, life is but a Lila, a part of a contingent, transient process, of little value if seen from an individual perspective devoid of the norms of society. Accordingly, rebellion or transgression leads to untold misery and the cool pattern of existence gets disrupted every time if someone like Daisy or Rosy or Savithri attempts to change the given formula. On the whole, one has to accept the Order of the law.\(^{21}\)

Even in *The Painter of Signs*, the reader notices the fact that the protagonist remains caught among hotel managers, businessmen, bangle sellers, lawyers, doctors, and others, whose minds are always preoccupied with cash. But he also seems to suffer from distracting thoughts and the narrator tells us:

> He wanted to get away from sex thoughts, minimize their importance, just as he wished to reduce the importance of money. Money and sex, he reflected, obsessive thoughts, too much everywhere - literature, magazines, drama, or cinema deal with nothing but sex all the time, but the female figure, water-soaked, is enchanting (PS, 14).

Even in Savitri’s assertion that “Don’t possess anything in the world...” (DR, 88) leads us to concentrate on the fact that after experiencing the tragedy of life, one must stay desire free and demand free in order to experience the real because it is here that one stays away from all worldly passion and succumbs virtually to the possessiveness and bondage of social order that Lacan calls Law-of-the-father.²²

In *The Painter of Signs*, we on the one hand find Daisy succumbing to her instinctual urges but on the other she realizes the value of members of her own sex who have settled down for life after understanding and realizing the value of the social norms.

One of the delights of this novel is the affectionate way the erotic relationship between Daisy and Raman is dealt with without missing any of the inventive and attentive details that make a liaison between the two zealous propagandists so attractive. The thematic debate between vitality and control, between social and personal necessities is laid aside for the time being. Raman admits


It presents an explication of the doctrine of *dharma* and *karma* in the novels of R.K. Narayan. It also discusses how, in Narayan’s novels, the individual pursues fundamentally spiritual quest for self-understanding.
that he has been completely immersed and blinded in ‘Daisy-ism’ (PS, 137). He had tried to be a brahmacharya; a celibate and she had tried to eschew sex and do something meaningful with her life.23

Here, Narayan shows two ideologies in a natural setting through an affair, they almost come together when they are stranded in between two villages and the cart man mistakes them for newly weds, places them together for the night. Daisy and Raman, each in his or her turn desires and demands privacy, independence and one’s own way of doing things in life. However, this craving for individuality or independence is now under threat because of the erotic change in them that demands to forego one’s autonomy for the sake of the other. No doubt, they try to go their separate ways after their field trip is over — he comes to his old home and she to the lonely lodgings — Yet in matters of the heart, they realise that their love is not based on any appeal to the law or convention. It is based purely on feeling, an emblem of the promise, that human society has no room for both the heart and the intellect. Their intimacy is certainly an outcome of Lacanian

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23 Daisy believes that ‘I love you’, ‘I love you’ are words which can hardly be real. To her, they are unconvincing and mechanical.
Jouissance\textsuperscript{24}, in this sense, they resort to vulgar action. The rapture is initially physical but gradually gets attuned to the subtleties of the society around and darkened with intellectual shadows.\textsuperscript{25}

Daisy found her urges satisfied in Raman who accepts her decision to stick to her own name, though he is an affable lover, who 'preaches rationality' and 'whose outlook is to place sex in its place'\textsuperscript{26}. Raman once says: “People are moved by strange inexplicable drives” (PS, 64). This statement serves as a key for exploring subtly the psychic depths of Raman. Neeraj Kumar is right in saying that while for Daisy “work is worship”\textsuperscript{27}, for Raman, Daisy, is his entire world. He says:

\textsuperscript{24} The term Jouissance refers to blissful, orgasmic sexual enjoyment. For Lacan, Jouissance is the key for any understanding of Freud’s description of the death-drive: if the pleasure principle sets the limits of what the subject can experience as enjoyment or pleasure (for instance, the satisfaction of an appetite), Jouissance is the result of the subject’s drive to transgress limitations placed upon pleasure and go “beyond the pleasure principle”.

\textsuperscript{25} When asked why he does not discuss deeply when he treats of sex but with great care and decorum, leaves much room for imagination; Narayan replied that the young people, even if they are characters in his novel, are entitled to their privacy. He retorted: "Why should I sit by the bedside and take notes?" He also stated that after D.H. Lawrence no one has anything personal to state that is new or regional.

