Narrative Structure

The structure of a text is present in anything the author does to give a "shape" to the reader’s experience as s/he reads it. Studying structure means studying the way the author fits “parts” of the text together, aiming at finding out why he fits them together in that particular way. By focusing on how the author fits the parts together the reader gets the idea of what sort of vision of life he intends to convey, what sort of literary work he wishes to form.

The literary term for narrative structure is, of course, plot which is merely “a causal sequence of events arranged in some measure of time that allows a proper growth of motives and sense of duration.” Story, personae and plot are three fundamental items in a fiction which, when they blend together harmoniously, give pleasure much sought after in a work of art, but they are really separate. The novelistic personae speak their own dialogue and act out the events, story consists of all these events while “plot is the chain of causation which dictates that these events are somehow linked and that they are therefore to be depicted in relation to each other.” Plot governs a succession of events in a story, it constitutes the temporal complexity of the narrative matrix.

It is necessary to find in a work of art the principle of order that moves the connected events and incidents closer, and the study of plot helps us in finding it. In the conduct of an invented story, says Kermode, there are certain properties to be observed for the sake of clearness and effect and one of these properties is sequence of events moving from beginning to end through complications, plot, in short.

Narayan is aware of the importance of plot in a novel, hence he does not altogether ignore the intelligence and sensitivity with which the fictional events are related to his world, although he gives more emphasis on character delineation in most of his novels. Narayan’s "plot-construction, in keeping with the general nature of his art," observes Shiv K. Girla, "is . . . based on the basics of
causality which according to E.M. Forster distinguishes a plot from a story. For Narayan, a novel is about an individual living in the imaginative world of the author "performing a set of actions (upto a limit) contrived by him (the author)." The individual (character) and action become meaningful within the framework (plot) he creates. As Paul Verghese notes, in Narayan's novels:

The qualities the novelist attributes to these characters determine the action, and the action in turn progressively changes the characters and thus the story is carried forward to the end. In other words, as a good story-teller, Narayan sees to it that his story has a beginning, a middle and an end.

This chapter aims at studying Narayan's craftsmanship in plot construction and intends to show how the author, despite his more inclination towards character revelation, arranges events and incidents for clear expression of his world vision.

Swami and Friends is comparatively weak in its narrative structure, but it carries such elements of the author's craftsmanship in its embryonic form that it bears distinctly the testimony of a promising artist who never seems to have taken his craft casually. The only novel in the whole gamut of the author's works to have chapters with separate titles, it, with its episodic manner of story-telling, betrays the influence of Fielding and Scott. The art of dividing a novel into distinct chapters may not be directly and sufficiently helpful in understanding the work as the division of a play into act and scene does, but it is not of little importance. An author's penchant for dramatizing life's experience in an artificial manner through chapter division is clearly perceptible in many of the novels of the eighteenth century. He thought:

... experience itself can be said to consist of chapters because the alternating frustrations and fulfilments of life can be given a powerfully dramatic form simply by the act of segmenting the narrative, because the attention and the imagination of the reader are adaptable to small narrative units rather than to long, unbroken ones, and because the technical demands of writing a novel, with its scenic shifts, its omissions, and
so on are easier to meet when the narrative is divided.⁹

This practice of dividing a work into chapters when was followed in the nineteenth century, the novelists during the period ventured to make their chapters grow, in James's words, how "to make them "emerge" . . . how to reveal the pressure of environment."¹⁰ But in Swami and Friends, the chapters do not 'grow, do not 'emerge', do not 'reveal the pressure of environment'. Some chapters are so thin that they do not at all help for the growth of the theme, and reference may be made to the chapter titled "A New Arrival" which is just a little more than two pages and is purely informative in nature. No doubt, small chapters heighten the theatrical effect, they become interesting like the instalments of a television serial and they help the otherwise slim and weak plot to remain dynamic. But at the same time frequent change of scene does not help the story to get crystallised, it results in the failure of the events and incidents acquiring full scope to get imprinted in the reader's mind, because "other things being equal, the longer the scene, the stronger the hold on the reader's imagination."¹¹

Swami and Friends is more like a series of loosely strung episodes than a work structured around a particular theme. The structure is episodic by which we mean:

- lack of organisation in plot or story; having insufficient unity and cohesion in the various incidents; not properly flowing and following from one section to another, but rather a series of unconnected events; lack of logical pattern without mutual influence so that while much happens little or nothing happens."¹²

Nineteen chapters in the novel recount various incidents that happen at a particular stage to the life of Swaminathan who has limited range of emotion and limited orbits. Incidents for most part of the novel are neither cumulative nor climatic, but serial. In spite of certain mechanisms of the author designed to show Swami's growing maturity, little hero's life is composed, for most part, of episodes that do not have any cause and effect relation which Aristotle believes as an essential feature of narrative art. A narrative unit in the novel lasts as long as the particular dramatic situation in the life of Swami lasts. It is discontinued when the episode ends, each episode has its own little system.
of tension and resolution. Narayan's lack of structural subtlety in the novel is a bit unrewarding to the reader. In most of the novels of nineteenth century, the novelists had recourse to this episodic structure to relate life to the story because they believed that various incidents as happening to a man's life are so disorderly that when these are artificially arranged, they would never give a sense of harmony. Moreover, they thought, since life is chaotic, incomplete and confusing, why should it become so well knit, logical and ordered then in a novel? Narayan in his early literary career followed the footprints of nineteenth century novelists and subscribed to the idea of a disordered form of life for which his first novel becomes episodic in its structure. Giving an explanation to the looseness of structure of the novel, M.K.Naik says, "Devoid of the unifying principle of a larger concern, the narrative is naturally reduced to becoming a string of diverting episodes."^13

However, presence of a thin structural unity beginning from chapter thirteen till the last does not escape the reader's attention. A thin thread, i.e. the game of cricket runs through successive chapters from chapter thirteen interlinking the episodes. The end of the novel is a logical conclusion of Rajam's casual comment in chapter fifteen, "I will die if we lose" (142). If we go back further, we shall find how the novelist prepares us for the end from chapter four when Swami's friendship with his set of friends becomes hostile, and the end is the conclusion of this progression. Moreover, the episodes are so arranged in the work that they are filled in with as many shots as required for the desired degree of continuity of perception. As such, the episodes when taken as a whole make a sense and making sense in chronological order is a strong organising principle in human perception for which the television serial of the novel in eight parts proved a great success. Hence the episodic structure does not deter the reader much from recalling the whole of Swami's boyhood. To quote Iyengar, "It is as though everyday actuality has taken Narayan's pen and written out the universal epic of all our boyhood yesteryears that are now no more."^14

Narayan's next novel The Bachelor of Arts marks a definite improvement in its plot construction upon his earlier novel. It has a classical movement with a beginning, a middle and an end, organising the story in four parts, each depicting a distinct situation in a particular phase in the life of the protagonist. However, the novelist does not seem to have recovered from the hold of
episodic structure as is evident from the first part of the novel, though its second part has a continuous narrative.

The episodes in the novel are not loose and disjointed as in Swami and Friends but they are well conceived. They are placed carefully to mark the emotional delicacy and mental growth of the protagonist as well as to show his disillusionment with the long cherished illusions. Narayan's aim in the novel is to show Chandran first in his adolescent surroundings focusing on his ego bloated personality having illusion about friendship and love and then to prick it up so as to present him as "freed from distracting illusions and hysterics" (123).

Two episodes placed in part one of the novel—one of Chandran's successful participation in the college debate and the other of his deep involvement in the Historical Association—help to show Chandran's adolescent mind, his unlimited joy at the illusion about success. Part one of the novel fixes Chandran in his elevated idea of friendship while in part two, the episode of his optical communion with a girl makes him illusioned about love. However, as the negotiation for marriage with the girl is heading smoothly towards a happy resolution, successfully overcoming each hurdle coming on its way, there is an immediate surprise to the expectation of the result when the negotiation is cut off abruptly, that too because of incompatibility between the horoscopes. Failure of the negotiation makes Chandran hysterical which prompts his parents to send him to Madras to overcome the depression and where he decides to don the thread of a sanyasi. Thus emphasis falling on causality, each subsequent action of the protagonist having a connection with the earlier one carries forward the story in a logical way. Once Chandran is shown deeply illusioned about friendship and love, the plot moves towards the climax. In part three, the protagonist renounces the world by donning the garb of a sanyasi out of sheer frustration in love, the decision of which is ignited by an earlier episode, the Kailash episode. This episode placed after Chandran's frustration in love provides him necessary immediacy of experience to get disillusioned with the adult world. Chandran's preference for sanyasihood has its seed in part one where the flower thief sanyasi episode is cleverly placed to prepare the protagonist to accept the high regard enjoyed by sanyasis in the society. Again, the seed of this episode is sown much ahead of its actual appearance when,
on Chandran's mother's repeated complaints about flower theft, Chandran's father asks him to do something about it. Thus the episodes have probability, they grow out of story and prepare the reader mentally to receive them as arising out normally and naturally. Another episode is placed towards the end of the novel when Chandran standing in the college union hall and staring at the group photographs looks back on his college days and realizes the impermanent nature of friendship. Thus small incidents in the life of Chandran, the fragmentary incidents of the narrative issued forth naturally and smoothly from previous actions are the very things from which a coherent vision that love and friendship are the veriest illusions emerges. To quote William Walsh:

\[\ldots\text{the simplicity of Narayan's narrative line, in which each event glides smoothly into the next in an apparently straightforward and realistic way,}\]

\[\text{tends to mask the real if subdued subtlety of the structure.}\]

Unlike earlier novels of the author, The Dark Room completely abandons the episodic method, entertains very few deviations and digressions, moves in a linear progression with a clear beginning, a middle and an end. Narayan assiduously builds up the macro structure of the novel with the help of micro structures. The intensity of the conflict between Savitri and Ramani with all its underlying irony is built up bit by bit by referring to the domestic conflicts in the households of the Cook and Ranga, the two domestic servants in Savitri's house, to the family life of Gangu and Janamma, the two close friends of Savitri living in the immediate neighbourhood and lastly to the family set up of Mari and Ponni living in the vicinity of Malgudi. Savitri's predicament is paralleled with the domestic scenes of the Cook's house, albeit in a lesser scale, it is inverted and contrasted with the domestic situations of Ranga and Mari, and with faint echo we are informed of the variable kind of identical situations prevailing in the households of Gangu and Janamma. Thus the main action of the novel has resemblance to minor situations and little actions in the novel that give it a pyramidal structure. By making the situations and actions contrasted and inverted in relation to Savitri's family life, Narayan asserts that marital incompatibility is not confined only to the family set up of Savitri, but from case to case both husband and wife are at receiving ends, hence mutual understanding is needed.
The beginning of the novel initiates the reader into the development of action like the exposition of a classical drama. In the beginning, Ramani's haughtiness and Savitri's silent revolt are so artfully insinuated into the narrative that the reader is initiated into knowing the theme of the novel and forming an attitude towards the temperaments of the main characters.

Two scenes, one of film show and the other of doll display, placed in the first part of the novel are crucial to the understanding of the theme since both these serve the purpose of foreshadowing. The film show depicting devotion of Kuchela's wife to her husband is like a scene within a scene. It is used here to communicate how a single event can evoke two opposite attitudes of two partners in life. Moreover, the show prompting Ramani to remark on Kuchela's wife, "Note how patient she is and how uncomplaining" (29), reveals his male egoism, a character trait that lasts for a considerable period till chapter nine where he "remembers(ed) all the heroines of the epic whose one dominant quality is(was) a blind stubbornness following of their husbands like the shadow following the substance" (141). Savitri harps on her concern for her children throughout the cinema show, which foreshadows the fact that in future this strong emotional attachment will compel her to accept, even if grudgingly, the domestic reality.

