Writer to Reader

A writer can never really ignore the factor of the reading his text by persons other than him because a text gets its meaning only when it is read; a reader as much as a writer produces text by reading it, and there remains always a reciprocal relation between the text and the reader. As Jonathan Culler puts it:

As a linguistic object the text is strange and ambiguous . . . We reduce its strangeness by reading it as the utterances of a particular narrator so that models of plausible human attitudes and of coherent personalities can be made operative. ¹

To understand the meaning of the text, to understand the purpose of the maker of it behind the making, reading of the text (either in print or in film etc.) is a must because narrative structure and meaning function only in its process of reading. Narratives do not contain a definite meaning that sits in the words waiting for someone to find it. Meaning comes into existence only in the act of reading. A text unless it is read fails to elicit the response of the reader and the result will be that the meaning embodied in it will die out. To put it in the words of Wolfgang Iser:

a text can only come to life when it is read, and if it is to be examined, it must therefore be studied through the eyes of the reader. ²

The writer in the course of making the text becomes a reader of it; he becomes its critic, he interprets it, creates an image of himself and another image of his reader who possesses a special privilege of rewriting the story, and when the author and his created self find complete agreement, it entails the most successful reading. Next, when the text makes to the reader, the real person reading, it involves itself in the reader, gets its meaning changed in the process of reading. Modern criticism includes the reader as an essential feature of the narrative situation and fixes the concept
of literary meaning between the narrator and the reader, because more successfully they coalesce in regard to the questions of value and meaning, more forceful the text becomes.

The text that begins in reading a book does not remain the same by the time it is finished; it undergoes a sea change, it elicits different responses leaving, what Martin says,

in its wake not a constructed meaning but a variety of hypothetical viewpoints depending on how the reader has filled in meanings, questioned social practices, and tried to find positive alternatives to the inadequate views represented in the text.  

The reader when enters the text, s/he becomes the source of interpretative diversity since each reader brings to the narrative a different set of experiences and expectations. According to Norman Holland, each reader “find(s) in the literary work the kind of thing we characteristically wish or fear . . .”"1 By the defence mechanism a reader maintains psychic equilibrium that helps him/her to fantasize freely about the text. S/he poses questions, interprets it, answers it and thus becomes a second writer.

Most narratives in their bid to be enchanting and engrossing have a metaphorical aspect where deviating from an expected line they offer something different that creates suspense and arouses curiosity in the reader. In reading the text and while moving towards its end, varied impressions on it crop up and if the end comes without satisfying the reader’s aesthetic pleasure, the text fails. Thus the text in the course of its reading moves towards conclusion by the process of re-presentation. To quote Miller,

A fiction story is like joke . . . The closer to the last word you can get the climax, the better. Nobody needs a book to get to the middle, you read a book to get to the end and you hope the end is good enough to justify all the time you have spent reading it.  

The text, the interpretation and the events are three aspects of a story. 6 A narration involves a selection of events and this selection of events does not allow randomness, but a continuity of subject matter that can make the chronological sequence of the events significant. This sequence of
events flowing in “natural” time becomes the object of a story while the text is the sign of a story. In the process of reading, the constructed sequences of events become interpretant. Fictional events have no independent standing unless they are entextualized, they embody meaning and value only when they are created by and with the text.

Element of story is most crucial to a work of art where the reader finds his/her own image, which places him/her in space and time. As Bryan Appleyard asserts,

> At each moment of our lives these stories place us in space and time. They console us, making our lives meaningful by placing us in something bigger than ourselves. May be the story is just that we are in love, that we have to feed the cat or educate the children. Or may be it is about a life long struggle for salvation or liberation. Either way—however large or small the story—the human impulse is to make sense of each moment by referring it to a large narrative. We need to live in a world not of our own making.

A novel fails to invite the reader’s response if it lacks story element. Importance of story element as well as the manner of telling the story cannot be ignored by any writer while presenting his work. Story-telling is a specialised art intended to give delight, and in the process the narrator exercises power over the narratee, a power of mesmerising, so as to influence the listener according to his wish. In the process of making the narrative, a writer creates suspense, arouses curiosity by adopting various devices so as to keep his reader engaged.

Narayan is aware of the role of the reader in rendering meaning to the text. He knows writing is not only from the author to the reader but also it is the voice of reading. So in his story, he leads the reader to get absorbed in reading, enables him/her to drift towards imaginary identification with the character, prepares him/her to get lost willingly in reading. He unobtrusively controls and decontrols reader’s response to the text, but at the same time gives him/her certain freedom to interpret it; of course, without allowing much to deviate from his (author’s) line of intention. Narayan is not open about his art or competency in story telling. Talking to Ved Mehta, he characterized himself as an “inattentive quick writer who has little sense of style,” while in another occasion he
says, "I'd be quite happy if no more is claimed from me than being just a storyteller. Only the story matters, that's all." This conflicting nature in the author's pronouncements about his storytelling art has evoked diverse comments from critics. Critics like Henry Miller recognize him as a "born storyteller," to Antony West, he is a "first-rate storyteller" while detractors like Harsharan S. Ahluwalia castigate the author saying that most of his novels are not well made and he fails to exhibit "that exploratory quality which gives to a creative work depth and range." Narayan's art of storytelling is not that simple and spontaneous as it seems to be, he has his "own artful ways of concealing art," and his novels have a sense of shape whose "subtlety is sometimes revealed incrementally."

India has a rich tradition in the art of storytelling. The Mahabharata, the Ramayana, Puranas, Mahakavyas with their legends and myths have caught the imagination of the writers and appealed the audience in an infinite variety of ways from time immemorial. Sometimes adhering to conventional rules and sometimes deviating from it, narrators of these stories, in their manner of storytelling, play to the imagination of the audience leaving them to interpret the story in their own ways. Ananda Vardhana in his Dhvanyaloka asserts the supremacy of the poet's creativity over conventional rules of composition, and at the same time argues that it should be controlled by laws of inner coherence and unity of aesthetic appeal. Ancient story tellers not only transmitted their own world vision to the audience in a subtle way but also endeavoured to maintain inner coherence of their story for rendering aesthetic pleasure. This ingenuity in storytelling has made Kavyas and Mahakavyas of ancient India, stories from the Upanishadas and Jatakas defeat the vagaries of time and enabled them to merge into history blurring the frontiers between history and fiction.

With the emergence of nationhood in India during late nineteenth century, the Indian writer refused to accept western image of India, he rather tried to present in his writing the image of India highlighting the achievements of Indian culture. He reasserted the identity of the nation suited with the self-respect of the community. While commenting on this, David C. Gordon says:

(He) . . . rejects colonizer's myths and he counters them with his own myths.

He seeks to resume contact with his pre-historical continuum and he tends
to emphasize the uniqueness and superiority of his cultural heritage.\textsuperscript{14}

Writers like Bankim Chandra Chaterjee, Rabindra Nath Tagore created an Indian self-image and enriched their writings by describing or dramatizing human experience based on the literary materials and means of ahistorical past. In line with these writers R.K. Narayan made an effort in the recovery of the lost Indian self by using the myths, legends, folk tales, allusions culled from Indian classical literature. As Ashis Nandy puts it succinctly, the element of Indianness "plays an important role in the elites self identity and it is in no small measure, thanks to men like Narayan that this should be so."\textsuperscript{15} However, Narayan is not totally averse to western story-telling method, a writer as he is, being fed with western literature since his formative years, he along with Indian classical story-telling method uses western devices like allegory, symbols, imagery, irony, parody and latest filmic devices etc. to make his story interesting. In his work devices commonly used in realistic literature play with the devices used in romantic fiction, effecting a balance between randomness and causality, between inexplicable accident and inevitable destiny.

In his first novel \textit{Swami and Friends}, Narayan invites reader's response in various ways; the title comes to the mind first. Titles in Narayan's novels are most often deceptive, sometimes they are ironical, they tell something but inform other things, they either mislead the reader in the beginning or from the beginning. The title "Swami and Friends" in its first reading conveys us a meaning about the possible material in the text, but when the text begins to read it negates the first impression that has been carried so far. By purposefully withholding the full name Swaminathan and shortening it to Swami, commonly understood as an ascetic, Narayan envelops the title with a kind of enigma. The reader in his first reading feels the urge to know if the story when unfolds will not tell about a real Swami? All the misconceptions about the title, however, get removed at the moment we enter the text and gradually we feel that the author's naming of the title after something that does not come to the reader's immediate experience is only to entice him/her to plunge headlong into the story. As the story unfolds, we encounter not a real Swami but Swaminathan, a school boy with whom we identify our days of boyhood.