See Narayan. The Illustrated Weekly of India. 26 May 1963, p. 150.


Till yesterday I was a free man with my mind unfettered. Today I am unable to think of any other subject ...a lifetime seemed to be crumbling down” (PS, 44-45).

The whole novel focuses on Daisy’s baffling individualism, adolescent visions of romantic love and fanatical idealism. We, in this novel also, find that the experience chastens the heroine, Daisy for the acceptance of calm resignation i.e., Symbolic Order.

Narayan strongly believes that there is no such thing as a life-force relationship, that all love, all attachment is illusory, that any change, as Meenakshi Mukherjee puts it, is to be viewed negatively:

As a play of shadows, as illusion, an unreality, like a bubble, which will burst sooner or later, and the normal order of the cosmos will prevail again.28

It is very significant to state here that the movement from *Swami and Friends* to *The English Teacher* is a progress from the innocent pleasure of childhood to the wisdom of a mature adult; a world of Lacanian ‘desires and unknown drives. *Swami and Friends* show its central figure growing in an English ruled atmosphere of Malgudi. He is even sent for education to the Albert Mission School in order to enter properly into the realm of

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language only to grow as a normal human being. Narayan himself remarks:

My main concern is with human character – a central character from whose point of view that world is seen and who tries to get over a difficult situation, or succumbs to it or fights to it in his own setting.

The novels reveal how Narayan presents scenes in a very lively and vivid manner only to expose Indian characters to the societal laws and culture. He carves and shapes them as normal human beings, accepting and entering the law of the language, of the same society of which they are essential components.

In *The English Teacher*, for example, we find that the ultimate end of Narayan is his quest for a positive philosophy of life and attainment of spiritual maturity. Krishnan’s happy matrimonial life, his gloomy days of eternal separation and his experience with Susila’s soul after her death — all these talk about the crude reality of life, Lacanian Law-of-the-father, society and order. About it, Narayan himself says:


31 Lacan sees language as the only major force in shaping human identity: through language the individual gains his or her subject positions. Language allows a range of relational positions into which the human subject or individual is drawn. Therefore, submission to language is also submission to patriarchal authority.
Wife, child, brothers, parents, friends…we come together only to go apart again. It is one continuous movement. The law of life can’t be avoided. The law comes into operation the moment we detach ourselves from our mother’s womb. All struggle and misery of life in life is due to our attempt to arrest the law or get away from it or in allowing ourselves to be hurt by it. The fact must be recognized. A profound unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life (ET, 177).

It is a statement that serves as a key to Narayan comedy as Biswal observes after the storm of passion and derives and vanities are over. The characters return to accept the societal Law i.e., Law-of-the-father.

In his novels like Mr. Sampath and The Financial Expert:

We enter an exotic world at half-headed or half-hearted dreamers, artists, financiers, speculators, twisters, adventurers, eccentrics, cranks, cinema-stars, sanyasis. several of them not Malgudi products at all but staying or imported from outside.32

Mr. Sampath, a spectacle of domestic discord, is undoubtedly the story of a cunning rogue who becomes victim of his own over ambition and over-confidence without adequate corresponding abilities. He is so indecisive that “The question of career seemed to him as embarrassing as a physiological detail”.33

In the novel, we come across a strange relationship between Sampath and Shanti. In the novel, Shanti makes her first appearance in the film studio and dominates the novel fully thereafter. She strikes the fancy of Sampath when he first looks at her photograph sent by her along with her application for performing the role of the heroine, Parvathi, in the proposed film *The Burning of Kama*. Soon, she is interviewed and asked to act the role of the heroine in the film. Her physical charms are so bewitching that any male could fall a victim to her ravishing beauty. Srinivas loses his mental balance at her enchanting beauty when Sampath introduces her to him. She is described as

a pretty girl, of a height which is neither too much nor too little, a perfect figure, rosy complexion, arched eyebrows and almond-shaped eyes – everything that should send a man, especially an artist, into hysterics (MS.139).