The doll display scene in chapter four placed immediately after the scene of film show is a well conceived scene that offers the novelist scope for peeping into the past of Savitri through her memories and reminiscences. By relating them to the present the author highlights her present predicament in a domestic set up and reveals her longing to go back to the past:

She next felt an intense admiration for her mother who never let even the slightest toy be lost but preserved everything carefully, and brought it all out for the Navaratri display. Savitri had a sudden longing to be back in her mother's house. She charged herself with neglecting her mother and not writing to her for several months now... (34).

Savitri's careful and artistic design of doll display mirrors her own painstaking effort to maintain a sweet relation in her domestic front which gets shattered due to the overbearing nature of her husband. The film show scene when eases the domestic tension, the doll display scene placed just
after it precipitates the tension making it the writer's strategy to move his plot towards a climatic point through this alternating process. The apparently accidental breaking of the elephant trunk by Ranga is not without purpose, rather it is a parallel situation and an advance mention of the impending breach in their family relationship. The elephant that stands for the goddess Lakshmi has its sense of pride in its trunk. Savitri, the Lakshmi of the house whose fierce sense of freedom when clashes with the ego of her husband, it causes domestic conflict, and on her return home after a brief revolt she is purged of her ego. She returns home realizing that "This is defeat. I accept it. I am no good for this fight. I am a bamboo pole..." (190). The scene packed with small incidents unfolds many information like Ramani's haughtiness, Babu's expression of male ego, presence of discordant notes in the domestic life of Savitri and expansion of the gap between husband and wife. The scene also initiates the first major conflict into the domestic front of the couple. The Navaratri festival incident is such a trivial incident but it is effective in quickening the development of the plot and in accentuating the main theme.

If the first part of the work leads the action into domestic conflict, the middle part in which Ramani gets involved in high romance with Shanta Bai precipitates the conflict and then the plot moves at a rapid pace towards the climax. Unlike in The Bachelor of Arts where each unit of action is determined by an earlier action, here the entry of Santa Bai is not made naturally out of any previous incident, rather issues forth from the need of the character's (Raman) desire, the hint of which is given much earlier when Savitri refused to entertain her husband's sexual desire. Thus the domestic conflict getting precipitated, the action of the novel heads towards the climax.

In chapter seven, Savitri makes a suicide bid and from then the action moves fast towards denouement, Savitri returning home and submitting herself to her family obligations and Ramani realizing the importance of her in his domestic set up. By the end of the story, both Ramani and Savitri realize their own weakness and their own limitations. The novel ends emphatically rather than with "a struggle of dots" and the conventional 'happy' ending is not melodramatic, it is consequential.

Commenting on the end of the work, Hari Mohan Prasad says:

In Narayan the narrative follows a straight route. The end of the novel is
built in the progress of the incidents and the character's reactions. The sudden conversion of Ramani would have been sentimental, quite contrary to the character of Ramani. Hence the change in him is not defined in clear terms. Savitri's refusal to return would have been a Hindi-screen bravado. The kind of character that she emerged in the process of the novel must have submitted even at the cost of sacrificing something. This kind of conformity between the audience expectation and the character's action may at times lead to monotony. But Narayan keeps the reader in suspense and plays on his curiosity. Savitri's return, though not unexpected, comes to the audience as a new experience.17

After the climatic point, the narrative unfolds a sub-plot intended to make a parody of the main plot that runs almost parallel to the main plot for about one third of the text. The work with its main plot verging on a pathetic note and the sub-plot on a comic note strikes a balance between tragic and comic aspects of life. Introduction of the sub-plot does not pose any problem for the main action, it does not rival the main plot; rather it helps to make the intention of the writer explicit.

The drama of Savitri's life plays itself out altogether on one spot, i.e. in Malgudi town and its immediate neighbourhood, so that there is no waste of energy in the adjustment to new settings, and it is all confined, after four introductory chapters, to a few weeks. Indeed, the falling action of the plot till its resolution occupies only two days, following close on one another's heels. The immediate sequence of one scene upon another involving always some of the same characters suggests the novel having features of a well made novel.

The English Teacher in the confession of the novelist:

falls in two parts-one is domestic life and the other half is "spiritual."

Many readers have gone through the first half with interest and the second half with bewilderment and even resentment, perhaps feeling that they have been baited with the domestic picture into tragedy, death, and nebulous, impossible speculations (MD 135).
Broadly speaking, the very nature of the theme of the novel poses problems for the author; first how to establish in the reader a frame of mind befitting to the emotional quality of the story and second how to make sure that the feelings aroused during the course of action are properly appropriated to the intended overall effect.

The events are organized in the form of two major sequences-Krishna, the protagonist before the death of his wife Susila and Krishna after the death of his wife The first sequence is divided again into two parts; the protagonist before the arrival of his wife and little daughter Leela at Malgudi to live with him and he (Krishna) getting more and more involved in 'this' life. The second sequence records Krishna's mental turmoil and depression at the sudden demise of Susila and his gradual coming to terms with reality after reaching "a moment of rare, immutable joy—a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death" (228).

Krishna's experience in his psychical development is the central energy of the text. So it is significant to note that the climax of this experience follows the moments of crisis that bear the traces of repetition. In the beginning, Krishna poses himself, in course of setting an exercise in essay writing on "Man is the master of his own destiny" to the students, unanswerable questions about the identity of Man and about destiny:

Man, What is man? What is destiny? How does he overcome destiny?
How does destiny overcome him? What is fate? What is free will?—a number of headings which reduced man and his destiny and all the rest to a working formula . . . (13).

Thus by unobtrusively introducing in the beginning these highly philosophical questions, Narayan engineers a thematic import into the context. Of course, these statements are not apparently designed for the thematic purpose, though in the end these questions become relevant to the protagonist's life. The topic and the questions that had stirred the feelings of Krishna in the beginning become pertinent to his own life when he later asks himself the same questions to find out the meaning in life. In the process of his psychic development where he sees the problems of life, death and destiny in shifting perspective, he understands the meaning of Life and Death.
So, how does Narayan bring a proper alignment to this shifting perspective—from questioning to belief, from an "idiotic theme" to a theme appropriate to the protagonist's life? To do this, to maintain in the reader the emotional quality of the story as a whole, Narayan contrives two episodes in the later half of the story, the episode of the village farmer and the episode of the nursery school head master. After Susila's death, the novel, which was all along been developing on reality model, with these episodes, has to switch abruptly to the opposite mood, indicating by suggestion the processes which are at work within Krishna's consciousness and which resist visual presentation and direct verbal expression. The theme as such, the narrative material can remain no longer an external reality, but an inner life of the protagonist, a spiritual experience which can only be rendered by the metaphoric mood. The episode of the head master that constitutes the secondary story line is intricately woven into the main story and is in fact an amplification of the main theme, i.e. how to live a life in peace being unafraid of death. The head master watches his own death scene, the dread of which had been "weighing upon me down all these years, in spite of what I might have felt and said . . . It was a terrible agony stretching over years. I rejoice it over" (204). And once it is over, he lives free and happy treating himself as dead and his life as a new birth. The episode of the head master motivates Krishna to look at his life anew, to ignore the fright of loneliness and death. It inspires him to lead a harmonious life in the world of innocence where the boundaries of material world and spiritual world disintegrate. From "a life of peculiar blankness and emptiness" (116) weighed down by the sense of separation and sadness, Krishna experiences a sense of fulfilment and richness in life. The attitude of Dr. Sankar towards death in chapter three finds its full circle in the episode of the head master and both these episodes bolster Krishna's resolve to take an objective view on life and death. Thus, these episodes do not dilute or distract the reader from the main plot but they actually extend and amplify it besides keeping the stages of action in proper alignment with the intended overall effect.

As the novel proceeds from its first part to its second, the discourse pattern changes perceptibly. The change can be described as a movement from the mimetic to the diachronic mode. Choice of two models, realism and fantasy, in a single narrative may look incredible and uncon-
vincing to many but this is beyond the author's conscious control as the cultural trapping of the
author prompts him to shape the narrative design in such way. The technique of construction of
this plot of thought is determined by the nature of the material treated by the author in the work
and such a work contains what Martin says, "an admixture of archetypal romance elements," the
contour of the protagonist's spiritual illumination through Death and Birth.

The English Teacher brings a change in the vision of life of the author and strengthens his
belief in the regenerative nature of time, a belief that eventually influences the narrative structure of
his subsequent novels. The theme of awareness of the permanence of cosmic cycle vis-a-vis the
transitoriness of human life is carried forward to his next novel Mr. Sampath. The beginning of the
novel sets the note of this search for a stabilizing factor in life by bringing to the scene Srinivas, a
person having serious and philosophical attitude to life. But as the novel moves towards the mid­
dle, the action veers off and enters Sampath's comical world of film and romance. Thus, two
parallel strands-one of serious and reflective and the other of comical and light-run throughout the
novel and they offer a comprehensive understanding to life and its problems in the end.

Srinivas and Sampath represent two opposite views on life, the former seeking always an
equilibrium and the latter disequilibrium, but the two are always complementary to each other.
Narayan's realization of the absurdity of embarrassment in life when seen in the larger perspective
of the world order prompts him to build the novel on a comic framework and to emplot the events
to realize the form. This comic response to life springs from the incongruity theory of laughter
identified by Bergson, Schopenhauer and others. As Schopenhauer says:

The cause of laughter is in every case simply the sudden perception of
the incongruity between a concept and the real objects to which it has
been related in our mind . . . All laughter then is occasioned by paradox,
and therefore by unexpected assimilation, whether this is expressed in
words or in actions.

The events in the plot are conceived mostly to expose this incongruity in life, as a result,
fantasy creeps into the story. Fantasy in the plot is largely attributable to the conception of the
character of Sampath who in his every action puts a challenge to the moral world and to the established order of the society. Sampath cracks groundnuts inside the courtroom, declares "These rules are not for me" (67), gets ready to have a second wife flouting all social norms, and this defiant attitude to social codes and social mores determines the events surrounding him. He cherishes a sense of independence of spirit and in such cherishment lies his conflict with the external reality. If the story had all hilarious events, the author would have failed to achieve an aesthetic sense, but to achieve an aesthetic sense in a work of art is the hallmark of success of an artist. So, the writer subtly brings into the plot such a character Ravi, who in his running after a false world turns into a pathetic figure. The gap between aspiration and realization is pronounced more artistically by introducing another character, the old landlord who dreams throughout to marry off his granddaughter to Ravi. All these characters evoke both laughter and pathos for their irreconcilability with the reality.