The author in the novel plays most often with the expectation of the reader either by under-
statement or by deliberate pretention about the innocence of the character. The use of this literary
device of irony is not simple in the work. For example, in the following passage, the victim of irony
is not Swaminathan but the reader because his/her expectation from a normal pupil (Swami) about
the attitude s/he bears towards a teacher is suddenly defeated by the character’s inside views:

The teacher called for home exercises. Swaminathan left his seat, jumped
of the platform, and placed his note-book on the table. While the teacher
was scrutinizing the sums, Swaminathan was gazing on his face, which seem
so tame at close quarters. His criticism of the teacher’s face was that his
eyes were too near each other, that there was more hair on his chin than
one saw from the bench, and that he was very very bad-looking (4).

The irony here is at the expense of the reader as the reader was subtly informed in the beginning
that Swami was not an ordinary boy expected to behave in a normal way but he was a boy full of
mischief having the potentiality to do something unusual. Thus the author plays with the intelligence
of the reader and invites him/her to share his attitude towards Swami.

The novel is rich in animated scenes that tempt the audience to watch it without necessarily
getting involved in the experience of the character. The founding of the cricket club where the boys
discuss and argue over its naming and over their practice on ground, Swami’s efforts to convince
his grandmother of the intricacies of the game are some of the animated scenes that enthral the
reader. The scene where Swami prays god to turn pebbles into coins prepares the reader to enter
a child’s world filled with fear, superstition and anger. This scene along with the scene where
Swami “took a pinch of earth, uttered a prayer for the soul of the ant and dropped it into the
gutter” (33) suggests a world where the reader following Narayan can reformulate children’s world
in literary idiom.

The characteristic of a modern novel is a story without an ending. A story that does not offer
a traditional closure, that offers scope for the reader to indulge in various interpretations “cut
fiction free from determinate meanings to open a space for the reader’s personal involvement in the
story.” 16 Swami and Friends ends on a note of suggestive ambiguity offering multiple meaning. The
author is not categorical if Swami's gift to Rajam was received by him, if their friendship was restored or if Mani remaining "inscrutable" suggested the opposite. He leaves it to the reader to construe his/her own meaning about the fate of the bond of friendship between the two, whether they parted ways or with Swami's gift Rajam pardoned him. He (the author) is non-committal to convey any message with finality and leaves the scope for reaching conclusion according to one's own interpretation. The ending of the novel is remarkable for another reason, i.e. the use of a cinematic device—the device of long shot. At the station, with the departure of the train, Swami keeps on looking the moving train till the "red lamp of the last van could be seen for a long time, it diminished in size every minute and disappeared around a bend" (178). The novel ends inviting the reader to guess if that was the last meeting between Rajam and Swami.

The title "The Bachelor of Arts" of Narayan's second novel, like the first, is fraught with irony. The first line of the story, "Chandran was just climbing the steps of College Union." (1), gives us a proper name around whom many characters will gather who will largely determine the life role of the "fixed" character. Chandran, the fixed character, whose degree the title bears and whose role determines the action of the novel invites the reader to ponder over the question if his actions are in conformity with the degree he holds or, in other way, if the academic qualification he possesses is of any practical help to him. Titles are "apt summaries of stories after we have read them" but "they usually appear enigmatic when we began." 17 Who possesses the degree "The Bachelor of Arts," how far his degree does help him in life, how does the degree help him improve his personality are some of the questions that come up to mind in the beginning. As the story moves to answer these questions, the reader encounters many situations that put Chandran's degree in poor light and expose the hollowness of his academic achievement. Despite having the degree of Bachelor of Arts, he remains unemployed, cherishes illusions and he drifts in life. By the time the story ends, by the time the reader gets to know what s/he is supposed to know about the character, intention of the author in giving the title "The Bachelor of Arts" to his story becomes clear. The author and the reader share identical views on character's possession of the degree, and the reader accepts the ironic stance rendered to the qualification of the character by the
Every text prefers to go slow for its survival simply by delaying the action in it. If the text answers quickly any problem posed in it, it would come to an untimely end, reader's interest would not be heightened, the work would fail to give delight. Retardation of a narrative's progress produces suspense and plays upon the sense of curiosity in the reader that makes the text more pleasing. In *The Bachelor of Arts*, movement of the story is slowed down in the middle during the marriage negotiation of Chandran. The wrangle over the horoscope matching creates suspense and its continuance for quite sometime arouses the reader's curiosity as to what would happen next. This what would happen next, as Forster says, "is universal and that is why the backbone of a novel has to be a story. Some of us want to know nothing else—there is nothing else—there is nothing in us but primeval curiosity..." The author does not supply information immediately about the fate of the marriage proposal. The match maker Ganapati Satrigal fails to appear in time to carry the proposal to the parents of Malathi as "he had to spend some months in the village. There was some dispute about the lands; and also some arrears had to be collected from tenants" (73-74). Reader's interest is heightened at the false hopes raised in the narration, ([Next Ganapati Satrigal came with good news" (75)]) and suspense is created with Satrigal's delay in breaking the news of the result of his visit to D. W. Krishna's house, it is compounded when he gives false hopes like "I am certain that this marriage will take very soon. Even as I started for their house a man came bearing pots of foaming toddy; it is an excellent omen. I am certain that this alliance will be completed” (78). Repetition of the words "I am certain that" by a trustworthy person reinforced by folk beliefs gives false leads to the reader and by the time the actual position is known, much delay is caused. After the failure of the marriage proposal, reader's usual expectation is to see Chandran in search for a job and then settle in life, but by introducing the sanyasi episode in the text the narration is lengthened, reader's curiosity is aroused to know about the fate of Chandran. But the author does not prolong the episode as from the beginning the reader anticipates a happy ending to it, because he/she knows that Chandran's donning of the garb is not out of inner transformation but it is an impulsive act, "He was a *sanyasi*, the simplest solution. Shave the head, dye
the clothes in ochre, and you were dead for aught the world cared” (102). The episode is dismissed in little textual space, the narrative moves quickly towards a satisfying end.

The reader of Narayan finds often repetition of a similar motif in his novels, s/he finds a network of intertextual reference. In Swami and Friends, we find the first appearance of two motifs to which the writer is to return repeatedly in his later novels, one of a character’s running away from Malgudi and then to return to it, and the other of the religious rituals a character takes up to produce more money. Swami being afraid of a hostile surrounding runs away from home only to return later. This motif has its reappearance in The Bachelor of Arts when Chandran runs away after getting frustrated in love, only to return later. Another motif found in the novel to be repeated in a different form in the writer’s later novel The Guide is that of Chandran’s donning the sanyasi robe. Chandran knows he is a fake, he feels guilty for betraying the villagers who repose great faith on him, and at the call of his conscience he discards the garb but Raju, the protagonist in The Guide could not do this, he succumbs to the faith of the villagers.

In Narayan’s novels most of the bizarre incidents and human predicaments are pregnant with meaningful roles. Cyclical construction of his novels is a mechanism just laughable because “when every effort the player makes by a fateful interaction of cause and effect, (it) merely succeeds in bringing it back to the same spot.” Narayan’s novels have least possibility of tragedy, his characters are seldom driven to the boundary situation, but underneath his comic vision there always runs a tragic vein.

The Bachelor of Arts ends in a happy note but the anguish of Chandran in his failure to possess Malathi has a muted tragic strain:

The opposite house shone in the greenish brilliance of two Kitson lamps. People were coming to the house, women wearing lace-bordered saris, and men in well ironed shirts and upper clothes-guests to the Wedding Notice ceremony. Chandran ran down the street, chased by the Kalyani raga, and the doom-doom of the drummer.

Chandran had fever that night. He had a high temperature and he
raved (92).

Thus the gala celebration where community takes part is juxtaposed by the loneliness of an individual and this juxtaposition heightens the pathos, a motif to be repeated in *The Guide*.

To read a novel expecting satisfactions from a closure is what many people find enough to do. The gap initially created between the author and the reader, the author always trying to transmit his message and the reader always gasping for its acceptance, is closed when the reader at the end receives decisively the communication sent by the author. So, many people think it perverse to deny the author possession of an authentic sense of what he has said. Ambivalent ending in *Swami and Friends* leaves two possibilities—either the friendship between Swami and Rajam was restored or the friendship between them was not restored. The practice of this type of ending is not followed in *The Bachelor of Arts*. The reader at the end of the reading process reaches an overall meaning “which makes sense of the text as a whole.” There is no ambiguity in its reading, no oscillation between multiple possibilities. The reader arrives only at one end, that Chandran gets well settled in life, marrying and earning moderately and pulling on satisfactorily in his new found love.