Everything regarding her—The manner of her dress, her feet encased in velvet sandals, the folds of her azure translucent saree edged with gold falling over her ankles and a tiny diamond star sparkling at her throat — impresses Srinivas to such an extent that he is fully placed in a state of trance. He says:

It is all nonsense to say that she does all this only to attract man. That is a self-compliment Man concocts for himself. She spends her day doing all this to herself because she can’t help it, any more than the full moon can help being round and lustrous (MS, 139).
Her captivating personality, unparallelled beauty and unique physical figure is natural and spontaneous to her. Srinivas admits frankly his discomfiture and bewilderment in her presence and thinks of the mythological reference of the opening of Shiva's third eye in order to burn Kama, the god of Love, who stirs desire, *Pleasure Principle*, in him for Parvathi-Shiva's devotee. Srinivas finds himself in Shiva's predicament. He states apologetically: "Mankind has not yet learned to react to beauty properly" (MS, 140). Her grandeur and baffling charm is reiterated in his comments, "She was dazzling today, clad in a fluffy saree of rainbow colours, with flowers in her hair to match" (MS, 154).

These observations are made when she comes to Srinivas along with Sampath to make clarification in the film script whether the dialogue, "How shall I get at him?" (MS, 154) is to be spoken as a question or as a desperate cry. The impact of her pleasing personality is pointed out in Srinivas's spontaneous remarks, "What a pleasure to watch her features!" (MS, 157) The whole business of shooting the film ends in a big hysterical fiasco due to the disorderly, frenzied behaviour of Ravi because he is caught profoundly in *Lacanian Desire*. 
Shanti's seductive physical charms and enslaving features prove disastrous to the ordinary calm domestic life of both Ravi and Sampath. Ravi feels greatly attracted towards her because she resembles the girl of Ravi's dreams. Therefore, her sudden appearance is described by him 'as an apparition' and sends him into a trance, or what can be called the *Lacanian jouissance*. Her chance encounter with him brings about a commotion in his life. Ravi's artistic urges get resurrected. He vents his desire to Srinivas to work in the art department of the studio. She storms the world of wild imagination and he decides to complete the unfinished portrait with unusual colours. He says:

My subject must have a tint of the early dawn for her cheeks, the light of the stars for her eyes, the tint of the summer rain-cloud for her tresses, the colour of ivory for her forehead...(MS, 160).

He feels that the "usual synthetic stuff for painting, available in market in tubes, is too heavy for this job" (MS, 160).

Doubting Ravi's unusual behaviour, his movements in the studio are restricted by the Director of the art department. He feels heavily shaken on being barred from having occasional glances at Shanti. Sampath's proximity and tactile contact with her in the car becomes the great cause of irritation for him. She fills jealousy in
Ravi’s mind against Sampath. Ravi’s exasperation is doubled when he gets deprived of a glimpse of Shanti even at the time of her arrival at the studio due to the drawn up curtains of the car. However, he manages to see her by standing on a block of wood when she crosses the courtyard of the costume department. Infatuation with Shanti coupled with Ravi’s increasing exasperation due to the obstacles put in his way, proves hard to him. He reaches nervous breakdown in the dance scene where Shanti is enacting the role of Parvathi and Sampath is in the role of Shiva. Shanti as Parvathi is gliding gradually towards Sampath standing with his arms stretched-out in order to receive her. While watching this all, Ravi loses control and in a fit of madness, he rushes immediately towards Shanti pushing aside Sampath and takes her into his arms. She struggles hard in his arms and gets badly bruised. He tries to carry of “his prize!” i.e., Shanti. He remains a true demented young man afterwards for the whole of his life. This reveals the fact that Shanti is purely an object of Lacanian *Jouissance* for Ravi and it is she who proves disastrous to Ravi’s normal life.