The first part of the story that centres round The Banner runs for almost one-third of the work and it moves on a realistic plane, Srinivas trying to set the world right through his philosophical magazine and Sampath helping him as a printer in his own way. In this part all the four characters who jointly set the action of the next part of the story rolling come in a queer relation. Srinivas meets the old man in course of his search for a rented house, Ravi as a co-tenant and Sampath as the printer of The Banner. By meticulously fixing Srinivas in his surroundings the author drops hints at how the old man and Ravi would later get involved in his life, Ravi in his reference to the highhandedness of his manager who later removes him from the job and the old man in coaxing him to find the hands of Ravi for his granddaughter. Thus the comic tone of the story being initiated in the first part, the narrative slides into the second part in a laboured way. Only in his visit to the house of Sampath, Srinivas is informed of the latter's filmic personality. Since then the plot takes a turn from the serious world of a philosophical magazine to the film world that borders round fantasy, which is "a quality of astonishment that we feel where the ground rules of a narrative world are suddenly made to turn about 180°..." The events and incidents like the death of the oldman, the judge's speech, Sampath's ingenuity in getting the house of Srinivas renovated, the
quarrel between Sampath and VLG on the set that appear in the later part of the novel are all aimed at establishing and maintaining in the reader a comic frame of mind appropriate to the general atmosphere of the story.

The author in no way on the surface structure of the narrative attempts to destroy this form, rather he heightens it by meticulous handling of the parts. He achieves it in maximizing the general comic expectations of the reader by minimizing the possible non-comic elements about particular situations. Sometimes by preventing our attention from concentrating long on the potential causes of distress for the character, sometimes by skipping over a painful scene and diverting the reader to a comic sequence and sometimes by the narrator's refusal to describe in detail the feelings of the character at the loss of something loved for, the overall comic atmosphere in the work is maintained. Srinivas's gloominess at the suspension of *The Banner* is immediately removed by the chatterings of the jutka driver during his journey to Sampath's house, his encounter with the bank manager removes the reader's feeling of pity for Ravi on his dismissal from job and the tragi-feeling of the reader due to Ravi's madness is deflated when he is immediately shunted away from the scene.

Narayan achieves this comic response by concealing a deeper contrast. In its deep structure, the narrative arouses our pathos by subjecting the characters to chase something that is never realized. Sampath's aspiration to reach the height of fame and wealth on the wings of film is shattered when the action reaches its climax, and in the end he is abandoned by his object of love in a ludicrous manner. Ravi lands in jail for his attempt to disturb the moral world, he even goes mad while the old man dies unsung after being duped of his life's savings. The pathetic notes are heightened towards the end with an exorcist arriving to cure Ravi of his madness and the all resourceful Sampath taking shelter on a platform at the loss of moorings in life.

The narrative structure unfolds the interplay between art and reality, between different sorts of reality and myths. The author uses an inverted myth, the Shiva-Parvati dance sequence, in the climatic scene, only to show the eternal paradigm intruding into the world of illusion. The scene offers a scope to the author to show how illusion and reality exchange places, how Sampath, a
threat to the moral order, dances to his destruction and also to salvation, thereby establishing subtly a deeper link between myth and contemporary disorder.

However, the plot of the novel fails to achieve coherence in its composition as it has lots of incidents and actions that have little relationship to one another as far as the centrality of the theme is concerned. The two structures, one veering round the magazine and the other round the film, lack coherence and the plot takes an inverted U shape. Episodes like Sriniva's long meeting with Mr. Shilling to advocate for Ravi, elaborate preparation of the panchanama after the death of the old man are some of the events which the author could have avoided as these do not illustrate the theme. Moreover, the resolution of the conflict does not seem to have sprung from the natural action of the characters, it is rather mechanical.

The Financial Expert invites strong inclination for a study of its plot because the novel involving a single person is based on the socio-psychological problem of the protagonist. It has a well organised plot where various parts are developed to achieve maximum realization of the effect, not least of all for its beginning. For what the novel chooses to present at its outset is precisely a search for a beginning. The protagonist is a creation of war economy, he loses his true identity in his mad rush for money, forgets his original name given by his parents, rather he struggles to forget it. This conscious erasing of one's own name to acquire a name chosen by forces beyond natural authority determines largely the plot of the novel:

> From time immemorial people seemed to have been calling him Margayya... He himself must have forgotten his original name; he has gradually got into the habit of signing his name 'Margayya' even in legal documents. And what did it mean? It was purely 'derivative': Marga meant 'The Way' and 'Ayya' was an honorific suffix: taken together it denoted one who showed the way. He showed the way out to those in financial trouble (1).

Thus by imprinting the protagonist in time, the novelist next imprints him in space. Margayya is shown sitting under a large banyan tree, in front of the Central Co-operative Land Mortgage
Bank, transacting his money lending business by defying the very purpose of such banks. The beginning is richly suggestive of the problem of identity, self-consciousness and lawlessness in Margayya's character that will accompany him throughout the novel.

The problem of identity and the resultant lawlessness is born of his strong desire to obliterate the stigma attached to his ancestry, that it was a family of corpsebearers. His strong inferiority complex is born of his acute poverty during his formative years. Cut off from family roots and denied to social ascension due to poverty, it is Margayya's repeated hallucination for money and for his son's rise in social scale that constitute the organising device of the whole novel. These two factors make him take a defiant attitude towards the society and its surroundings. All these induce him to acquire money, either by right or wrong means, to become rich and to push his son up the social scale through even socially disapproved way. Thus the narrative draws its material from the cultural and psychological identification of Margayya, who in the temporal and social context of India scrambles to rise in life. Cultural modernity in the shape of money society that was emerging in the war period in India and the resulting tension between tradition and modernity gives the novel its dominant moods, sadness and fantasy. Narayan is acutely aware of this tension in the Indian society and points out the sources of a novel in the Indian milieu:

\[\ldots \text{villagers' lives are monotonous and sedantry, and there is no story awaiting in a village, the birth place of a good novel being half way house between a static village and an anonymous industrial city.}\]

Therefore, behind the protagonist's individual and public behaviour lies embedded several layers of psychological, social and cultural milieu. In the neckbreak competitive, hostile world Margayya finds pleasure of wish fulfilment in taking shelter to fantasies. The narrative design finds its strength from this complexity of the protagonist's fantasies in regard to money and his son.

In course of the narrative, the role of money in the life of Margayya undergoes a change from its role as universal modern (capitalist) signifier to a mystic height, to "an air of sanctity." A few examples here will show how the incidents take shape following directly from Margayya's notion of money in a man's life. For him, "People did anything for money in life. Money was man's
greatest need like air and food" (22). He is enchanted with the thought of power and dynamism of money and is totally obsessed by the idea of money. He thinks a man without money is a near beast, he even defines his relation with his wife in money terms, "Even you will learn how to behave when I have money" (17). With this sense of money Margayya sits in front of the co-operative bank to earn interest by lending others' money, confronts Arul Doss and the secretary much to the loss of his self respect. The same sense of money forces him to scavenge the dirty gutter, an act socially disapproved, for retrieval of the account book thrown by Balu into it. And the same sense prompts him to take the help of supernatural power to acquire wealth. His faith in goddess of wealth who, he believes, when smiles on anybody can help him "afford to buy all the gifts that goddess Saraswati holds in her palm" (41) bears fruit and in a chance meeting with Dr. Pal, Margayya takes the pornography "Domestic Harmony" and comes to agreement with Lal for its marketing. With the rise of his financial empire he becomes a true mystic of money, meditates upon it and attempts to free it from its exchange value. He builds his own banking system, exploits the credulous investors, and with a bloated ego even attempts to dictate terms to planets. Thus, in his every action Margayya heads towards a supernatural height forgetting in the course the bliss associated with family life.

On the path of Margayya's soaring to the height of economic prosperity, Narayan does not put any restraint; he allows him to imagine more and more about the importance of money in human life. To push forward him in his action of accumulating enormous money, Narayan introduces Dr. Pal who once giving Margayya the taste of acquiring easy money through his book further serves as his tout to attract the investors to invest in Margayya's bank at an exorbitant rate of interest. Dr. Pal throughout the novel acts the role of Margayya's bad double. Narayan by each action of his protagonist shoves him in his usual self and does not allow the attention of his reader to waver from his (protagonist's) engrossment with the thought of money. Even his Madras visit to search for his "dead" son is dismissed in a few pages so as to bring him back immediately to his usual self. When one strand of Margayya's action knows no limit to reach its climax, the other strand, however, suffers from many setbacks. And it is Narayan's art of putting the comic frame of
Margayya's one self together with the tragic frame of his other self, so as to achieve a distinct aesthetic pleasure, that invites our continued interest in the character. When Margayya's one self finds pleasure in acquiring money and hoarding tons of it, his other self craves to obliterate his ignoble past and seeks shelter in the fantasy of Balu's acquiring fantasimal social standing. This other strand that veers round pathos often negates the primary strand ([But money is not everything (95)]). This strand is unobtrusively and delicately creeps into the story in the beginning few pages as if to make a balance by countering the comic paradox and fantasy running through Margayya's main line of action. By the method of enchainment the events happening before the first narrative is brought before the reader and s/he enters the life of the protagonist to sympathise him. Margayya's uneasiness with the identity of his ancestry, his strong desire to obliterate his past prompt him to make his son march in a procession while going to take admission to the school. But destiny goes against him. With Balu's repeated failure in examinations and his subsequent disappearance to Madras the scene of action is transferred to Madras and Margayya arrives there to search for his supposedly dead son. But Margayya remains incorrigibly the same throughout as even in his tryst with fate, he thinks about the interest of his banking business. The professional life of Margayya running under the shadow of fantasy, the domestic life strikes a chord of realism, and the story carves a balance between the two. But towards the end, the delicate balance between fantasy and realism dissolves, Margayya develops a hubris with his money power by dictating "to the planets what they should do" (152) and even bringing an astrologer to find an excellent match for his son. At this point, Dr. Pal who was instrumental in the phenomenal financial rise of Margayya joins Balu and from now on the story moves towards a climax. Dr. Pal turns into an agent for the moral fall of Balu and instigates him to challenge the parental authority by demanding a share in the property, an act that stirs Margayya's latent conscience and in a fit of anger he assaults him. With this, the wheel of Margayya's financial empire crumbles away and he returns to his original place.

In the story, first we have a vague apprehension of the end towards which things are moving. Margayya's inordinate ambition, his deep passion for riches always knock at the back of our mind
that something unusual is going to happen, that he will lead himself to some exceptional destiny, brilliant or calamitous. Even in his rise and fall with "Domestic Harmony," nothing is determined; everything remains undetermined, yet we fear something spectacular would happen to him. With his selection of Dr. Pal to tout for him for his private financing, the course of events in his life gets altered, the reader can now anticipate the end. With catastrophe falling upon him, he calls his little grandson for his recreation and asks Balu to go and sit under the banyan tree, but on his refusal he himself gets ready to go there. Thus we find the same old scene enacting before our eyes. The ending of the narrative ironically places Margayya in the beginning, the journey from one end to the other is a movement of incidents in their natural sequence so that one may say that the end is embryonically contained in the beginning. 28 Commenting on the ending of the novel, Harish Raizada says, "There is always a wistful irony about the endings of Narayan's novels. Very few writers know better than he where to begin and where to end their novels..." 29

The design of the plot is essentially fabular. The eternal clash between the goddess of wealth and the goddess of learning, between hedonistic and scholastic life that shapes most of the narratives of Hindu fables finds expression in the work. Narayan's essentially Hindu view of life does not allow the worship of Mammon to get upper hand, so he brings nemesis on his protagonist for sacrificing his conscience on the altar of the goddess of wealth. Underneath the outer frame of the story with vanities and defiance of Margayya ever set to challenge the traditional authority and age old belief, there flows a strain of sadness reminding one of the futility of human pride and ego. The plot progresses from an obsessive illusion to disillusion, from ignorance to knowledge.