The first thing that strikes the reader in Narayan’s next novel is the naming of its title, “The Dark Room,” that deviates from his earlier practice of giving the name or qualification of the character as title to his novels. The title “The Dark Room” is symbolic, it stands for stifled environment that causes psychic darkness of the protagonist for want of mental freedom. It is metaphorical as it informs of a kitchen usually occupied by a housewife; it, what Harrex says, “symbolises the emotional emptiness and domestic claustrophobia which can result from a circumscribing marital orthodox.” After reading the story, after getting its meaning, the reader finds the title as an apt summary of the story as the domestic environment of the protagonist is like a dark room that muffles her freedom and chokes her personality. The reader conversant with the *Ramayana* responds immediately to the title by drawing an analogy between it and the kopagriha (the dark room) of Queen Kaikei who sulked there to express her anger at the decision of King Dasaratha to coronate Sri Rama, or the reader having knowledge of the *Mahabharata* can draw a parallel
between the story of Savitri and the story of Sati Sumati who suffered in the hands of her womaniser husband and wept in her kitchen.

The title apart from its symbolic significance is ironic. The writer’s orthodox mind does not allow his narrative to go beyond time or challenge the conventional morality by allowing his protagonist to step out of her home in search of an independent living. He creates Savitri in the mould of a tragic character whose pathos are distinctly heard on tired afternoons at her home or on the banks of the river at dark night or even in temple shanties in late evening. But the way the author subjects Savitri to sulk in the dark room, the way in which she marks her protest against her domineering husband smacks of author’s disapproval of her action. The Dark Room, as M.K.Naik observes “is an ironically symbolic where the protagonist Savitri (literary “she of the Sun”) sulks”.

The reader finds echoes of similar themes in many literary works but treated differently. First, the Mahabharata story of Savitri-Satyavan is inverted to serve the purpose of the novelist in the sense that the legendary Savitri refused to leave her husband Satyavan even in his death, begged his life from the god of Death and succeeded. But Savitri of Narayan runs away from her husband and even contemplates to commit suicide. By bringing Savitri back to family fold Narayan makes a parody of A Doll’s House of Henrik Ibsen where Ibsen’s heroine Nora Helmer in a similar situation deserts her husband ignoring the call of her family duties. The reader while reading the story also recalls the play Candida of George Bernard Shaw where the heroine Candida does not run away from her home, rather succeeds in convincing her egoist husband Morell of the practical help that a wife provides to her husband. The Dark Room stands in between these two extremes.

Realism and romance interplay in Narayan’s novels, one meets the rational satisfaction and the other the emotional pleasure of the reader, one involves objectivity and the doctrine of artless causality and the other involves inexplicable things in life like chance, accident, co-incidence and providence. In Swami and Friends, the cartman’s crossing the forest road at the time when Swami was lying unconscious is a co-incidence while in The Bachelor of Arts, the meeting between Chandran and Kailash at Madras that changes the course of the story is a chance happening. The
Dark Room is set on a realistic plane, it authentically picturizes the pathetic condition of a dependent housewife in an orthodox family set up. But realistic novels cannot always satisfy the irresponsible curiosity of the reader and the suspense built up on a realistic narrative plane cannot always be defused by rational explanations. So, there is the need for “silhouetting.” In *The Dark Room* co-incidence and providence play their part in making the story interesting and taking it forward. These elements also retard the movement of the narrative by delaying its denouement. It is sheer co-incidence when Gangu finds both Ramani and Shanta Bai present in the film hall, the incident that precipitates the conflict in the domestic life of Ramani and Savitri. Mari’s presence along the riverside when Savitri is on a suicide bid is providential and in her rescue immediate resolution of the story is averted, the narrative gets a new lease of life.

*The Dark Room* evokes a kind of melancholic strain and seriousness. But Narayan does not keep up the high tension for a long time lest it will stiffen the reader’s nerve. So he introduces subdued comic elements in scenes where tragic intensity is packed. For example, the gloominess enveloping the scene where Savitri asks Ponnie some fundamental questions about the exact relation between husband and wife is partly removed with the introduction of alternating humour between Ponni and Mari. In another scene, in chapter eleven, the tension created by the deep concern of the children over the possible fate of their mother is mitigated by their useless prattle with Ranga.

The first and foremost involvement of a reader in a piece of literary text is his/her response to the language used in it, because language is the medium the writer employs to articulate and realize his perceptions, thoughts and feelings. It plays an important role in fiction as Bahartrhari declares, “There is no awareness in this world without being interpenetrated with language. All cognitive awareness is interpreted with language.” The reader analyzes the text, interprets it by a reference to what he already knows of the language. Language is a component of aesthetic significance, it is functional to the world view of the writer:

for language by generating tensions and energies alone can, and does, transform specific instances, i.e. the local meaning of the text, into a free
standing form, a concrete universal, and, in the second, it alone can manipulate a framework of “verisimilitude” or “recognizable relation to life.”

Narayan uses language in its barity, in which Malgudians talk and think. No doubt, he sometimes fails to “explore(ing) the fuller, deeper possibility of the language,” but in some of his novels the reader notices such passages where skilful use of language heightens the effect, clears the intended meaning. In the following passage the reader will mark how the repetitive use of a single word “comfort” informs meaningfully the intention of the author behind its use:

She grew home sick. A nostalgia for children, home and accustomed comforts seized her. Lying here on the rough floor, beside the hot flickering lamp, her soul racked with fears, she couldn’t help contrasting the comfort, security, and un-loneliness of her home. When she shut the door and put out the lights, how comforting the bed felt and how well one could sleep! (189). (emphasis added).

Use of the word comfort has an ironic effect, the reader finds how Savitri reacts to this word by comparing her life at home to the life in the temple and how the word embedded with material and physical states of her life does not fill in the inner vacuum of the character about which the writer has so far been informing us.

In a fictional work, symbols, metaphors and imagery form a major part of narrative action, and through them significance of a work is heightened. Martin says, “... form is not solely a matter of how the story is told; it can involve the structure of image, metaphor and symbol that emerge from the action.” In Narayan’s work, besides these elements of style, the reader further finds the use of colloquialism, allusions, suggestiveness etc. that serve, apart from the function of embellishment, the task of transmitting the meaning vividly. In Swami and Friends and in The Bachelor of Arts one does not come across remarkable handling of style but in The Dark Room, the style is manipulated to make it functional. Vivid imagery that Narayan uses in one of the scenes in the novel is remarkable for the fact that it enlivens the otherwise sombre domestic atmosphere of Savitri and
it plays a functional role in associating the past joyful days of the protagonist with her present sufferings. The scene on the eve of the Navaratri festival where Ranga, in his preposterous turban “stooping into the casks and bringing out the dolls, looked like an intoxicated conjurer giving a wild performance”(33) is vivid in description. Again the dialogue of Pereira where he says to Kantaiengar, “A rugged piece of timber like you can be kept anywhere, but wouldn’t a fresh rose need a lot of air, light and this large table, to keep it alive?”(36) is marked for its apt comparison. By comparing Shanta Bai to a fresh rose and later by revealing her sex appeal through suggestive lines, “She compressed her lips and jerked her head in the perfect Garbo manner . . .”(87-8), Narayan describes subtly her power of enticement, exposes her coquettishness and achieves maximum effect by using minimum words. Some of the passages in the novel bristled with Tamil spirit of the dialogue and Tamil colloquialism as found in the talks among the servants of Ramani’s household,

Ranga: . . . and what should a father do?
The Cook: You will have to run upto the shop now and bring vegetables.
Ranga: Certainly, but listen. What should a father do?
The Servant-maid: . . . What do you know of the fire in a mother’s belly when her child is suffering? (50-51),
sprinkle local colour on the language that helps the narration gain credibility.

The English Teacher marks the beginning of Narayan’s naming the title of his works after the profession of the protagonist, as his next four novels are named after the vocation that the main character pursues. But the title like most of Narayan’s titles has an ironic slant, though very mild, and the irony lies in the fact that the protagonist Krishna himself being a college teacher takes lessons from a nursery school teacher. The novel being a veiled autobiography reflects, without much loss to artistic pleasure, author’s own self, his views on English system of education and his spiritual journey.

The novel in its first half remains a quest for domestic bliss and in the second half it is a search for spiritual bliss, and both these parts are built on the principle of pattern, namely that of
balance, balance between realism and romance, balance between sadness and happiness. It runs on a reality model in its first half and turns to literature model in its second part, for which there is a slight affectation in balance. In spite of the difference in genre, the novel does not suffer from the process of "naturalization" because the literature model in the second part does not, what Rimmon-Kenan says, "involve a mediation through some concept of the world." The unique nature of the experience of Krishna, first in his loss of his dear wife after a short marital bliss, then in his attainment of bliss by spiritual communion with his dead wife, is a one time experience of his self. It is to be seen how does Narayan, while following different genres in the same work, achieve the process of naturalization working on the principle of pattern. It is also to be seen how does the materials and the attitudes appropriate to different genres flow in and out of one another, how does the writer establish a pattern between sadness and muted laughter of a solitary individual. The naturalization is achieved in the first part by balancing the domestic joy with odd domestic quarrels. Even in the highly patho evoking scene where Susila is inching towards death, the gloominess is temporarily removed with the humour of the doctor, with the protagonist's hope for a possible recovery of his wife and above all, by his own generalisations on life. In the second half, during Krishna's journey towards spiritual ecstasy, the hopes are at times marred by despair, and the joys in life are punctuated by the burden of life. The overall gaiety in the first part is overshadowed by the pathetic manner in which Susila dies and the overall poignancy in the second part is eclipsed at the expectation of a possible happy ending with which the novel ends.