The Shanti-Sampath episode in the novel reiterates the vicious effect that Shanti’s seductive physical charms exercise on Sampath. The latter introduces her initially as some sort of his
cousin but it ends up into an amorous relationship between the two. Srinivas suspects Sampath when he notices nail polish on his fingers and asks him, “What is that red on your fingers?” (MS, 161) Sampath feels confused and replies that his cousin might have done some mischief without his knowledge. Srinivas’s suspicion becomes a confirmed fact when Sampath’s wife tells Srinivas’s wife that her husband has been keeping away from home for days together ignoring his family. She wants her to tell Srinivas about it and prevail upon Sampath to visit home. Srinivas probes Sampath and finds that he has gone too far in the matter. Sampath reveals his mind frankly saying that he thinks of marrying Shanti as his second wife and assures him that he will keep both of his wives in equal comfort in separate houses. He says:

Some people say that every sane man need two wives – a perfect one for the house and a perfect one outside for social life... I have the one. Why not the other the one? I have confidence that I will keep both of them happy and if necessary in separate houses. Is a man’s heart so narrow that it cannot accommodate more than one? I have married according to Vedic rites, let me have one according to the civil marriage law... (MS, 179).

He dismisses the anxieties of his wife: “It’s her nature to fuss about things sometime. But she always changes for the better” (MS, 180). This disturbs Srinivas fully and he comments on
his infatuation with Shanti as nothing but “succumbing to a little piece of georgette, powder and curves” (MS, 180).

We also see that after experiencing the mishap in the dance scene, Shanti is taken to the hill to recover her mental trauma. Soon, she recovers and goes back to Madras leaving a letter for Sampath wherein she informs him about her decision. In fact, in it, she warns him that in case he chases her she will shave off her head, fling away the jewellery and wear a white saree. She can easily do all this because she is a widow. She leaves Sampath in a woebegone, bewildered and jilted state. She too feels disillusioned with this imagined, illusory and unreal world of making a career as a film heroine. Thus, the whole novel is fully pregnant with the Lacanian Desire domain.

In *Mr. Sampath*, we finally conclude that Mr. Sampath, a married man, enters a lustful life with Shanti, a fascinating widow from outside, through a camouflage of the script being shot. Srinivas realizes his mistake of entering the Film Studio, a chamber of debauchery as he contemplates it, in it are shut the protagonists of the profane. The theme of the script being played is the burning of *Kama*, in the myth of Shiva and Parvathi. However, Mr. Sampath and Shanti, while playing the roles of Shiva and Parvathi instead of burning Kama and attains the icy union of Shiva and
Parvathi and kindle Kama all the more instead of burning it. They excite it in themselves and in Ravi: the drama of sex (desire) that constitute the thematic core of the action takes place between Ravi – the bachelor and Mr. Sampath – the married ogre. Sriram observes the game as an angel of chastity, almost as a superhuman figure standing above the plane of existential beings. Thus, the Lacanian desire domain is evident.

According to P. K. Singh Sampath gave a trial to agriculture, apprenticeship in a bank, teaching the law, but every time he felt the excruciating pain of losing the time and rejecting the job in hand to get another to make best of the time. He wants to achieve something very big and something unusual so that he could get rid of “engaging all his hours in trial, round of actions, at home and outside”\(^{34}\). He even endeavours to touch the sky in a jump and in the progress is crashed to the same old ground\(^{35}\). His illusions and consequent disillusionments that characterize the empire of his desire get shattered due to his wavering attitude towards life.

Similarly, in The Financial Expert, we find that Margayya carries his business under the shade of banyan tree in front of the

\(^{34}\) R. S. Singh. 1977, p.60.

Co-operative Society. His earnest desire is to soar high in status by earning huge wealth. Even Margayya’s wife who epitomizes an isolated, trapped, and suppressed psyche is at the mercy of an unsympathetic, unfriendly and cruel husband who is maddened by the pursuit of worldly material progress and wealth hardly pays any attention to her. In fact, he succeeds in his ambition and exploits greatly the innocent and credulous villagers in the wake of his financial transactions with them.36

Margayya’s main desire is money. He believes:

Money alone is important in this world. Everything else will come to us naturally if we have in our purse...Even you will learn to behave with me when I have money (FE, 21-22).

However, through Margayya’s character, Narayan actually highlights the existing sordid way of earning money in the society. Narayan primarily focuses here on the fact that money is desire and states:

His mind began to catalogue all the good things money had done as for as he remembers. He shuddered to think how people could ever do without it. If money was absent men came near being beast...People did anything for money. Money was men’s greatest need, like air or food. People went to horrifying things for its sake, like collecting rent on a dead body, yet this did not strike Margayya, in his present mood as so horrible as something to be marveled at. It left him admiring the

power and dynamism of money, its capacity to make people do strange
deeds (FE, 28).