How the shape of the narrative structure of Waiting for the Mahatma is to take in future can be gathered from when one searches for it in the beginning. Sriram, an orphan, in the beginning faintly remembers his mother who died in her childbirth, and whose framed photograph with her full appearance does not please him, for which he frequently looks at the still portrait of a European lady hanging on the wall in the opposite shop and gets a sort of peculiar pleasure in staring at it. Sriram lives under the weak authority of his granny who at her age cannot exert necessary control on him nor can she supply such psychological input that can provide him pleasure in dreaming of a
female body. Thus the beginning of the novel sets the motion of one line of action while the other line is provided with reference to Sriram's father who died at Mesopotamia while fighting war. This imagery of war and soldiering is to provide him later necessary impetus to determine his future line of action. The parentless protagonist under a weak authority when reaches the age of a major, independent to operate the passbook in his name, frees an author from struggling with pre-existing authorities allowing him to create afresh all the determinants of plot within the text. Thus the author starts with a rule-free character and as the text proceeds, he brings the rule bear upon him. With Sriram in the beginning of the novel, Narayan begins as he were with a life that is for the moment precedent to plot. For the plot to come to shape, after four years of narrative time, in page twelve, Sriram embarks himself upon in search of the "authority"-that would define and justify, authorize the plot of his ensuing life.  

Sriram's hunt for a female figure at his conscious level and his search for authority at his unconscious level end in his meeting Bharati at a market place. This leads to a logically oriented action of Sriram what Claude Bremond terms as enchainment, "back to back succession-outcome of one sequence amounts to (=) the potential stage of the next." When Sriram enters stealthily the camp of the Mahatma at Malgudi to come in close proximity to Bharati, Bharati responds to his yearning for love by presenting him a small jasmine. But all along she remains non-committal and pushes him to undergo further test under the joint authority of her and Mahatma Gandhi. Sriram's return to the fold of Bharati discarding his home and grainy, and his option for becoming a soldier in India's freedom struggle are mainly motivated by his preference for a stronger personality discovered in Bharati. So long as Bharati was with him during his village tour and in his hybernation at Mempi hills, it had a soothing effect on him; he accepted her authority ungrudgingly. In the middle of the novel, Sriram loses the control of his self, becomes passionate, behaves like an idiot in his hugging, embracing and imploring her to marry him. But Bharati being more restrained and more chiselled in her mind releases herself from his hold and says, "Not yet, I must wait for Bapu's sanction" (90), thus exercising a mild authority over him. This authority over Sriram has its strong effect till part two, but the moment she leaves the scene, Sriram becomes lawless, he loses direc-
tion in his life and defines all his actions along the earlier imagery of war and soldiering. But when he is reminded of Bharati, he returns to his former self nurturing wishful thinkings about her.

Sriram's infatuation with Bharati triggers certain actions that carry forward the story. His disguise of a rice merchant taken with a view to meeting her inside the jail is one such. Bharati's spell on him can be gauged when, while growing moustache to look like a rice merchant, he reflects, "How many things I have to do before I can see Bharati" (113). This spell turns into authority when Sriram accepts her instruction to meet his ailing granny at his home from where he is led into the jail by the police. Thus Sriram's passion leads him to commit a series of actions which, in turn, develops the plot. From part four till denouement, the plot does not show any vigorous action, rather the action moves towards an end according to the desire of the author, the protagonist playing a passive role in it. The action of the protagonist in this part does not spring from strong sense of probability and the reader here does not involve himself emotionally in any of his actions. The narration becomes flat like the record of an historical document.

The plot of the novel gets episodic in part two when the action is transferred from Malgudi to village. Sriram's encounter with the tea-estate owner Mathieson, his confrontation with the timber merchant and with the shopkeeper at Solur village are episodes highly enjoyable in themselves. S.K. Girlla is pertinent when he says, these episodes "hardly carry conviction as illustration of Gandhian theme" as because these episodes expose Sriram's half-baked conviction about Gandhian principles. By presenting these episodes the author, without doubt digs the puerile mind of the youths of the time who at the call of Gandhi jumped into freedom struggle without any seriousness. But Girlla fails to notice that the novel does not aim at making the Gandhian theme explicit, it aims at recording the experience of a youth who is in search of equilibrium at a certain stage in his life.

Like most of the novels of the author, the plot of this novel, from part three, with the authority of Bharati slackening on Sriram in her absence, takes a turn for fantasy. Sriram's earnestness in following the instructions of Jagadish to make a note of the message of Subhas Chandra Bose from the radio or the way the message gets snapped is full of absurdities. Granny's rise from the funeral
pyre and the refusal of the Malgudians to take her back to the town fearing that such an "inauspici­ous" act would spell disaster for the townspeople are weird in conception, and the event, to quote Uma Parameswaran, is "strangely incongruous in the context of Narayan's general realism." \(^{33}\)

The action of the novel takes place over a vast spatial canvas stretching from Malgudi to Mempi hills, then to villages and further to a far off place like Delhi. The episodes do not give an ordered structure of actions directed towards the intended effect, the parts in the narrative are not so closely connected to one another that transposual or withdrawal of any one of them will disjoint or dislocate the whole. The vast stretch of space and the length of time involving the action in the novel had offered fine scope to the author to weave an epic in the line of *War and Peace* but his wavering in the middle and the weak ending \(^{34}\) robbed the novel of that scope. Narayan's use of the historic scene as a background makes the setting fiercely effective but the way the multifarious scenes of life, the scenes of unchanging story of human relationship in the form of romantic love between young people are linked together makes the work structurally weak.

In *The Guide* modern psychology provides plot pattern for discovery of self and offers the novelist a new kind of comic formulation referable to psychology. All the actions of the novel that flow out of the character are largely determined by this psychological factor, i.e. Raju's deep passion for Rosie and his strong sense of self-deception. Braided time-scheme and the intercalated narration, the protagonist speaking in his own voice of his past life and the omniscient narrator narrating the present of the protagonist, used in the novel determine largely its narrative structure. The events of the past cycle are progressively revealed, but at the same time Raju moves into and accepts his new role. The parallels and contrasts of Raju's past life as a railway guide and his present life as a spiritual guide are made clear at the outset:

... the other said, "I have a problem sir."

'Tell me about it,' Raju said, the old, old habit of affording guidance to others asserting itself. Tourists who recommended him to each other would say at one time, 'If you are lucky enough to be guided by Raju
you will know everything. He will not only show you all the worthwhile places, but also help you in every way. "It was his nature to be involved in other people's interests and activities. 'Otherwise,' Raju often reflected, 'I should have grown up like a thousand other normal persons without worries in life" (8).

The plot of the novel is built on the basis of this intricate pattern of parallelism and contrast.

The novel takes its structural pattern after Raju whose passion for Rosie results in his seduction of her which, in turn, prompts Marco to desert her. All these three in the first part of the narrative form a triangle; Marco aspiring to fulfill his life's desire by discovering and annotating the hidden treasures of India's rich cultural past, Rosie seeking her soul's satisfaction through creative channels of India's classical dance and Raju dreaming always an elusive future. The initial impression that the novel embodies a plot of love triangle is dispelled gradually and turns to be the story of an individual who frantically searches his identity in the complex world of passion, debauchery and hypocrisy.

The action of the novel flows out in two streams and these two have been knit together into a single whole by the presence of Raju in both. One stream flows in the town of Malgudi where life in its erotic form moves on, to which rich traditions of classical dance offered by Rosie-Nalini are traced, and where bubbles of youthful, carefree life with all its defiance to society and morality are felt. Another stream flows in the neighbouring Mangala village, where the spiritual aspect of swamihood is felt, where urban deceit experienced in Malgudi is absent, where life flows in on the basis of simple faith. Raju's presence in both these streams presents the wholeness of life in its myriad form.

This parallelism also works in Rosie episode, and in the final episode of Raju in his incarnation. Raju's sex obsession gets him involved in the affairs of Rosie, makes him jump to rescue her from the tyranny of Marco, and later his self-deception induces him to take a life larger than himself. In both these episodes that begin very casually, almost by accident, Raju struggles hard to fill in the details of his part, and in both these he rises above his normal self. In the episode of Rosie,
Raju promotes Rosie's dancing career to its finest and in the other episode he cultivates himself so thoroughly that even sharper eyes of journalists and government machinery fail to find out his true personality. In the former, his excessive sense of possessiveness and jealousy makes him commit a moral slip for which he loses his make believe world and lands himself in the prison, while in the latter his attempt to hoodwink the gullible villagers backfires and forces him to undertake a fatal fast to the point of self annihilation. Earlier, with his prison life, with his physical punishment his life of debauchery ended and later with his twelve days fast to save Mangala village from the scourge of god, his deceptive world ended.

The narrative structure goes on "swinging forward and backward," the omniscient narrator narrates the present of Raju and he (Raju) is allowed to give an autobiographical narration of his past to Velan. In the autobiographical narration of Raju, the author allows Rosie to speak of her life with Marco from the time Raju leaves her with him (Marco) in the Mempi caves to the time she is driven away from railway station to come to Raju. This parallelism in the stories of Raju and Rosie, each being allowed to tell his/her story, is an artistic design of the author made to invite sympathy of the reader for the otherwise unlikeable action of the character. Raju's own story within the larger story frame and Rosie's story within the story of Raju are like rings within rings which Rimmon-Kenan terms as "embedding-one sequence is inserted into another as a specification or detailing of one of its functions." Narayan by allowing Raju and Rosie to tell their tales saves the story from didacticism and makes it an integral part of the total plan of his plot.

Parallelism between the beginning and the end of the novel rarely escapes the notice of the reader. Raju with all his past hectic life, with all his attainments of the status of a public celebrity in earlier life when reaches Mangala village, he becomes an anonymous figure, and only in his anonymity he fits into the spiritual expectation of the villagers. Thus the novel begins in the middle with Raju's anonymity and this condition is repeated at the end of the novel when Raju fades out as a nameless sadhu, people least caring to know about his original identity.

The plot of the novel like most of Narayan's plots breaks in the middle, and in it we find an admixture of realism and fantasy. The action begins realistically with common place, ordinary
events, and the characters playing it are nothing extraordinary; but soon there is an intrusion of much that is improbable, unreal and fantastic. However, the elements of realism and fantasy are artistically fused to give it the quality of an "organic compound." Some critics criticize the basic structure of the novel. T. D. Brunton, an otherwise admirer of Narayan's art while giving his opinion about the plot says, "... the career of Raju himself is too fantastic for Narayan's essentially realistic mode to cope with, and the book cannot overcome its inherent improbability." But as the theme is essentially Indian and Raju's growth from a railway guide to a spiritual guide is quite probable in the religious and social context of India, this intrusion of fantasy into the plot does not make the work bizarre. And this sort of plot structure helps Narayan to illustrate the theme of illusion vrs. reality. To quote Rabkin about the utility of fantastic plot structure will be appropriate here. Rabkin says, "The fantastic is a potent tool in the hands of an author who wishes to satirize man's world or clarify the innerworkings of man's soul." Moreover, by using the literary device of ambiguity Narayan saves his plot from turning to too incredible, from slumping into a mere mechanical mixture. The improbable becomes probable, the fantastic becomes convincing when the novelist does not become categorical about Raju's transformation. We still remain uncertain if Raju's inner soul undergoes a basic change with his penance or he simply takes another role, the role of a saint.