The novel has two endings; the first when Susila dies and the second when Krishna attains a sort of epiphany. The first ending with a seemingly "finalized hypothesis" misleads the reader who asks in disbelief if it is the end of the story:

There is no more surprises and shocks in life, so that I watch the flame without agitation. For me the greatest reality is this and nothing else... nothing else will worry or interest me in life here after (115).

The very emphatic tone in the passage also suggests subtility, that there is something kept hidden from the reader to come next, tempting him/her for further reading. In both the parts, before each
ending, there occur the delay in the movement of the narrative achieved with the help of detours and digressions. When the suspense of the reader is resolved in the first half with the death of Susila, his/her curiosity arises next to know how the protagonist will cope with the trauma. These two basic affects—suspense and curiosity—make the story tempting and interesting, notwithstanding that the story is intensely subjective. Earlier, Susila's death is delayed by describing her sickbed in minute detail, and with it suspense is heightened, reader's curiosity to know what will happen next is aroused. This delaying action provides the character a context and particularity so as to create fictional illusion. The clinical coolness with which the attack of the disease and its progress are described, the detailed account of Dr. Sankar's treatment, equivocation of Dr. Sankar about the condition of the patient interrupt the reader's desire to know immediately the fate of Susila. Further, introduction of a digression by bringing in an exorcist to heal Susila though delays the progress of the narrative yet it gives delight. A digression, as Benette and Royle say:

> helps us enjoy the suspense involved in delaying a denouement. It evokes Masochistic pleasure that we take in delay. One of the paradoxical attractions of a good story, in fact, is often understood to be its balancing of digression, on the one hand, with progression towards an end, on the other.\(^{28}\)

The reader, in fact, does not want to be diverted at this stage of the story, he is rather anxious to know much of Susila's fate. But at the same time he does not want to miss the scene as it gives him pleasure in all its uncanniness. S/he sympathises with Krishna, Krishna becomes able to evoke empathy in him/her, character-reader identification is achieved. In the second part, unusual, detailed and vivid description of Krishna's experiment in parapsychology with its intermittent failure and success sustains our emotional interest in the subject. Village farmer's long absence from the scene delaying Krishna's quick realization of spiritual joy and the introduction of the head master retard the quick ending of the story. However, the retardation does not affect the reader's pleasure in reading the text as with each step in his (protagonist's) progress, s/he hopes for a happy ending to his trouble.
Krishna's vision of Susila in the second half reminds one of "The Blessed Damozel," where the poet sings the divineness of his beloved who with all her brightness in her body and soul died young. Rossetti’s mental communion with his wife parallels that of Krishna when he (Krishna) speaks of Susila,

Her complexion had a golden glow, her eyes sparkled with a new light, her saree shimmered with blue interwoven with "light" as she had termed it (228),
to celebrate her mortal beauty. Words like “golden glow,” “new light” suggest the angelic qualities in Susila and hint at how Krishna will finally achieve spiritual sight in her association. The American title of the book "Grateful to Life and Death" reminds one of Wordsworth’s sub-title “the growth of a poet’s mind” given to his autobiographical narrative “The Prelude.” However, unlike Wordsworth who presents his narrative in a shaped way, the author (Narayan) hiding himself behind the English teacher takes liberties with the facts of his life, but ends his novel at a meaningful point.

The novel marks a new element hitherto unknown in Narayan's work, i.e. copious presence of rich sensuousness in his style. Spiritual vision that Krishna holds for his wife which fuses with the past experience of her body negates the metaphysical gap. In the following passage the reader will find Krishna's sensory correspondence with the other self of Susila that transcends his fear of loneliness and death:

But by and by, you will hear my bangles clanking and feast your eyes on my dress and form... My dress to-night is a shimmering blue interwoven with light and stars... when you lift your arm you touch me... If you want any evidence of my presence pluck about the jasmine buds and keep them near your pillow to-night (160-161).

All the sensory perceptions like sound, sight, touch and smell bring immediately to the reader’s mind the divine quality attributed to Susila by her husband, it also brings to the mind the spiritual ecstasy that Krishna achieves in his ephemeral association with her.
In the next novel, reader's attention is instantly drawn to the title 'Mr' prefixed to the name Sampath. Author's preference for Mr. Sampath to the original title The Printer of Malgudi seems not without purpose. When the reader re-reads the title after the end of the text, s/he is confused with the suffix 'Mr' attached to the name Sampath. Use of the title 'Mr' for a character like Sampath is ambiguous, and the question if Sampath deserves such a title belongs to the hermeneutic code. "An ambiguity arises when we are unsure whether P is true in the story or whether Q is."29 When one reads Sampath's flirtation, his deceit, his defiant behaviour, one is certainly compelled to refuse him the title, but when one reads his gregarious and altruistic nature, his resourcefulness, his versatility and his ingenuity in balancing different opposite forces, one is tempted to offer the title to him. The reader does not find any clue from the text if the author supports the action of his character or not. Hence s/he remains free to form an independent opinion of him (the character).

Sampath's name is kept withheld for about one-third of the text, though it directs reader's partial comprehension of and attitude towards the character almost from the beginning. Initial information provided to the reader about Sampath's handling of Srinivas's problem singlehanded has a crucial effect on the process of partial understanding of the character and, while reading the text, reader's original impression on him gets modified. By the end of the text, despite Sampath's bizarre behaviour, reader interprets his action even in the light of the attitude s/he formed of him at an earlier stage. Rimmon-Kenan says:

Texts can encourage the reader's tendency to comply with the primacy effect by constantly reinforcing the initial informations, but on the whole they induce the reader to assimilate all previous information to the item presented last.30

The recency effect when placed beside the primary effect makes the reader "indecisive" about how to form a particular opinion about the character, because subtle combination of these two presentations tends to reject both virtues and vices in him (the character) as finalities. The author directs the process of reading, arouses reader's curiosity to know more about the character by
creating in the beginning a halo around Sampath, telling there most of his virtues but without disclosing his name. And at the end, when Sampath’s unlikeable actions are seen against his retrospective actions, the reader partially modifies his/her earlier impression.

As one goes through the text, Sampath’s multifarious personality gets unfolded slowly and gradually by the comments thrown on him by Srinivas and other characters, who observe his actions and gather information and also interpret it. Martin says:

The author is not the only source of meaning, nor is the reader the only interpreter. The characters also usually “read” and interpret the events in which they are involved.31

Srinivas reads Sampath and Ravi in their madness, relates it to the cyclical order of the events, and interprets their actions in that light. For him, Sampath is not the only character in human history to have shown this odd behaviour nor Ravi’s madness is final:

Madness or sanity, suffering or happiness seemed all the same... It didn’t make the slightest difference in the long run—in the rush of eternity nothing mattered (208).

A text has greater chance of survival if it succeeds in tempting the reader to continue reading by stimulating his/her interest. Writers achieve this by slowing down the reading process through the use of devices like delay and gaps so as to create suspense or to arouse curiosity in the reader. After the discontinuity of *The Banner* there is a long gap to inform the reader of its fate and, only at the fag end of the narrative, the reader comes to know of Srinivas’s endeavour to revive it. In between, narrative’s engrossment with the film world, its pre-occupation with the infatuation of Ravi and Sampath with Shanti diminish reader’s curiosity about it (*The Banner*), but reader’s interest in it seldom dies down. However, with the failure of the film project and Shanti’s departure from Malgudi, reader’s interest in it is revived. Narrative line from the time of suspension of the publication of the magazine till its revival is like a long digression, but the digression does not communicate the feeling that the story fails in giving pleasure to the reader. The reader rather derives a chain of pleasures from the film venture and from the comicality involved in the incidents
of infatuation. In another instance, reader’s curiosity to know the exact cause of the death of the oldman is not met immediately, the information is delayed by offering misleading clues and varied interpretations. The text also does not close two gaps dispersed in it, one of the exact cause of the closure of the press and second of what exactly happened to Ravi in the end. But both these information gaps are trivial, not crucial or central to the narrative; reader’s pleasure in the text is not diminished by leaving these gaps open.