Narayan accepts the fact that without money, man is nothing
because it is the main consideration for being respected and
honoured.

Nothing is impossible in this world... If I have money, I need not
dodge that spectacle dealer. I need not cringe before that stores. I could
give those medicines to my wife. The doctor would look at her with
more interest and she might look like other women (FE, 29).

Margayya thinks that he can do anything for his son, Babu,
with the help of money:

That son of mine, that – I could give him everything (FE, 29).

In another famous novel, *The Vendor of Sweets*, Narayan
exposes the ironies of the life of leaders of free India who no doubt
swear by the name of Mahatma Gandhi but actually live a degraded
and sinful life. For their own interests and personal gains, they
twist even the preaching of Gandhi and the Geeta. In the novel,
Jagan appears as a true model of Mahatma Gandhi, clad in Khadi-
cloths and with the Geeta in his hands, selling sweets in Malgudi.
His son Mali represents the class of young Indian men who,
fascinated by American affluence and culture, make airy plans for
the improvement of their own prospects and sometimes criticize
their own country.\textsuperscript{37} However, in the process they fail in their attempts to revolt against the tradition and modify the cultural norms having deep roots in the Indian society and its people. This shows the predominant impact of the Lacanian Symbolic.

Jagan like Raman in \textit{The Painter of Signs} wishes to sanctify the immoral union. Like Raman, his is the very first and the freshest sexual contact with a girl. The taint on the ancestral home can be removed if they enter a sacramental union but Mali sees no fresh hope there. Like Raju, in \textit{The Guide}, Mali had first mixed up sexual passion or lust with his commercial ambition. The young enthusiast was also an adventurer in sex. But once his sexual lust is satiated, he, like Raju, shifts his stress to commercial success.

\textit{In The Dark Room}, we come across the hero, Ramani, as a successful branch manager who is very domineering and cynical in his ways and hence governs his house according to his own will. As he is always irritable, the atmosphere in his house is very gloomy and his wife, children, and servants are always in a state of fear and terror. This echoes the image of a tense relation which is the result of Lacanian Law-of-the-father. Once he gets liberated from his megalomaniac attitude and succumbs to Shantabai’s

beauty and coquettish ways. He attains Lacanian *Jouissance* and the psychological satisfaction.\(^\text{38}\)

In the novel, *A Tiger for Malgudi*, we come across a number of instances where *Lacanian Desire* domain is focused in the narrative. In the novel the 'tiger wonders how man is accustomed to derive pleasure and meaning by meaningless and unnatural acts. He feels contemptuous of the absurd instructions of the captain whom he no longer obeys. Tiger says:

... I won't do any of the meaningless turns these foolish men around want me to do ... I like this air and freedom... (TM, 174).

Hence, the tiger is an emblem and incarnation of freedom but as compared to animal even Madan says:

life is created and made possible only through sex and violence, no use fighting against it, shutting one's eyes to the facts of life... (TM, 81).

Further, the tiger says that his master believes that

the eye is the starting point of all evil and mischief. The eye can travel far and pick out objects indiscriminately. mind follows the eye. and rest of the body is conditioned by the mind. Thus starts chain of activity which may lead to trouble and complication (TM, 155).


In it we find that despite their edited and exquisitely monitored responses towards their often paradoxical situations. Malgudi women seem to imply an existential paradigm of Indian womanhood under the impact of change and claim attention as individuals affected no less than their male counterparts by the large sociological issues of human identity, continuity and affiliation.
We find finally that before going to attain Samadhi, the master explains religious philosophy of Hindu's in a nutshell saying:

No relationship, human or other, or association of any kind could last for ever. Separation is the law of life right from the mother's womb. One has to accept it he has to live in God's plans (TM. 174).

Similarly, In Mr Sampath, Srinivas puts forward his argument on this philosophy of quietism of acceptance. He remarks on the futility of rebellion:

Life and the world and all this is passing – Why bother about anything? The perfect and the imperfect are all the same. Why really bother? (MS.30).