Narayan's superb handling of the incidents helps the novel maintain a delicate balance between the comic vision and the tragic realm of the work. Even after committing the forgery, the discovery of which lands him in jail, Raju does not undergo any moral change. Narayan keeps up, even in an otherwise gloomy surrounding, the momic spirit by detailing the hillarious moments during the trial of Raju so as to lessen the gloom of the courtroom. Raju's prison life is dismissed in a few pages where he does not show any remorse, rather enjoys it to the last bit making fun of those who dread it. The same art of making the most out of incidents for the comic suspense of the plot can be seen through the rest of the work. Even as Raju's end becomes inevitable, as he is seen moving towards self-annihilation, poised as a tragic figure arousing pathos in us, Narayan keeps up the comic spirit of the novel by presenting a carnival atmosphere. Film shows, shops, merry go
rounds, loudspeaker music drown the heart's cry of Raju who in the hands of Shakespeare might have emerged as a great tragic figure.

Moreover, the ending of the novel could have become a tragic one if Narayan would have left the protagonist dead in the last scene. Narayan did not make a definite pronouncement on the fate of his protagonist. If he had left him with obvious reference to a happy ending, he would have hurt the moral world of the reader and the form of the novel would have looked ludicrous because as Naik says, "... a happy ending to The Guide would have been as unthinkable as a happy ending to King Lear." Again, if he had left him dead, the form of the work would have suffered and the reader's faith in Narayan's vision of life would have eroded. So, Narayan with the device of open ending leaves the fate of his protagonist to be presumed by his reader.

A less accomplished artist than Narayan would never have been able to invent characters, as Marco and the Adjournment Lawyer are, so good for the form as well as so interesting in themselves. Marco's eccentricities and the star lawyer's capacity to prolong the case are well contrasted with the openness of Raju and Rosie's belief in karma. The character of Velan well heightens the suspense of the novel and his moron brother with his comic misunderstanding of the protagonist complicates the plot. Marco, the foil of Raju, is not endowed with any particularized traits and any more individualization of him would have upset the balance of the form. In spite of Raju's great betrayal of Marco and his commission of moral debauchery, our sympathy goes for him, but not for Marco because in him (Raju) we discover a kind of goodheart, a sense of altruism for which we share his feelings. Narayan's great art in denying further individualization of Raju in his later part of life enables us to derive a peculiar aesthetic pleasure as we see Raju here struggling hard against the larger social/cultural context. The novel is about a man's quest for a meaning in life. Narayan has achieved this to a considerable extent by inserting Raju into typical situations, i.e. putting a tragic character in comic situation. Thus the plot consists of a working out of the reactions of the protagonist to situations which are largely of his own creation; it follows a familiar pattern, character's pride, flaw, downfall and recognition. The question for Raju is not what is going next? or what is the meaning behind the mystery of the situation? but how shall he meet the challenge of
the situations? This gives us a strong feeling of moral tension which in a work of fiction does so much to give the impression of reality.

Narayan in *The Man-eater of Malgudi* deals with the problem of Evil, poses some fundamental questions about good and evil and their role in human life, at the same time he also finds his own answers how to take on the problem. But the mode chosen by him for the purpose is essentially comic. Since the comic mode restricts considerably the exploration of the problem, the novelist devises the narrative strategy by having recourse to a myth—the myth of Bhasmasura as frame of reference or structural device. Giving reason for using myth as a technique to illustrate his moral vision, Narayan said:

At some point in one’s writing career one takes a fresh look at the so-called myths and legends and finds a new meaning in them. After writing a number of novels and short stories based on the society around me, some years ago I suddenly came across a theme which struck me as an excellent piece of mythology in modern dress. It was published under the title *The Man-eater of Malgudi.* I based this story on a well known mythical episode, the story of Mohini and Bhasmasura.39

The choice of an Indian classical myth by the author to explore a universal problem does not pose any difficulty for the reader because analysis reveals that seemingly different myths are all the same because they derive from or reflect "identical primal relationships" among humans. Narayan believes in this universal sameness of myths and its appropriateness in providing story patterns.

The plot of *The Man-eater of Malgudi* is built on the conscious use of a myth and novelist’s intention to use the myth in an obvious manner is found in the text itself, not once but many times. Shastri, the surrogate author while defining Vasu says:

He shows all the definitions of *rakshasa;* persisted Sastri, and went on to define the make-up of a *rakshasa,* or a demoniac creature who possessed enormous strength, strange powers, and genius, but recognized no sort of restraints of man or God. He said, 'Every rakshasa gets swo-
likened with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something or other will destroy him" (95-96).

The obviousness of the craft is again announced in the end of the work when Sastri repeats his early belief, "Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the *rakshasas* that were ever born. Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment" (242).

This repeated mention of an idea, long imprinted in mind, to drive home a universal truth is reinforced in the novel with the use of parallel patterns for the coherent assemblage of incidents. From the beginning Vasu has been saying that the one thing he cannot abide is a mosquito, "Night or day, I run when a mosquito is mentioned" (26). The clearing of Nataraj's attic dehouses a thousand mosquitoes, and the only way to escape from it is to use a net. But Vasu before his end, to demonstrate his strength, strikes the iron cot, breaks it and thus makes the net useless. On the night of the temple procession, Vasu is smitten by a mosquito, slams it in a rage, brings down all his strength on himself, and in the process kills himself. The parallel pattern of incidents is also noticed when Vasu brings his palm flat down on the iron frame of the cot, cracks it and dislocates the wrist of the Police Inspector. This enormous power of Vasu and his aggressiveness have a parallel in his single blow at his pahelwan guru. Vasu's giant strength used in finishing his own self has been mentioned earlier in his power to snap chains, splinter a three-inch thick panel of seasoned teak with his fist.

In the narrative structure, apart from parallel patterns, we also find patterns of contrast to make the meaning explicit. The first chapter in the novel builds a picture of peace and stability in everyday existence of Nataraj as well as that of Malgudi. The blue curtain hanging in the chamber of Nataraj symbolizes the peaceful and ordered life of Nataraj. But with the emergence of Vasu on Malgudi scene the order becomes disorder, the equilibrium becomes disequilibrium, and peace turns into trouble. The same contrasting pattern in plot construction is followed to emphasise upon the nature of evil. Evil dominates Good but not always. Evil remains alluring for a considerable
time, it triumphs but its triumph is temporary. The contrast in Vasu and Nataraj is allegorical; one destroys life, another fosters it, one has a pugnacious spirit and the other is not constructed to sustain any sort of enmity.

The structural design of the work built on the mythological story of Bhasmasura and Mohini is scaffolded by some other mythical analogues. Only after establishing Vasu convincingly as a veritable demon in the garb of a man, though perverted, Narayan draws analogical parallels between him and the other demons of Indian classical stories. Some of these parallels are so obviously drawn that they hang in the plot loose without being fully integrated into it. The author by drawing parallels between Mahisasura and Vasu informs us of the cruelty, sensuality and diabolical personality of the latter, and by paralleling him to Daksha he (the author) suggests the inevitability of death. The device so used shows how the micro narrative units are deliberately drawn to suggest the magnitude of Vasu's evilness and his ultimate fate. Looseness of some of these units often affects the structural compactness of the plot, they look unnecessary though they make the theme explicit. Commenting upon this obvious craft in the novel, U. P Sinha says, "Prominent presence of myth makes the artistic failure of dijuction in patterning."40 But not that all the slices of myth recounted in the narrative damage the architectonic quality of the plot. There are some myths used here that reinforce the main plot. The Gajendra myth is so complexly woven into the plot that it becomes instrumental in the orchestration of understanding the problem of evil and its consequences. Subtle infusion of Krishna legend and the story of the Ramayana into the plot guide the attention of the reader to the mythic substructure of it and make the theme explicit.

The plot of the novel has a classical design, the pattern is order-disorder-order, only within the convention of story-telling which unsparingly emphasises that a story must have a beginning, a middle and an end.41 The katastasis plot on which is superimposed the mythic paradigm serves to anticipate the development and denouement of the story. The story runs under the shadow of the end because the idea of the author behind the story has its end before the beginning, what Brooks sees as the "structuring force of the ending."42 In the disorder the climax is touched and with Vasu's death the denouement is reached, the order is established, the recognition that evil contains its
destruction in itself is established. The first ending of the plot is very abrupt, sudden and fantastic; Vasu's removal from the scene is in line with the Greek idea of deux ex machina, the hint of which is given a priori in Gajendra myth. The end, as a result, becomes artificial despite well planned incidents in the middle of the work. To quote Brunton, "... Mr. Narayan is a brilliantly subtle comedian. His typical art is an original compound of fantasy and realism. But when, as sometimes happens in the vein of fantasy predominates, his writing slips into escapism and triviality. An acute example of such a failure is offered by ... The Man Eater of Malgudi." 43

Narayan's skill in the arrangement of events and actions, his choice of characters have sustained the comic form of the novel. The actions of the characters mostly spring from their relation to Vasu and these actions are so controlled by the author that they set the comic mode of the novel rolling. To cite examples, almost hijacking of Nataraj to the Mempi jungle by Vasu and leaving him high dry on the highway would have aroused immense tension and violent reaction in Nataraj, but Narayan by bringing Muthu on to the scene and through their comic verbal exchanges lightens the situation. Again, Nataraj's return bus journey with a garrulous bus conductor and a caricatured Police Inspector minimizes any tension in him. The faint current of tragic strain produced by the bullying nature of Vasu towards peace loving people of Malgudi is neutralized with Sastri's repeated reference to the very unsubstantial nature of evil. Rangi's confiding relation with Nataraj in informing of Vasu's resolve to kill the temple elephant, nerve racking tension at Vasu's open declaration to shoot it, Nataraj's concern for both the elephant and the crowd are elements of melodrama while Vasu's attack on the Police Inspector, Nataraj's fainting at the temple portal due to overstretched imaginings have tragic tinge. But Narayan deflates it by detailing Nataraj's wild comic sensual feelings for Rangi, by narrating comic response of characters present in the attic of Vasu and by describing the exaggerated attention that Nataraj receives in the aftermath of his recovery from swooning. The manner in which Vasu annihilates himself, the train of incidents following the murder and Sastri's untangling of the mystery reaffirm the comic mode of the narrative.

In The Vendor of Sweets, progress of the story is skilfully woven into the development of
Jagan's character. This development is shaped through a series of conflicts, and the plot of the novel is built around two main lines of conflict, i.e. the conflict in the self of Jagan and the external conflict faced by him from his son. Jagan is torn in doubt and confusion regarding his role in life which gives rise to his inner conflict, while the external conflict rises in the clash between western civilization and Indian culture represented respectively by his son and by his visions of life originating from the value system shaped out of his national pride and national allegory.44

The incident with which the novel opens is a small excerpt issuing forth from the experience of Jagan, moulded from Hindu culture that finds it difficult to get separated from the flow of his life. The excerpt reveals the self, torn in doubt and confusion, repeatedly trying to move towards equilibrium; it also suggests about the nature of the character to be developed:

CONQUER TASTE, and you will have conquered the self,' said Jagan to his listener, who asked, 'why conquer the self?' Jagan said 'I do not know, but all our sages advise us so.'