The text enlivens reader’s interest by using different devices like eckphrasis, amorce, cinematic device of long shot etc. Eckphrasis is a device that refers “to the power of words to create a picture or to operate like a painting.”32 The following passage shows how the author has attempted, while depicting the scene of the tenants of the old man drawing water from a single tap, to create a picture in words:

It had a wet central courtyard with a water-pipe, and a lot of people were standing around it—four children waiting to wash their hands, three women to draw water, and three men, who had eaten their food, were waiting also to wash their hands. In addition to these there was a little boy with a miserable puppy tied to a string, waiting to bathe his pet (13-14).

When these written words with all their details can help the reader to construct the picture on a canvas, the following passage shows how the use of anti-thetical/parallel words can paint a mental picture about the cyclical nature of the human world:

Dynasties rose and fell. Palaces and mansions appeared and disappeared.

The entire country went down under the fire and sword of the invader, and was washed clean when Sarayu overflowed its bounds. But it always had its re-birth and growth (207). (emphasis added).

Parallel words like palaces/mansions, fire/sword suggest man’s bid to conquer time while anti-thetical words like rose/fell, appeared/disappeared expose the futility of such attempts.

Reader gets prepared from the time of arrival of Shanti with her handbag carrying a cobrahood mark on it for a possible catastrophe for the events. The close up shots of the mark of cobrahood
are played time and again that have an effect of 'amorce.' Reader is made alert to this particular mark and reads in advance of its destructive role, as the cobra is a symbol of deception and sensuality. Mark of cobrahood informing in a subtle way of the secret part of Chandi, the goddess of destruction when is appended to Shanti, she (Shanti) plays the role of a destroyer to the sensuality of Sampath and Ravi. The story ends, as in Swami and Friends, with a filmic device, i.e. long shot that suggests the association of Srinivas with Sampath coming to a likely end:

While turning down Anderson Lane he looked back for a second and saw far off the glow of a cigarette end in the square where he had left Sampath; it was like a ruby set in the night. He raised his hand, flourished a final farewell, and set his face homeward (219).

The next novel The Financial Expert marks an extra-ordinary skill of the writer in allowing the events flow in such a way that the story just tells itself. Realism and romance, credibility and fantasy, experiences and expectations are so beautifully woven into the story of Margayya's obsessions with money and his son that the reader sees in it, "a scheme of composition holding everything together in a vibrant and balanced union." Margayya's penchant for money and his concern for his son are not unrealistic, they do not defy the realism of the referent world of the character, but what charms the reader is the way the story of Margayya's ambition, his rise and fall is told.

The narrative is composed from the beginning in such a way that each part of it builds up the next and conversely the following part depends on the previous. The reader while reading forward goes back frequently to previous incidents happened to protagonist's life, in order to accumulate all the details which may explain Margayya's motivation to hoard money. This retrospective reconstruction helps the reader grasp the rationale behind the protagonist's line of action. Margayya is first seen in his setting exploiting the simple rustics whom he advances loan on an exorbitant rate of interest, and this greed for money has its root in his impoverished childhood. His longing to become rich even by seeking supernatural help is a direct result of loss of his money business under the banyan tree. His chance meeting with Dr. Pal who shows him the path of becoming rich sug-
gests the role of a power beyond human control. Each aspect of Margayya's money minting business and also his skill in manipulating stars while seeking marriage alliance for his son, can only be deciphered in the light of his past life and past actions, as "the progressive integration of information often requires retrospective patterning of earlier parts of the text." The events unfolding the character and the character shaping the events take forward the story, the reader is propelled into it, and at the end s/he feels that Margayya's world is a make believe world, it is "a combination of the comic-mythic sense of lila with an ethical purpose and acceptance of the world..." The way the story moves, the way the events and the character interact offer sufficient scope to the reader to entertain often various guesses as to what is going to happen in the sequel. The reader does not wait until the end to understand the text, the text encourages the reader from the very beginning to start integrating the information, and with each closure of a narrative unit s/he forms an idea, reinforces it with the earlier, assimilates the past to the future and finds in the end that his/her earlier feeling of Margayya not doing right is justified. An awareness is realized that enables him/her to derive a meaning of life. Margayya's phenomenal rise to success, his hoarding of incredible amount of money collected through unethical means disturb the balance in the moral world, reader expects restoration of equilibrium, and with the collapse of Margayya's financial empire reader's expectation is fulfilled; the effect is one of aesthetic satisfaction. As Brooks and others have suggested:

... narratives move from a state of equilibrium or statis through a disturbance of this stability and back to a state of equilibrium at the end. This ending offers a kind of satisfaction of the reader's desire to know.

In the end, the narrative closes, yet it gives rise to another possibility that Margayya is going to open his business again under the large banyan tree, a possibility that opens another possibility for a narrative. Author's act of giving possibility to the protagonist another chance of starting life anew with a change in attitude, with a break in illusion does not offend the reader, rather it offers him/her another scope for satisfaction. To quote Frank Kermode:
Consequently the world divides between those who seek to restore something authentic but lost and those who conclude that the nature of parable, and perhaps of narrative in general, is to be “open”-open that is to penetration by interpretation. They are in Paul Ricoeur’s formula, models for the redescription of the world; they will change endlessly since the world is endlessly capable of being redescribed.37

Margayya’s senseless running after riches, his fantasimal rise to economic prosperity do not offend the reader’s sense of belief as the text directs the attention of the reader in such a way, by manipulating the device of delay from the beginning, that even incredible looks credible, disbelief seems belief. The ritual practised by Margayya does not contribute to his rise immediately or directly. Suspense is compounded; otherwise, reader’s belief in supernatural other than human action would have got strengthened and credibility of the story would have eroded. So delay in Margayya’s becoming rich, his step by step rise in his fortune with the help from a human agent Dr. Pal conforming to a believable chain of events invite an emotional response that the writer desires to evoke in the reader. The author introduces a diversion in between Margayya’s business in pornography and banking by shifting the scene to Madras, as the intervening gap is required to lull the reader’s interest in the protagonist’s senseless chasing after money. However, the narration, during the period, is enlivened with lighter moods, tension created due to the missing of Balu is eased off with mock serious tone in the narrative. This helps in reconciling truth and beauty. An example of this alternating tone,

He suddenly felt that he had kept away too long from the thought of money. It was like a tobacco chewer suddenly realizing that he had been away too long from a pouch (134),

will serve our purpose. Narrative during this period takes a leisurely movement, reader’s curiosity is aroused to know what happens to Balu. But immediate resolution of the complicacy is delayed by introducing an elaborate scene in the train compartment, though a possible happy resolution is anticipated with the introduction of a Police Inspector. But the way the information about him
(Balu) is withheld by the Inspector makes the reader remain still in suspense about his possible fate. To quote Leech and Short in this context will not be out of place:

in presentational sequencing as well as in the other aspects of sequencing
the author’s artistic sense often shows in the way information is withheld,
rather than in the way it is revealed. 38

Two motifs that occurred in Swami and Friends, one, a short ritual to propitiate god to get rich and the other, the character’s running away from home, find repetition here. The motif of Swami’s innocent ritual to turn pebbles into coins takes an elaborate and emphatic form in The Financial Expert, where Margayya to propitiate the goddess of wealth undertakes a ritual including a long fast. Balu’s running away from home to Madras echoes Swami’s escape into the Mempi forest. But with Swami it was an innocent act born of fear for his father, whereas Balu’s action is a revolt against his father. This relation between text to text can also be explored when one juxtaposes the fantasy in Margayya’s worshipping the goddess of wealth to acquire riches and the parapsychological experiment of Krishna in The English Teacher. However, the supernatural practice in The Financial Expert presents a revealing contrast to the exercise in the supernatural in The English Teacher. In Margayya’s practice, Narayan is careful to keep it strictly within the bounds of probability, he is alert to maintain just that degree of strangeness for the reader which ensures that the limits of the credible are not overstepped, but at the same time he throws a certain colouring of imagination over the whole proceeding. The entire episode with the vagueness of the priest, with the cumbersome ritual has without doubt, a distinct touch of fantasy, but it does not erode the reader’s willing suspension of disbelief, while in Krishna’s practice of parapsychology, all credibility is thrown overboard; the difference is due to the nature of experience that the protagonists go through.