These instances and illustrations very clearly highlight the balance between Lacanian Jouissance and Law-of-the-father that Narayan wants to emphasize upon.39

It is very unfortunate and ironical that individuals like Chandran, Krishnan, Margayya and Raman succumb and accept the very societal norms that they have been battling against all along. The given social order is irreversible. None can survive without it and therefore, they have to accept the philosophy of life.

or Lacanian Law or Symbolic Order by entering into the realm of language.\textsuperscript{40} Like wise it is important to note that Jagan’s renunciation, Savitri’s submission, Rosie’s succumbing, Daisy’s moment’s weakness, Margayya’s lust for money, Raju’s love and Chandran’s return are the direct results of the acceptance of these doctrines or Lacanian Law-of-the-father. It may also sound apt to mention here that in Narayan’s novels, we come across many women characters such as Daisy, Bharati, Rosie and Shanta Bai one way or the other falling a prey to the \textit{Lacanian Desire} domain. Daisy makes enough use of Raman for satisfying her inward biological needs especially when she feels so. Similarly, Raju falls in the trap of Rosie who blinds him completely in her lust and passion. He loses everything while satiating the inward of Rosie. How can we forget Shanta Bai who destroys Ramani fully just for her own pleasure and \textit{Jouissance} but they do not succeed in destroying the men or overpower them because of the Law-of-the-father. Narayan himself affirms:

\textsuperscript{40} It is the Lacanian Symbolic in which the subject is constituted. In fact, it is the battlefield of being and images. Further, we know that the pre-configuration of the conscious state for Lacan is very much predicated in language and that is why for him “the unconscious is structured like a language”.

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I was somehow obsessed with a philosophy of woman as opposed to man ....My novels dealt with her, with this philosophy broadly in the background.41

In fact, the presence of passive women in Narayan’s and their quietism is the end result of their acceptance of Law-of-the-father. They believe strongly in Karma and embrace phallocentric42 concept of society which promotes the concept of dependence on males and male dominance. In fact, they are conditioned to surrender to the organization of men. They cannot fight for life independently as their societal order doesn’t allow them for it. Thus, Narayan shows vividly in his novels that women can’t survive without males. They are directly or indirectly dependent on males especially for realizing their inward biological needs and also for gaining their cherished status in the society. They, like their male counterparts, return to the fold of the society. For


42 Lacan believes that the Phallus is somehow the central mode around which all-latent inner speech acts revolve. He also believes that human desire is fundamentally placed in sex. All humans are some sort of halves which are searching in vain for their completion. The man in Narayan’s novels is ever in revolt in search of completeness – either through sacred or profane. The concept of revolt is relative and is based upon the principle of sexual lack, which in final analysis becomes the general lack – a condition in the existential world.
instance, Savitri returns to her children and husband and Shanti, once her illusions are crumbled, goes back to take care of her son.

In *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, the Protagonist, Vasu, has to suspend his hunting activities in the Mempi Jungle and retreat into the promiscuous sex with Rangi and all types of young girls of Malgudi. The sexual passion becomes a part of his material passion and activities. He doesn’t allow himself to be tortured and pent up into orthodox culture of Malgudi but celebrates Lacanian thesis that desire is everything. In the novel, we also come across Rangi who seduces all the men folk she sets eyes on or feels need of and comes every night to Vasu for satiating her sexual desire. She is full of passion, dark, seductive, and overloaded with jewellery. Vasu uses her in order to enjoy his inexplicable pleasures for sex. The narrator says:

Sometimes a slim girl went by, sometimes a fair one, sometimes an in-between type, sometimes a fuzzy-haired woman, some mornings a fashionable one, who had taken a trouble to tidy herself up before coming out. Most times Rangi came along also with one or the other of them, or by herself. Brisk traffic passes on the staircase. I guessed that after the challenge from the cavader, Mempi forest was being watched more carefully, and his activities there were neutralized. Vasu had
turned his tracking instinct in another direction. I had no notion that our town possessed such a varied supply of women.43

Nataraj, though a good person, is also confronted with the billowy breasts of the dark sensuous object on the foot of the stairs that lead to Vasu's attic. The sexual passion boils and cools in him in quick succession in accordance with his psychic tribulations. He states:

My blood tingled with an unholy thrill. I let my mind slide into a wild fantasy of seduction and passion. I was no longer a married man with a child and home. I was an adolescent lost in dreams over a nude photograph ... my mind speculated on how I was to neutralize the grille between us if it comes to that... She looked at me indifferently ...(MEM, 121).