The listener lost interest in the question; his aim was only to stimulate conversation, while he occupied a low wooden stool next to Jagan's chair. Jagan sat under the framed picture of the goddess Lakshmi hanging on the wall and offered prayers first thing in the day by reverently placing a string of jasmine on top of the frame; he also lit an incense stick and stuck it in a crevice in the wall. The air was charged with the fragrance of sweetmeats frying in ghee, in the kitchen across the hall (1).

Thus the beginning where hieratic intermingles with demotic idea, levity undercuts gravity determines the plot and form of the text. The attempt to stimulate conversation by Cousin, the rational double of Jagan is a confirmation of limited intelligence of the character, and this illustration of the ordinariness will continue for a considerable length in the text. This episode in page one showing Jagan non-committal about his life philosophy logically gives rise to various conflicts. The whole plot opens with this initial problem of Jagan and closes with Jagan achieving a kind of stabilizing factor in his life.
The middle of the plot is notably characterized by the hypocrisy of Jagan, by his inability to find the difference between appearance and reality. The reader is constantly reminded of the dilemma between the exacting standards of perfection provided by the nationalistic culture and traditions based on scriptures and the process of modernization represented by his only son to whom he is blindly attached. But this struggle is often so interior that it, to some degree, retards plot development. The first two chapters presents Jagan in his normal self attached to his son and to his sweetmeat vending and takes him back occasionally to his youthful days and to his childhood memories. But from chapter three, the plot follows a pattern of conflicts arising out of the clash between his long cherished and steadfastly held ideals and the western life style adopted by his son. This clash between the ideals shapes the organizing pattern of the plot.

Mali's refusal to pursue further studies and his declaration to be a writer is the first conflict that Jagan encounters. He reacts abruptly, "Mali is displaying strange notions" (33) which is extended when he further outbursts, "Did Valmiki go to America or Germany in order to learn to write his Ramayana?" (51). Thus, with each shock he receives from Mali he enters into a conflict with himself; his self turning repressive, it repeatedly returns to his national spirit and to his culture. Jagan seeks help from classical literature to find if there is any justification in his son's aberration or in his own action. Under the impact of his cultural settings, he disapproves Mali's action, but again under the veil of illusion, he weaves fantasies over his (Mali's) antics. Illusion about filial love engulfs him, he affirms more confidence in his son's writing ability, he even casts doubt on his own judgement, "For twenty years', Jagan reflected, 'he has grown up with me, under the same roof, but how little I have known him!" (40). At the next moment he is confused, his repressive self turns overboard, "Secretly his mind was bothered as to why there was always an invisible barrier between them" (40), and it struggles to find the cause of this barrier.

Mali's escape to America to learn storywriting skill gives a turn to the plot. Cousin's earlier dropping of hints about American life with its beef eating and alcohol drinking habit when turns real for Mali, Jagan's repressed self looks for scriptural sanction for these disagreeable actions. But unable to find out an answer to it, he leaves it there. With Mali's sudden return from America along
with Grace, the action gains momentum. Mali's absurd proposal to start a business of marketing storywriting machine has the flavour of fantasy and thus the plot now, in the middle, slips to it deviating from the realistic plane on which it was moving. Jagan by neither rejecting nor accepting the proposal of Mali to be a shareholder of the venture becomes a party to Mali's fantasy. But fantasy is a common characteristic in the plots of Narayan. The tradition of story-telling in India, informs Warder, combines two conflicting elements; realism and criticism of social evils on the one hand and growth of fantasy on the other. This element of fantasy complicates the plot, makes the intention of Jagan utterly uncertain. This uncertain intention in Jagan makes him stand before Mali's door with "a mental picture of himself standing like a ragged petitioner in the presence of Mali and the Chinese girl, being sneered at for his business of life-time" (98). In a moment of impulse, he declares, "Money is an evil... 'We should all be happier without it. It is enough if an activity goes on self-supported, no need to earn money, no need to earn money" (98-99). The result of the repressive self struggling for a release finds a saviour in the intrusion of an errant authorship-Chinna Dora's. With the image maker's appearance on the scene, the action staged in the interior of Jagan gets agitated. For him:

Sweetmeat vending, money and his son's problems seemed remote and unrelated to him. The edge of reality was beginning to blur; this man from the previous millenium seemed to be the only object worth notice; he looked like one possessed" (118),

and he experienced a moment when "Mali's antics seemed to matter naught" (120).

The climax of the interior action reaches in chapter ten with Jagan's discovery that Mali and Grace have tainted his ancestral home by living in sin. Jagan does not turn violent, he does not rant the air with curse,

He stood looking at the girl. She looked so good and virtuous; he had relied on her so much and yet here she was living in sin and talking casually about it all. 'What breed of creatures are these?' he wondered. They had tainted his ancient home. He had borne much from them (141).
With this inward withdrawal the repressive self fully releases itself, Jagan realizes his ignorance, what theorists have come to recognize that "ignorance and knowledge, vested in character as an independent entity, are crucial to an understanding of narrative structure."

The Painter of Signs divided into four parts is more a long short story than a conventional novel. Each part of the novel presents its protagonist Raman in course of his journey to a state of equilibrium from a state of disequilibrium. Raman, a young painter of signs determined to establish the Age of Reason in the world struggles hard in the first part of the novel to resist the irrational attraction he feels for Daisy, "first female brushing against" him (50). But in the second part, he plunges deep into her love one-sided, and being unable to resist her temptation even attempts to molest her in a desolate place. Raman in the third part forces her to agree to marry him and Daisy succumbing to his pressure gives consent to have a gandharva type marriage, after laying the condition that they should have no children. In the last part, when Raman is all set to receive Daisy in his home, she leaves him abruptly, and Raman after a long infatuation with her realizes in the end the need to mind his own business. Thus the plot has a circular construction leaving the protagonist remain where he earlier was and during the intervening period he develops, "from within, showing himself, in Coleridge's idiom, as modified by "a form proceeding, not a shape super induced." The circular movement of the plot is a process in which Raman's ability to perceive his fall becomes an essential part of his self. So to approach the novel as belonging to bildungsroman genre will be a significant way of reading it. The story of Raman is the story of his being "sandwiched between Malgudi conventions and the outsider's iconoclasm, between the philosophies of the Traditional Woman (his aunt) and the New Woman (Daisy). It is also the story of his psychological and moral formation. When the novel is read in terms of bildungsroman plot, Raman's roundings in Malgudi and his journey through villages in part two become the metaphor of his development. Raman progresses in time, and the plot he represents is circular for him. Objections are often made that the plot mostly reflects meaning, not action; but what D.S Philip says, "a clearly defined plot where action follows action with definite consequences does not appear to be a particular strength of Narayan's writings." Apart from it, change in the protagonist is inwardly.
it is, what Meenakshi Mukherjee says in another context, "through the consciousness of a rather
limited person." So the reader encounters little external action. The story accomplishes the re-
establishment of the very same state as in the beginning, the inner state of Raman undergoing a
change, he realizes in the end that his true vocation in life lies in his sign painting. Thus, the plot
progresses "from order to disorder and back again."

But not that the novel lacks events, rather much of the vitality provided by the plot is derived
from its familiar situations and causal progress. The romance of Raman involving Daisy gains an
initial motivation and a continuing rationale for his action in his individual world. But before Raman's
involvement with Daisy, two episodes appear—one of Raman's encounter with the lawyer
where we find him declaring, "I want a rational explanation for everything... I am a rationalist and
I don't do anything unless I see some logic in it" (5), and the other of his clash with the bangle seller
over the payment of dues. These two episodes do not much contribute to story development but
are crucial for character's deceptive motivation in the beginning of the plot. After these two ep-
isodes, with Daisy's entry into the scene, the plot construction takes a continuity leaving almost no
thread hanging loose. Daisy and Raman make a journey through rural side to educate the villagers
about the need for family planning, and there they meet a cave-temple priest who, according to
popular belief, can cure women their barrenness. Raman here again meets the priest stealthily to
know about his future relation with Daisy and the meeting ends in ambiguity. After the village tour,
when the duo makes a return journey on a bullock-cart, the plot takes a sudden turn. By giving
Raman indulgence to talk about sex, Daisy suddenly reacts to his unilateral sexual advance; thus
the first external conflict in their relation arises. This external conflict is transferred to the inner level
of the protagonist in part three. Again in the same part, the plot takes another sudden turn. Daisy
one evening comes to Raman's house of her own and arouses his wild passion to possess her. Thus
the action is carried forward to the next part where Raman on being put conditions by Daisy for
marriage finds a mythical analogy in him, "I will be like the ancient king Santhanu..." (159). The
allusion to this ancient model made towards the end is central to the novel as it is built around
Santhanu-Ganga legend in a very subtle way. At this stage, the plot takes an unexpected turn as
Raman, after preparing himself fully for the "bride's" coming, finds Daisy suddenly leaving Malgudi for a distant village to pursue her missionary zeal. Thus the plot deviates from the Mahabharata legend and adapts it to contemporary life by making Daisy break the condition even before the marriage takes place. Narayan's use of an Indian myth here is, what P.K. Singh observes, "a part of his (Narayan's) grip of reality, of his particular view of human life and his individual way of placing and ordering human feelings and experiences."\(^{53}\)

The plot has a number of pairing offs and parallels and these carry sufficient significance. Although the members of each pair or parallel correspond to each other, their contextual meaning makes them divergent from or even contrary to each other.

The bangle-seller in chapter one had refused to pay Raman his dues as the word 'cash' on the sign board written by Raman for him was too red, and according to him it might frighten the customers. He again surfaced in chapter three and paid Raman advance for a new sign-board. The earlier incident was a strategy on the part of the bangle-seller to belittle Raman in his sense of calligraphy while the second is to flatter him in his art with an ulterior motive to find favour with Daisy via Raman in a bid to promote his bangle selling.

Aunt's recounting of her stories, "I was one of the several children in the house" (19), has its echoes in the recounting of Daisy of her story to Raman in part three. The Aunt takes pride in a large number of children in her family, but the modern girl Daisy is sick of it. This parallel story suggests contrary attitudes taken by the Aunt and Daisy representing respectively the views held by old and modern generations towards the problem of population and towards life.

Aunt's withdrawal from home to Benares has a parallel with Daisy's exist from Malgudi. Aunt makes an elaborate preparation before her final withdrawal and, true to ashram dharma, she instructs Raman in detail what to do and what not to do in his domestic life after her exist. But Daisy's exist from Malgudi is abrupt, she leaves the place without having any consideration for Raman, least caring to leave any message for him about her next location. This contrasting attitude towards life is born of their (Aunt's and Daisy's) respective attitudes towards man and life crystalized under the impact of time.
Some of the items in the narrative arrest the attention of the reader by their earlier hint in the text. In part three, Daisy while narrating her life story to Raman told how, after she ran away from her home, her father traced her among the fishermen on a seashore. Earlier in chapter two, the cave temple priest had guessed that Daisy had run away from home "without telling anyone, when you were twelve years old. Your father and mother searched for you, poor things! After months traced you." He shut his eyes for a moment and said, "I see a seashore, waves, huts . . ." (72).

Even Raman's reflection "May be we will live together in our next janma. At least then she will leave people alone, I hope" (183) has its faint echo in the message of the Town Hall Professor "This will pass" (27).