The narrative is rich in symbol and metaphor; the powerful metaphor is in the beginning of the narrative, in page eight, where Balu, the little son of Margayya, burns his finger by putting it on the top of the hot metal plate of the lamp. Margayya later explains to his wife why he desisted from preventing his son from touching it, “I wanted to see what he would do alone by himself” (9)
Margayya in his obsession with money when later leaves Balu alone, Balu turns a wreck, he brings indirectly the downfall of his father. The metaphor has a crucial initial information on the process of understanding the text. Balu’s playfulness is burnt in the flames of candle light and Margayya silently observes it, while Margayya’s passion for wealth is burnt under the passion of Balu and Balu remains a silent spectator to it. The writer uses certain symbols in the work which inform forcefully the theme. The huge and prowling banyan tree under which Margayya used to sit is a major symbol. Margayya sitting under the tree and transacting his money business assumes himself playing the role of a protector to poor villagers from financial worries, as the banyan tree getting germinated from a tiny seed and growing through generations protects weary travellers from scorching sun. There are two other minor symbols in the story, one is milk and the other is lotus. Margayya in his search for wealth is told by the priest about the importance of milk as it is one of the ways through which Lakshmi manifests herself. He (Margayya) hurriedly grabs a tumbler of milk, drinks it at a draught. In an earlier occasion, during his bad days, when Lakshmi seemed to desert him, Margayya even could not buy a drop of milk for his son. Dr.Pal helped Margayya procure a red lotus from a deep pond for use in the ritual and next helped him become rich quick by handing him over the right of a pornographic book. Lotus symbolizes Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and the book symbolizes Saraswati, the goddess of learning, but the two are never compatible. So also, as Margayya goes on becoming rich, his son whom he had visualized to become a learned man with his ill gotten money goes astray and plays havoc on him.

In Narayan’s novels chance and co-incidence always play a significant role. As Burner suggests, “the act of ‘telling a story’ cannot simply be understood by interrogating the illogical principles of sense and reference contained in the act’ instead ‘we interpret stories by their verisimilitude,’ their truth likeness or more accurately their life-likeness.” Margayya’s chance meetings with the priest, then with Dr.Pal act as catalytic factors in his rise. However, his co-incidental meeting with Dr.Pal at the gate of Balu where he assaults him suspecting his role in the moral turpitude of Balu brings his fall. This suddenness of events do not offend the reader’s sense of probability because of its verisimilitude. The co-incidence brings what Aristotle calls peripeteia or
reversal, as the possibility of their reconciliation is closed in a way that is unexpected and yet plausible, "an academic man should not have associated with a businessman" (174), grumbled Dr. Pal.

The use of cinematic device in the narrative helps the reader infer the action of the story and makes good sense to emphasise upon the analysis of it. It is a way to help the reader bring knowledges of phenomena outside the text to the reading process. One filmic device used in the novel is parallel editing or cross cutting. Parallel editing is a technique that which would perhaps involve a single shot of the pursued scurrying along alone within the frame, followed by a cross cut to a shot of his pursuer steadily gaining on him.40

The use of the device is seen in the scene where Margayya chases Balu, the latter running with the account book in a bid to throw it into the gutter and the former running after him to retrieve it. Through parallel editing, the author creates suspense by interrupting action and delaying information, but at the same time revealing character's motivation. Moreover, by varying the angle and the size of the scene, attention of the audience is guided, the writer shows only those what he wants to show; no more, no less. The writer has achieved a special effect towards the end of the narrative by using close and medium shots to show the thronging of the infinite number of customers of Margayya's banking business and their attempt to break into his house shouting and demanding their money back.

The beginning of Narayan's next novel Waiting for the Mahatma is a deliberate, elaborate exercise on the part of the author to present his intentions, to lead the reader follow his requirements; it is a sort of programming audience reactions. Authors always place certain items in the beginning so that the text can guide and control the reader's understanding of the text. In the beginning of Waiting for the Mahatma, Sriram's reflection on his mother's physical feature and his wish to have the portrait of a European lady to stare at offer a psycho-analytical interpretation to the text and help the reader study it in this line:

He had, however, concrete evidence of his mother in a framed photo-
graph which for years hung too high on the wall for him to see; when he grew tall enough to study the dim picture, he did not feel pleased with her appearance; he wished she looked like that portrait of a European queen with apple cheeks and waivy coiffure hanging in the little shop opposite his house, where he often went to buy peppermints with the daily money given him by granny (1).

Initial information provided by the author about the working of the protagonist's mind has a crucial influence on the process of perception, and this encourages the reader while s/he goes through the text to interpret everything in the light of it.

Narayan begins from the idea that the narrative satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, and when he brings in Bharati, "slender and young, with eyes that sparkled with happiness" (13), he directs Sriram's action along, what Mulvey proposes, "an active/passive heterosexual division of labour." In fact, Bharati is an extension of the figure of the European lady and Sriram's encounter with her at market place is his first confrontation with the anima figure in real sense. To quote Jung on like situation:

...when animus and anima meet, the animus draws his sword of power and the anima ejects her poison of illusion and seduction. The outcome need not be always negative, since the two are equally likely to fall in love (a special instance of love at first sight).

The narrative in its movement towards the end gathers meanings and attitudes formed in the beginning, and in the end it assimilates all these to solve the indentificational problem of the reader. To quote Mark Currie:

Identification then, for the male viewer is an identification with the narrative action itself as opposed to the passive image of the female icon, as well as being an identification with the bearer of the gaze.

The text uses devices like delay, gap by adopting elements like snares, false clues etc. before the final union of two lovers. Devices so used arouse curiosity, keep the reader in sus-
pense, lengthen the text. Deceptive death of the granny leads Sriram to fall into the trap of the police, misleading clue of Jagadish to India achieving immediate freedom prompts Sriram to spend a considerable period in subversive activity, and all these detours delay the text considerably for an end. A permanent gap remains in the text when till the last the secret of Jagadish always getting first the exact information about the movement of Bharati, first inside the jail and second at Delhi, remains undisclosed. But this, of course, does not make us lose interest in reading the story. Secrets and sequence remain at odds, novelists often overlook the secrets. Frank Kermode says:

Authors indeed however keenly aware of other possibilities, are often anxious to help reader behave as they wish to; they "foreground" sequence and message. This cannot be done for large parts of a novel to go virtually unread; the less manifest portions of its text (its secrets) remain secret, resisting all but abnormally attentive scrutiny, reading so minute, intense and slow that it seems to run counter to one's "natural" sense of what of novel is . . . 44

In Narayan's novels, often similar scenes and situations repeat itself. In The Bachelor of Arts, Chandran after his return home from eight months wanderings finds that his mother has kept his room clean and his knick-knacks in order. A similar scene appears in Waiting for the Mahatma. Sriram returning home from his hybernation when finds his granny "dead" goes inside his room, checks his old trunk and finds that everything is just as it had been.

The Guide begins in the middle and from the beginning its language imposes upon its reader a perception of bits of information, determines the attitude of the reader towards the text and sets the initial polarity between Raju's aim of revealing his loquaciousness and guarding secret of his past. The opening passage ([Raju welcomed the intrusion . . . the hard earned coins of jail life (5-6).]) contains definite article the twenty seven times. Repetition of 'man' and 'other' with article the is a game plan of the author to make the reader a party to the situation, to put him/her inside the scene. Specific use of the definite expression the man establishes the identity of the man as one who will play a vital role in the story and it brings the reader closer to the character and the
situation. The man who later turns out to be Velan, and Raju, the protagonist are brought closer to each other, thus foreshadowing their intimate relationship. The words "intrusion" and "welcome," "amused" and "embarrassed" are antithetical. They relieve Raju from "loneliness" and carry the presupposition that something has happened to Raju which is to be revealed. So the language used in the beginning generates a complex reality, evokes a sense of ambiguous relationship between Raju and Velan. It stirs the reader's intuitions concerning the ambiguity of the text. Moreover, the words signify the undercurrent of tension and attitude which are of some communicative import in the story. Intrusion of Velan into the life of Raju at a crucial period (when he is struggling to face the outside world after an ignominous jail life) suggests also an intrusion into his future life. Thus there is a psychological build up in the beginning of the text in which the reader pieces together the anxiety of Raju about his identity and the faith reposed on his appearance by the villager. The passage with the choice of words like "loneliness," "embarrassed," "trembling," "dreading," "waited" etc. confirms the mystery surrounding the real identity of Raju, which is next deflated by the garrulity of Velan unrelated to the main subject. All these compound the mystery and create suspense. The last sentence satisfies partly reader's curiosity by revealing Raju's cause of fear, that is, any possible disclosure of his past "jail life," but, again, it is heightened by withholding the reason for his going inside the jail. So, the opening passage reveals only such information what the author trickles into it, what he feels the reader will want to know the most. In spite of more space being taken by "the other man" in the passage, Raju attracts our attention emphatically because he is the prime mover of the conversation, initiator of action, a fact that suggests he will take a superior position in future. The use of end focus principle by dropping hints at Raju's jail life achieves dramatic effect, it makes the story oscillate between Raju's past and his present. In the opening passage, Raju is seen trying to assert his individuality, Velan is seen gazing at him "reverentially" and then taking his seat "two steps below the granite slab in which Raju was sitting." This situation makes Raju an abstraction, an object who fits his (Velan's) concept of a godhead. Velan carries this sense till the last, the climax of it is in his humility and submission when he, even after listening to Raju's past sinful life, declares, "I don't know why you tell me all this, Swami. It's very kind of you to address, at such
The meaning of the possible theme and the attitude towards the protagonist provided in the beginning of the text is carried for a considerable period till Raju sheds off his hypocrisy and resolves to "chase away all thought of food . . . eradicate all thoughts of tongue and stomach from . . . mind" to "help the trees bloom, and the grass grow" (213). Reader's initial impression of Raju as a hypocrite is carried too long, it is reinforced with his confessional statement. Then suddenly his readiness for self-sacrifice gives a severe jolt to reader's anticipation of Raju's death as a sinner or to his/her expectation of the exposure of his (Raju's) deception. Reader tends to reject his/her former impression of him in favour of the latter impression that Raju dies a "saint" sacrificing his life for redeeming the mankind. After full reading of the text, our initial unlikeability for him gives place to our sympathy and even after the closure of the text, his sincerity, his repentance, his openness, instead of his hypocrisy and his deception, linger on our mind.