The mixed idiom of his unconscious expression is indicative of the drag of the collective consciousness, the drag that caused exactly that pain which he experienced when he saw Vasu flouting codes of chaste life. In this situation of psychic crisis, Vasu is seen enacted within Nataraj who had so far confronted him in the objective world.

Though Rangi performs temple dances, she also goes to the lusty priests in search of livelihood. His unconscious seduction by

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Rangi makes him nervous when she physically appears on his doorstep. The fear of her being seen by his wife shakes him. The expression of the unconscious free sex is constantly suppressed in Nataraj. The collective morality inhibits his desire for free sex; it always remains lodged in his unconscious. Thus, Lacanian desire domain is evidently in operation.

It is sexual sip of Vasu in The Man Eater of Malgudi that can be relished any moment one wishes but it has no more reality than the physical satisfaction or Pleasure Principle. It, however, is very evident here that the desire of the other sex in both is not a desire to fuse the sharp and clear individualities into the ‘haze’ of the spiritual union. We notice that even Waiting for the Mahatma opens with the reflection on the western thought the unchaste, morbid view of sex as visualised by D.H. Lawrence in human behaviour seems to be invested in the framed picture of the European queen with apple cheeks. Sriram’s mother who died in his infancy begins to be rediscovered in the symbolic sensuous object of the framed picture. He places his sensuous passion in the picture for the European queen with apple cheeks and wavy coiffure:
He did not feel pleased with her appearance; he wished she looked like that portrait of a European queen with apple cheeks and wavy coiffure hanging in the little shop opposite his house. 44

For pleasure of the sensuous look, Sriram goes again and again to Kanni's shop to buy one thing or the other. He is initiated into the morbid sex through a symbol of the Western culture and thought. Though on purely psychic level, the mother is invested with the sensuous features of a beloved. And he goes about filling this lack of his dead mother. He spots this lack of the mother, which is his lack now and invests all his passion in the pursuit for Bharati.

Narayan like Lacan believes that sex, desire, jouissance and sexual urge may be a necessity in human behaviour and part of human passion, feeling and instinct but it should not go unrestrained because in such a situation the result would always be chaos and confusion. In order to check a free and unrestrained flow of these instincts, Lacan as well as Narayan propose the acceptance of the symbolic order. Having recognized the acceptance of the Law-of-the-farther, they want an individual not to seek an escape

from life or to evade its problems but to face these at varying levels.

In Narayan’s fiction\textsuperscript{45}, all characters seem invariably caught in an unending series of drives and desires for realizing their numberless dreams and desires. They never know what they are looking for: to experience perhaps joy, pleasure or \textit{Lacanian Jouissance} and in fact there is always something lacking or missing, desire for fame, desire for money or wealth, desire for earning many other unknown things. Despite these desires and ambitions they fail to achieve peace in the society and fall pray to Lacanian realm of language, inevitable symbolic order for becoming normal citizens of the society. Acceptance of the \textit{law of karma} is recognition of the all-pervasive realm of the symbolic, the law-of-the-father, the recognition of ego, its importance, and sin of pride or self-assertion. Like Lacan, Narayan rejects all those paths that lead to self-assertion – all symbols of pride or vanity are shown to crumble in his work. Ambition rolls no mass, and no object of desire ever proves to be self-sufficient, the thing, the signified. Signified truth or meaning or reality or authentic state of

\textsuperscript{45} Narayan operates in a framework of traditions and social morality which is bigger than the individual ego and oddities. Sooner or later, normal reality takes hold of the situation including the aspiring and erring individuals.
existence is not to be found in the world of time. All objects of desire prove to be slippery, and the world of desire appears to be the world of Maya or illusion. Narayan wants to prove that the world is not Maya. In this world, one has to obey the ideology and social norms in order to be at peace and any revolt against these may lead to a transitory period of *Jouissance* or ego fulfilment but in the long run it will result in a split or frustrated *self* which needs to be avoided. It is one of the main reasons why in the Indian philosophical or mystical tradition, there is emphasis on a guarded and detached attitude towards the material progress and focus on comic sense of detachment is in lieu of ascetic’s transcendental withdrawing gaze and renunciatory ethic as one finds in the residents of the Malgudi.