Thus the plot of the novel is woven in such a manner that not only it effects a psychic development in the protagonist but also traces how modernity takes over the tradition. To quote Ron Shepherd, there is in the work "an architectural duality in which modernity superimposes on tradition." By drawing an analogy between the Malgudi story of Raman and the mythic story of Santhanu, juxtaposing Daisy, a modern girl and Ganga, a prototype, Narayan attempts to make an individual a mythic prototype. Raman recognizes his place in the scheme of things; this realization comes in the end as a sharp, immediate realization; the protagonist returns to equilibrium recovering from his illusion, and the plot helps him to achieve this.

The plot of A Tiger for Malgudi consists of a number of significant events happening to the life of the tiger Raja who turned in course of his life's journey from a violent, cruel being to a being having understood the deep implications of philosophy of life. The story begins with Raja lying in its cage in a zoo contemplating its cubhood, its wild days in the jungle, its life in captivity as a circus star and then its association with the Master.

The story ends where it begins and by reading the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end we are often told about Raja's response in his present to some of the events happened to its life in the past. The narrative begins in a reminiscent mood, and since it is impossible to recapitulate all the events happening to his life, he (Raja) tells in his own person only those events that trace his spiritual development. The events narrated here do not stand independent, they are interlocked.
with each other, they help the narrative move towards its end, and yet they have their own form of tension and resolution. The episode of tiger's fierce encounter with a tigress and its union with her, the episode of its wanderings into the human habitat in search of prey and the villagers' attack on it and its final escape, the episode of its struggle to stand on its hind legs while on the film set and its recovery from this trouble by killing his captor have their own tensions and resolutions. The climax of Raja's worldly life is reached in his killing of Captain, its captor, and in his escape from the physical bondage from where he, in his association with Master, sees himself in a different and truer light. From the time of his meeting with his Master, the life of Raja moves towards attaining a kind of equilibrium achieved not through stages of any serious external or internal conflict, but through the experience of a sudden change in himself, "... already a change was coming over me, I think My Master's presence in the vicinity, though he had not come near me yet, must have begun to affect me" (136). Later this change in his self takes a solid form which he recounts like "How I was beginning to understand the speech as a mystery. He was exercising some strange power over me. His presence sapped all my strength. When I made one more attempt to spring up, I could not raise myself" (144). Like in most of Narayan's novels, the plot moving here, for a considerable length, on a reality plane slips to fantasy, and the equilibrium is achieved by a sort of epiphany experienced by the hero-narrator.

The division of the plot into parts is modelled on the Hindu idea of four stages of life—the life of blood, the life of sensuality, the life of bondage and the life of renunciation—as the tiger's life from cubhood till his state of renunciation is divided into four stages. Tiger's life is a complete cycle of drama of life which Narayan hints at when he tells how Captain introduces him (the tiger) to the audience, "Ladies and Gentlemen, you are to see our Raja perform an act which I have named "Four in one," which is actually a symphony in movement as you will notice when the band plays" (71). The note of same veiled analogy with self is perceived when the Master tells Raja,"You are now an adult, full grown tiger, and assuming you are fifteen years old, and at seventy and onwards one's temper gets toned down through normal decay, and let us be grateful for it" (145). This suggests a special affinity among tiger, Master, and Narayan (an autobiographical nexus because
Narayan was almost seventy when the novel was written. It conforms to Glen Cavaliero's observation that, "we are all each other's fictional creation, not only in how we set each other, but in how we induce others to see us."  

The linear simplicity of primitive epic provides the plan for the plot construction of the novel and the narrative chronicles the events seen through the protagonist's eyes, occasionally sprinkled with hindsight observations. The narrative in its plotting is unified by Raja, its single protagonist, who while telling his life story cannot be poised between his birth and death as neat boundaries of his tale. Hence the easiest of equilibria to achieve in narrative art that is employing death of the protagonist in the end is not possible here. So, the novelist while designing his plot line concludes with a satisfying end, at the point at which the protagonist comes to terms with himself.

Talkative Man, both slim and compact, is "a self-reflexive text which implicitly associates its author with his oeuvre, a retrospective exhibition which celebrates the creation and continuity of Malgudi over six decades . . . " In spite of its thinness, Narayan's masterly art in plot construction helps, by the end of the novel, to evolve a character, to construct a world and to analyse a predicament. The plot is an adroitly constructed framework for a picture of life, rather than an unfolding action. The incidents are acutely timed, they come in just where they should suit the scheme of the book, they are of an exquisitely orderly mind, arranging everything for its own purpose.

In the beginning the narrator seems to grapple for a plot as the story is not about the protagonist-narrator but it is about a person who has become a subject of talk in the town for quite sometime, and who provides later much material to the narrator for table talk. Like the Indian classical story-telling method where the narrator first gives his introduction and then begins the story from the beginning, here Talkative Man first introduces himself and then begins the story of Dr. Rann and goes on in the strict sense of beginning-middle-end sequence. The plot has its familiar pattern-an outsider intrudes into Malgudi scene, disturbs Malgudi life and finally with his exist, the order is established and Malgudi life returns to its early verve and vivacity—the 'narrative archetype' of Narayan. Commenting on this familiar pattern used in Talkative Man, Harrex says, "Beginning
with a momentous meeting between a vulnerable or ambitious Malgudian and a forceful stranger, the narrative essence of Narayan comedy is established in a pattern of intrusion, involvement, disruption, breach and finally, restoration of order.  

The plot has two episodes—the episode of autorickshaw journey by TM and Dr. Rann in search of a house and the Girija episode—which are not digressions but help TM see Dr. Rann in his diabolical personality and feel the rhythm of his hypocrisy. The first episode when emphatically fixes Dr. Rann in Malgudi surroundings, the second helps the story move towards anti-climax. The plot takes two turns in between these two episodes effecting a rapid pace in narration. The telegram asking TM to send the photograph of Dr. Rann for publication in the newspaper and Sarasa's arrival at Malgudi to reclaim her 'lost' husband after looking at the photograph from newspaper give twist to the plot and these incidents carry the action forward. The plot does not have a conventional denouement because the action does not necessarily end, it only halts, and there remains every possibility for its continuance. The end of the plot is abrupt, but it involves the protagonist in the recognition of the presence of such characters like Rann in the society. The narrative further leaves much scope for the protagonist to encounter such personalities more in future.

The plot follows the story within the story technique used earlier in The Guide and in The Painter of Signs. In the story, Commandant Sarasa is allowed to tell her life story involving Dr. Rann and within Sarasa's story too, there is swinging backward to link something missed, "Already I think I missed an important episode. It's vital link" (67). Sarasa is again allowed to tell her personal life towards the end of the novel where she narrates how even after reclaiming her husband with the help of TM she lost him again. Thus the plot modulates the events to present in the end a wholesome picture of the opposite character in whose association the protagonist is illumined about the elusive nature of a modern husband and the toils of a modern wife.

The plot alludes to Savitri-Satyavan myth in Sarasa's search for her husband but unlike in The Man-eater of Malgudi or in The Painter of Signs, the legend does not provide any structural design to the story here, rather the myth is alluded to make a parody of the relation between
Sarasa and Rann. Narayan evolves a form, as in his later novel *Grandmother's Tale*, suited to putting together his experimental content by weaving the personal story of Sarasa and Dr. Rann in the larger story of Savitri-Satyavan, thus forging a micro-macro symbiosis.

The plot of *The World of Nagaraj* moves around two obsessions of its protagonist, one of his unusual fondness for his nephew Tim, and the other of his penchant for writing the biography of Narada. These two are so finely coalesced in the plot that in the end a vision emerges that despite man's constant struggle against his hostile environment to achieve something in life, he remains as where he was.

The beginning chapter fixes Nagaraj solidly in his family environment informing us of Nagaraj's daily routine, his love-hate relationship with his brother Gopu. From chapter two till chapter ten, the incidents happening to Nagaraj's life are largely determined by Tim. The first conflict of Nagaraj with Tim surfaces in chapter six where Nagaraj sniffs "a faint alcohol flavour in the air" (59) as Tim passes in. The conflict is neither precipitated into a major external conflict nor does it cause any serious strain in the relation between the two, except that Nagaraj in chapter seven compares Tim to an incorrigible tarrier. In chapter eight, Nagaraj's sudden discovery of Tim's discontinuance of his studies takes Tim's story to a climax. In the marriage of Tim with Saroja, the narrative instead of coming to an end gives rise to another conflict as Saroja, in chapter eleven, with her harmonium sound disturbs the calm and quiet atmosphere of the house much to the discomfort of Nagaraj. From chapter two to chapter ten, Nagaraj's obsession with the biography of Narada does not appear much except occasional references made to it. However, from the middle of the narrative till chapter thirteen, it becomes the sole concern of the protagonist. In this part, two episodes appear, i.e. the episode of Kavu pundit and the episode of Bari, each defining the protagonist in his struggle against an hostile environment. But from chapter fourteen the action heads for a resolution, Nagaraj suspending his venture on Narada and accepting Tim as he is at the end, "I have to accept them, that's all. I do not mind anything except that huge harmonium; when its bellows work, the roof will be lifted off the rafters and beams. I dread it" (184).

The plot has two distinct components and each stands on its own in two parts of the narr-
tive. But it is Narayan's skill that integrates these two strands into a single whole. The action and thought of Nagaraj relating to Tim creeps unobtrusively, exactly in the middle, into the thought and action relating to his writing the biography of Narada. In the later half, besides two major episodes, there are small episodes like Nagaraj's visit to a clinic to collect cotton or his search for Tim along with Gopu. But none of these is superfluous, each contributes to the development of the plot and explains the theme. The narrative in the beginning breaks out the information about Nagaraj's two obsessions, "Jayaraj checked himself from enquiring about the book, otherwise he would have to sit there and listen to Nagaraj's grandiloquent plan to write on sage Narada" (3) and "I am fond of my brother's son Tim . . . " (10), it closes in the end with Nagaraj's same obsession, fondness for Tim, and his preparation to write the book at a later period—thus repeating Narayan's favourite structural design.

Dividing a piece of novel into small chapters to arrange the events and actions, to relate the change and continuity of experience with a movement towards an end is an art that Narayan attempted in his first novel *Swami and Friends*. But his lack of structural subtlety resulted there in the rise of a number of "narrative units." However, in *The World of Nagaraj* no chapter is superfluous, even small chapters containing pages as fewer as two and a half (chapter thirteen) show a phase in the psychic development of Nagaraj. Chapters in the novel have uneven lengths, chapter eleven which intertwines two major strands having thirty three pages is the longest. Unlike his first novel, here individual chapters do not have their separate tensions and resolutions, each lends material to the narrative to make it move towards a wholesome ending. When the work is read from the beginning to the end, a problem of life is tackled, a vision of life emerges, a structural symmetry is found. The chapter division into small pieces do not distract our attention and interest, rather it "gives the reader a chance to 'take breath', and it allows for sense and time shifts."59

*The World of Nagaraj* is funny and hunting, it abounds in comic situations, the arrangement of actions in the plot, choice of characters and their thoughts, all contribute to evoke marvellously an enchanting atmosphere in the work. In the novel, conflicts are created but they do not last long nor do they precipitate the matter leading to the heart racking struggle of the protagonist; they are
resolved soon on the surfacial mental plane of the character in a delightful manner. For example, there is the scene where Nagaraj tries to catch hold of his wayward nephew Tim who returns home at midnight with a trail of alcoholic scent. After sniffing he cannot help but asking Tim that he detects a smell "something like a spirit stove of a doctor's." Tim immediately explains:

'Some chap sprayed cau-de-cologne on me."

"Why?"

"They play that kind of joke in our club"

"But your breath also smells when you talk."