The ending of the novel highlights paradoxically the manipulative power of the authorial narrator and the freedom of the reader. Almost till the end, the author guards the secret of the manner of the ending of the text, he leads the reader falsely to expect the kind of end the novel is heading for. However, at the end, the author employs self-imposed limitation of method, he does not allow it to become what Kermode says, "a mere debauch of imagination."45 In an earlier occasion when Velan rejected Raju's assertion of his fraudulence, the writer expected his reader to do more work in interpreting the narrative, tempted him/her to complete the meaning of the novel, allowed the narratee (Velan) to determine the outcome of the narrative rejecting the intention of the narrator (Raju), and encouraged the reader to make what s/he wanted to do with it. The author is not categorical of Raju's change, he still envelops him in his usual ambiguity, he only invites the reader to form his/her own opinion about Raju. The end of the text with Raju's final words, "Velan, it is raining in the hills, I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my feet, up my legs" (221), leaves one looking at words whose meaning is, at best, left suspended and is suggestively spread across the tale. Commenting on the open ending of a modern novel, Alan Friedman says that it is not merely plot or characterization or technique or point of view that changed in the novel; the change
in the novel took place at a more fundamental level, a gradual shift from a closed form to an open form, 'closed' and 'open' referring to the full and final shaping of the flux of experience. The ending in *The Guide* has drawn much critical attention because of the writer's deliberate refusal to impose on the text a 'finalized hypothesis.' The author, by adopting the phenomenon referred to as "undecidability" much praised by the post structuralists, leaves it for the reader to decide on the fate of the protagonist. Commenting on the open ending of the novel, Michael Gorra says:

> And the novel ends. But what happens? Is it really raining in the hills, or Raju simply so weakened by hunger, so near death, that he mistakes the water around his legs for rain? If it is raining, how does he know? And did his fast cause it? And does he even believe what he says, or is he simply giving his audience what they want, one last and probably fatal time? Narayan leaves those questions open, and perhaps one's view of the ending of *The Guide* depends on where one stands in terms of things like swamis, and miracles, and prayer.

In the novel, the reader is struck at the subtle replay of the legend of Bhagiratha who propitiated Shiva and Ganga to bring water from heaven to earth to save the mankind from drought. The legend of Bhagiratha is a prototype of the story of Raju who in his "incarnation" of a saint tries to bring rains to Mangala village. Reader's imagination is caught to another legend lurking in the story, that is the legend of Valmiki who from the sinful life of Ratnakar metamorphoses into a saint. There is yet another mythic layer of meaning in the work which is imparted by Velan. Velan leads Raju by his simple and innocent faith to have a genuine change of heart through penance and fast onto death. In the process, Raju washes away his sin and rises to the status of a "saint". Velan's role reversal from a disciple to a guide is subtle. It reminds the reader of how Lord Krishan as Sarathi (guide) to Arjun dispels illusions enveloping his (Arjun's) mind and how he (Lord Krishna) induces him to take up arms to protect dharma. Raju's war is internal, it is a fight within his self against the adharma brewing in his mind and his weapons are penance and fasting. Commenting on this, Chellappan says:
Right in the beginning Raju is defined only negatively (p. 7), but stripping of layers which are the disguise, he comes closer to his inmost self, and this is in harmony with the cosmic will symbolised by the believing people at one level and the rains, at another. 48

Narayan is not a high priest of symbolism. But he knows how sometimes concrete words fail to evoke ideas, how they fail to transmit the hidden meanings lying in a work of art. He knows that enjoyment of a work is derived very often from guessing things little by little. By associating cobra and crocodile with Rosie and Raju respectively, Narayan is greatly successful in defining their characters while the use of cave and temple, as other symbols in the work, forms an intricate structural network. The cave and the temple, one of secular and of academic interest, the other of religious and faith, mould the life course of the protagonist Raju. The former is associated with his past and his present is involved in the latter. The cave with its erotic paintings and musical notations stirs the latent warmth of human passion in Rosie, a trait that tempts Raju get drawn to her. For Raju, the cave is only a tourist spot and more Marco gets engaged there, more Raju finds scope to flirt with Rosie. The cave in all its darkness spells doom to Raju. If cave taints the body of Raju, the temple sanctifies it. The temple against the background of which Raju’s present is enacted provides Velan his necessary idea of godhead to Raju. Velan’s visualization of Raju as a swami is essentially because Raju is perched on the temple precinct, and this visualization born out of deep faith directs Raju to wear the mask of a swami which later makes his face. The spell of temple is so strong both on Velan and Raju that, even after Raju confesses his sinful past to Velan, he (Velan) refuses to believe him. Raju playing the role of a Swami has his ultimate significance, and he leaves an immediate impact on the villagers which is explicable in terms of this structural background. The symbol of temple becomes more significant when, before Raju takes fast, reports on showing up of an old temple in a dried up lake with the “image of God remaining intact in the inner shrine — none the worse for having lain under water so long” (90) and a crocodile lying dead on the sand come pouring. Like the image of God, Raju’s soul remains pure despite his body being fouled in his sin, and the dehydration of the crocodile informs gradual dying out of Raju’s hypocrisy that had tainted
his flesh. To take the symbol further, the temple serves as a religious symbol for Raju, but for Rosie it is a symbol of fulfillment of her aesthetic sense. Her "idiom" is drawn from the temple dance, the "idiom" that arouses in her the longing to satisfy her artistic aspiration. This longing urges her to incline to Raju that ultimately results in the defilement of their body. Rosie cleanses it by her dedication to art, and Raju washes it by doing penance in a temple precinct.

The title 'guide' for Raju is strange, so also the villagers' address to him as 'Sir' and 'Swami,' (["I have a problem, Sir" (13) and you must show us the way, Swami" (83)]). These sorts of address arrest our attention immediately because of their inappropriateness. The author disturbs the relationship between sign and meaning by conferring the title 'guide' on Raju and by taking a jail bird to the status of 'Sir' and 'Swami'. This technique of art called defamiliarization is intended

to make object unfamiliar, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty, and the length of perception, because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself, and must be prolonged.49

Ideas and motifs from one narrative unit recur in another within the same text. This sort of repetition is not a slip on the part of the writer, rather it is an approach to inform subtly the meaning of the matter. Narayan provides us repeatedly the clue that Velan's image of Raju as Swami has some object. Raju's role of a guide at Mangala village is only a repetition of his earlier role as a mentor in the jail:

Whether they were homicides or cut-throats or highwaymen, they all listened to me, and I could talk them out of their blackest moods. When there was a respite, I told them stories and philosophies and what not.

They came to refer me as Vadhyar— that is, teacher (202-203).

Again, the story of Devaka appears twice; first, in third person narrator's account of Raju's use of the story as a moral discourse and second, in first person narration of Raju when he recounts how the story was told to him by his mother, and how during his listening to the story he used to sleep in the mid course. Thus in Raju's account we are told that he has an incomplete knowledge of the
story, while in omniscient narrator's account we are informed of Raju's relapse into silence after beginning the story. The very incompleteness of the tale is a sort of strategy on the part of the writer to prepare his reader for an open ending of the novel.

Co-incidence, chance meeting, miracles that find place in the narrative suggest the inexplicable hands of destiny in moulding Raju's career. Velan's sister's final willingness to marry a person of her family's choice and the unexpected return of a promissory note to a villager by his cousin are the elements of co-incidence which are regarded by the villagers as due to Raju's holy influence, the faith that conferred on him the status of a Swami. Chance meeting of a wandering journalist with Raju seals his fate, "The pen of the wandering journalist had done the trick. Its repercussions were far and wide" (214), and makes it impossible for him to escape the situation. Thus the narrative becomes an admixture of romance and realism, a process of "silhouetting."