"Oh, that chap sprayed it on my lips too" (60).

But next, Nagaraj tries to rationalize the boy's behaviour in order to believe him. And the conflict that would have taken an ugly turn is quickly resolved.

The incidents in the novel contribute to the realization of comic form of the work. Nagaraj's actions in the first part of the work spring from his excessive doting on his nephew. His excess affection for him results in his conflict with his wife and brother Gopu in the first part of the novel while in the second part his conflict with Tim and Saroja, Kavu pundit and Bari are consequential upon his obsession with the writing of the biography of Narada. Nagaraj's mock seriousness in the discovery of Tim's drinking bout, his encounter with Jessu Doss and Kavu pundit and his attempt to put brave face before the hostile Gopu are all at work in the novel to produce comic effect on the plot. All the characters-Nagaraj, Sita, Gopu, Tim, Saroja, Kavu pundit and Bari-are so well invented and sustained in the work that they all contribute to the comic form of the novel. Gopu's arrogance and his highhandedness, Nagaraj's meek acceptance of it, his (Nagaraj's) helplessness before assertive Tim and Saroja, his delight in Sita's constant digs, eccentricity of Kavu pundit and misleading information of Bari about Narada-all aim at arousing suppressed laughter. The events both at the mental and physical level of Nagaraj are so well contrived in the narrative that in spite of all the weaknesses in him, in spite of the lack of strength in his character, we are not tempted to form a prolonged feelings of indignation for him, but we constantly favour him against his "adversaries," our sympathy goes with him in his failure to materialize the "grandiose" plans in life. We
recognize ourselves in him.

GrandMother's Tale is the story of the heroic deeds of the great grandmother of the author. It is recorded by him as narrated to him in patches by his grandmother. The novel in its first part gives an elaborate introduction to the story by way of a biographical sketch of his grandmother's family and the manner in which he enabled himself to record his great grandmother's early life and her adventures. In the middle the novelist records the heroic deeds of his great grandmother in retrieving her husband. The story does not close with the death of the great grandmother of the author but spans beyond the death of her and extends to the death of his great grandfather. The transition from the second part to the end part is smooth, but it is laboured when the narrative moves from first part to the second part.

The plot of the novel is based on the story of the journey of a wife to a distant, unknown land to retrieve her husband and then her return home with astounding success, and life after that till the end of her and of her husband. The plot with the quest, the achievement and the return of Bala, the chief character of the fiction, is a typical plot of heroic romance, a "consciously artful empirical plotting of romance and history." The plot moves in a chronological sequence, it starts from the beginning leaving out the portion not conducive to the development of the story and ends at the end. The main plot of the novel is the biological form taking its shape from the marriage, life and death of an actual, that is Bala's marriage with Viswa, Viswa's running away from home, Bala's fierce determination to retrieve him-the how and why of it-and of the fulfilment of her vow-the how and why of that. The narrative ends not with the death of Bala, the chief character, but extends beyond her death till the death of her husband, till the "disposal of that house" (97) with permanent shifting of her heir to some other place because it represents the final triumph of Bala, of begetting her progeny through Viswa who was supposed to have died. Such plots often tend to be episodic, but the plot of GrandMother's Tale is compact and each event in it leads to the next, having causal relation. The events flow sequentially in time. As the plot progresses, it arouses expectations in the audience about the future course of events. In the middle part, with Bala embarking upon an uncertain course of life, an anxious uncertainty about what is going to happen especially of Bala,
whose determination and moral qualities are such that we have established a bond of sympathy with her, keeps us always in suspense. There are elements of surprise and suspense when one encounters the incidents like Bala's determination to enter the house of Bhatji (Viswa) at Poona or her attempt to end her life by drowning in the tank which is averted at the nick of time or Surma's meek acceptance of Bala's choice. Throughout the novel, we encounter this interplay of suspense and surprise that lends power and vitality to an ongoing plot.

The unity of the novel is the simple unity provided by Bala who connects its events chronologically by moving in time from one to another, and thematically by the continuous elements in her character, of her determination, of her amazonic mental strength and of her perseverance. The plot without doubt, lacks detail, but the novelist knows what to emphasise (Bala's strength in her character) and what to de-emphasise (Bala's death is dismissed in a paragraph). Moreover, the lack of detail of the events does not cause any loss to our interest in the story as the multilayeredness of the character of Bala is oriented, what Paul Cobleys says, towards a "historically true reality."61

Plots in many of the novels of Narayan are loose, they suffer from lack of compactness. But even some of the great novels in the world literature like Crime and Punishment, War and Peace, David Copperfield do not have highly organized plot, and some of the great novelists like Scott, Thackeray and Trollope write novels with loose plots. This looseness as Edwin Muir thinks is due to the limitations of our vision of the world, of our limitation about human mind and these limitations of our imagination determine the principle of the structure of an imaginative work.62 Life is chaotic and complex, it is in a continuous state of flux; it is for the novelist to capture this state of life. We should not assume that novels with organic plots are always better than the novels with loose plots, but what is appropriate for a novelist is to develop and convey his world views, his life values coherently and plainly, which Narayan has achieved to the maximum in his novels. For Narayan's novel catastrophe in Greek sense is not the ultimate fate. Malgudi life has its sense of inevitability and eternal reality, the individual's absurd designs and his corresponding sufferings and embarrassments are not real in ultimate sense, they appear funny in the end. And this happy ending, this satisfying ending found in most of the novels of the author greatly determines the structure of his
narrative as the genre of comedy has loose structure in comparison to the genre of tragedy.

Notes

10. qtd. in Stevick 183.

The action of the novel is influenced by Savitri’s refusal to meet the sexual hunger of Ramani. The plot without doubt, is based on social realism but can also be defined along Lacan’s desire theory:

"The impulse to attain defined goals (material, sexual and egotistical) and to be content once they are attained is what Lacan would call a need. Static characters who exist only to satisfy such impulses are common in some kinds of fiction. The character whose demands exceed needs is subject to what Lacan calls desire, and "seems to be real only in so far as it desires, that is real, actual, or present only in so far as it is deferred or projected into a future... Need aspires to the condition of statis and selfhood, while desire aspires to that of kinesis or subjectivity."

qtd. in Martin 121.


Critics like K.R.S.Iyengar and S.K. Girla are not happy with the sudden transition of the narrative mode of the novel. As if to put all these controversies into rest Narayan says to Ved Mehta, "the reviewers did not realise that the whole story was autobiographical that I myself had been a witness to the experiments."


"The principle in a plot of thought is a completed process of change in the thought of the protagonist and consequently in his feelings, conditioned and directed by character and actions (as in Pater’s Marius the Epicurean)."

R.S. Crane, "The Concept of Plot and the Plot of Tom Jones" *Perspectives on Fiction*, ed. Calderwood and Toliver 306.
20 Martin 54.

21 The plot of Mr. Sampath has comic suspense. In "An Introduction to Metahistory," where Hayden White elaborates upon the modes of conceptualization available to the historian, he thus comments on the possible narrative strategies in the story-telling process:

"Providing the meaning of a story by identifying the kind of story that has been told is called explanation by emplotment. If in the course of narrating his story, the historian provides it with the plot structure of a Tragedy, he has "explained" it in one way; if he has structured it as a comedy, he has "explained" it in another way. Emplotment is the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind".


26 Homi K. Bhabha says,

"... the complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address... function in the name of the people' or 'the nation and make them the immanent subjects and objects of a range of social and literary narratives."


27 "the riches of the represented world, its weightiness and resistance to ideals; its conse-
sequentia! logic and circumstantiality, these I take to be among the attributes one would expect to find in realistic literature."


"narrative is most importantly about 'experience', 'expectation' and 'memory'. reading the end in the beginning and reading the beginning in the end." Cobley 19.


The frame of authority for Sriram that begins from the page thirteen and continues till the end of the novel when Mahatma Gandhi told him, "You have done many wrong things. It's no comfort to think that worse things have happened since," Sriram replies, "Bharati went away to jail, and there was no one who could tell me what to do; no one who could show me the right way." R.K.Narayan, *Waiting for the Mahatma* 171.


Girla 159.


In *The Bachelor of Arts* and in *Waiting for the Mahatma* action comes to a halt, not to a conclusion leaving the impression that the action has the possibility of flowing again. Commenting on the ending of *The Bachelor of Arts*, the plot of which has similarity with the *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Boehmer writes:

*The Bachelor of Arts* is a slice of life biographical tale, meandering, episodic. It ends without denouement or conclusion, as though the action will soon continue: individual narratives form part of the wider haphazard pattern of Malgudi life.


Rimmon-Kenan 23.

37. Rabkin 41.


41. Somerset Maugham writes:

"...a novel is to be read with enjoyment. If it does not give that, it is worthless... It should have a widely interesting theme... the story should have a widely interesting theme... the story should be coherent and persuasive, it should have a beginning, a middle and an end, and the end should be the natural consequence of the beginning. The episodes should have probability and should not only develop the theme, but grow out of the story. The creatures of the novelist's invention should be observed with individuality, and their actions proceed from their characters."

Ten Novels and Their Authors (London: William Heinemann Ltd. 1954) 15-16.

42. qtd in Cobley 16.

43. Brunton 220.

44. Bhabha 297.

45. William Walsh commenting on the orbit of Jagan writes:

"Three areas of the life renounced by Jagan are drawn with the crispest line and shade in The Sweet-Vendor. First, the steady encircling routine of the community of Malgudi, which laps Jagan round with the certainties of history and the stability of current relationships, and which, while testing and proving him in a dozen ways, confirms his identity and value."
Then there is his work as the proprietor of an establishment making and selling sweets. Narayan is much drawn to the truth of character shown in a person's work in which the stretched personality submits itself to impersonal ends, and he describes with precise, effective care the style and method, the ritual and satisfaction of Jagan's work. Then there is the ambiguous and dangerous ground of his relations with his son, the sullen Westernised Mali, whose contemptuous explanations to his bewildered father include all the divisions which so maddeningly separate the two of them, the division of East and West, of Young and Old, of child and parent.

This triple structure makes a composition marred by the combined ease and authority of an artist in full control of his instrument and material...


46 Warder, Indian Kavya Literature vols. 2-4.
47 Martin 117.
51 Meenakshi Mukherjee while commenting on the characteristic of Narayan's protagonists has made this remark: The remark made much before the creation of Raman still holds good for the character.

Meenakshi, Mukherjee, The Twice Born Fiction: Themes and Technique of the Indian Novel in
English (Delhi: Heinemann, 1971) 30-31.


55 Ricour says,

By reading the end into the beginning and the beginning into the end, we learn to read time backward, as the recapitulation of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequences. In this way the plot does not merely establish human action in time, it also establishes it in memory. And memory in turn repeats-re-collects-the course of events according to an order that is the counterpart of the stretching along of time between a beginning and an end.

Paul Ricour, "Narrative Time" 176.


57 Harrex 82.

58 Harrex 82.


61 Copley 49.

62 Edwin Muir regards the looseness in plot structure as not of any particular author but of the human mind. He says, "This mind, trying to see life whole, has to narrow its focus, or instinc-
tively does so; it renounces in order to gain; it withdraws itself to one remove from life that it may see life clearly."


63 W. H. Hudson does not think that the organic novel, as such, "is on a higher artistic plane than the loose novel . . . a really great novel is likely, as a rule, to approximate rather to the loose than to the organic type."