The Man-eater of Malgudi sets a relationship between a fictional world created by the author and the "real" world. The author, by enacting on a written text imaginatively the oral story of Bhasmasura, tries to control the reader's response and brings a close alignment between himself and the reader. The writer is a reader and an interpreter, he poses questions, and answers it just as the real reader does and then rewrites the story. These paradoxes are not just sophistries, rather they are theoretical exercises. Narayan having read or heard umpteen times an inherited material like the story of Bhasmasura interprets it by rewriting it.

Narayan's interpretation of the nature of evil and its role in human life has its bearing on the narrative. The author creates a narrative audience in the beginning, where the narrator evokes sympathy of the reader by describing his vocation, his ablutionary routine and his harmless friends. He (the author) creates a physical context and prepares the reader to face the narrator's encounter with the central character. Though the banality of the beginning makes the reader doubtful about the truthfulness of the story yet the sincerity and humility present in the tone of the narrator do not reinforce this doubt. But as the story moves, the narrative audience is replaced by the authorial audience where the reader understands that the story s/he is reading is a fiction, and human figures in the story are introduced only to personify abstract concepts. Before Vasu's arrival at Malgudi,
reader response was linked to absence of reader concern, but immediately before and after Vasu's appearance, the narrator through choice of words raised reader's concern. Vasu's impending appearance at Nataraj's chamber is suggested when there was a sudden lull. I wondered if they had been suddenly struck dumb. I heard the shuffling of feet. I felt suddenly relieved ... and a moment later a new head appeared in its place—a tanned face, large powerful eyes under thick eyebrows, a large forehead and a shock of unkempt hair, like black-halo (12-13).

Repetition of the word "sudden" intimates an expression of formlessness, a kind of disorder which Vasu is sure to bring upon Malgudi. The word "shuffling" in relation to Vasu hints that he (Vasu), in every likelihood, will create disorder in Malgudi society and will remain a threat to its placid life. The author seemingly maintains verisimilitude by using words like "large powerful eyes," "thick eyebrows," "unkempt hair" while describing in detail the physical appearance of Vasu. The details are superfluous in comparison to the main function of the narrative, but they are clues to the very impermanence of a character like Vasu. The exaggeration of language with the submerged paradox "black halo" suggests dimension of evil in him because Satan, the prince of hell is the only possessor of it. The method of flattering Vasu serves to undermine our subjective empathy for him.

We cannot identify his traits as potentially human and as such his counterpart Nataraj is now seen only as a creation to establish a "contrary" universe. The primary effect produced in the beginning of the text is countered with the appearance of Vasu and the subsequent effect so produced is negated next with Sastri's assertion of his (Vasu's) demoniac traits and his self destructive attribute. Impressions initially formed on Nataraj gradually receding to the background, the text now induces the reader to modify his/her original speculation and be convinced that Nataraj is created only to represent a certain idea of the author. The way the reading process ends and the degree of "finalization" it achieves informs of a definitive solution to the problem which the narrative earlier initiated with the arrival of Vasu on Malgudi scene. The end absorbs all the information in the text presented after the entry of Vasu into Nataraj's chamber.
First ending of the narrative comes with the death of Vasu but, by withholding the cause and manner of his end the author creates suspense, arouses the curiosity of the reader. The reader becomes impatient to know about the details of his (Vasu’s) death and thus the temporary withholding of the information turns the reading process a guessing game. To achieve this effect, author adopts such techniques and introduces such events which Brooks calls "detours." The guessing game continues for quite sometime with questions like who killed Vasu? how did he kill him? will Nataraj be able to exonerate himself of the stigma of a murderer? will he survive this threatening situation? Narayan does not answer these questions immediately, he keeps his reader in suspense and makes it a guessing work as to who killed Vasu. Delay in the revelation of the name of the murderer of Vasu is caused, first by removing Sastri from the scene and then by creating a fear psychosis in Rangi so that she would desist from divulging it. To quote Rimmon-Kenan about how delay can be created in the text:

> delays are made plausible in terms of occurrences in the story itself; e.g. the death of a character who bears certain information, the departure of a character, his missing a train or losing a letter which contains crucial information out of fear, discretion, or what not.50

Rangi, the mistress of Vasu, knew the cause and circumstance of Vasu’s death but she did not disclose it out of fear. Sastri who could elicit information from Rangi suddenly left Malgudi and his return was delayed as he went on a pilgrimage to Rameswaram and then to a dozen other places. Moreover, Nataraj’s own ambivalent response to queries of different persons including his wife about his role in the murder of Vasu made the air thicker, with suspicion pointing at him. The suspicion was removed, truth was established only with the return of Sastri after a long absence. Thus the delay lengthens the text and makes the narrative an interesting piece of reading.

The whole section beginning from the time when Rangi broke the news of Vasu’s macabre plan to kill the temple elephant Kumar till Nataraj’s stealthy entry into Vasu’s attic is packed with excitement, suspense and thrills that keep the audience on edge. Eerie silence prevailing over the printing press of Nataraj at the dead of night where Nataraj and Vasu were present, one in half
asleep and the other in deep sleep, was punctuated only by the "Chug, gluck, pat" sound of the 
treadle parts over which Nataraj heard:

    a new sound: a repeated tap on the grille that separated me from Vasu's 
stair case. I hoped that the stuffed hyena had not come to life. I tried to 
ignore it and go on with my printing. Tap, tap on the steel mesh. I applied 
my eye to the private pin-hole and saw a vague outline stirring. 'Oh, the 
ghost of the hyena has come back!' I cried. A thrill of fear lifted the hair 
on my scalp and forearm (156).

Again, Nataraj's secret visit to the attic of Vasu at the dead of night to thwart his sinister design, his 
leapback at the sudden going off of the alarm clock and above all, the mystery surrounding the 
death of Vasu are pot boils of a detective story. These elements chill one's spine, curdle one's 
blood like a horror story.

Cinematic devices used in the novel make the narration marvellous, create a make believe 
world for the reader. As in film, the device of parallel editing is employed here to show the parallel 
action taking place in the story. Movement of the temple procession and the action in the attic of 
Vasu occur simultaneously, the author gives the audience the benefit of witnessing both the actions 
by juxtaposing the shots that build up suspense to the maximum level. Gunning argues, "Through 
parallel editing, Griffith could create suspense by interrupting action and delaying information."51 
The last minute survival of Kumar from the gun shots of Vasu is like Griffith's technique of "last 
minute rescue" that relieves the reader from the tension built up from the time Rangi informed 
Nataraj of Vasu's determination to kill the elephant. Narayan by using the device of parallel editing 
shows how actions were taking place simultaneously in the attic of Vasu and in the domestic circle 
of Nataraj on the eve of temple celebration.

If horror, excitement, suspense and thrill are the elements that make The Man-eater of 
Malgudi an engrossing story, then the next novel of the author The Vendor of Sweets is marked for 
lack of all these. However, it is not that the writer has not made any attempt to make the story 
compulsive, he has employed devices such as gap, delay, detours that generate interest, enhance
reader's curiosity and prolong the reading process. This contributes to the reader's dynamic participation in the text.

The narrative oscillates between the present and the past of the protagonist. The reader, by going back frequently to the past of the protagonist, weighs his (protagonist's) present against his past and interprets it, so, when the end comes s/he is not startled at the epiphany that the protagonist achieves. Narratives no doubt adopt some kind of diversion to yield a certain amount of pleasure, but, as Cobley says:

Crucially, however, such delays and digressions are not fool-proof mechanisms which guarantee enjoyment; instead, the space between beginning and end in narrative is where the reader will be involved in doing work. 52

Gaps always enhance interest in the reader and prolong the reading process. They contribute to the reader's vigorous involvement in making the text significant. True identity of Cousin and his exact relation with Jagan remain unanswered till the last. However, the reader is not at all serious about this gap, the gap also does not stand as a barrier to grasp the meaning of the story. The gap, rather by weaving enigma over Cousin, offers the reader multiple choices. A temporary gap arises in the text regarding Grace's status, like her parentage and her exact marital relation with Mali. Mali sends Jagan a cable from America, "Arriving home: another person with me" (63) and Jagan reaffirms it, "Who is she? Anyway she looks like a Chinese . . . or perhaps she is Japanese. How was one to find out?" (64) This gap is filled not at a lot but bit by bit, first when Grace discloses her parentage, and then after a long flow of the story when she tells of her marital status. This gap is retrospective, the demand for fulfilment of it is not seriously asked until one gets solution by the events themselves.

Jagan's epiphany, though partial, is genuine, when it is set against his withdrawal, his withdrawal looks ambiguous, because, just before withdrawing from Malgudi, he takes with him the cheque book and requests Cousin to look after his shop. However, the total ambiguity in which he was engulfed in the beginning is only partially solved at the end. Ambiguity in the text does not affect the story, it rather heightens the reader's interest, stirs his/her critical faculty as it "is the norm, not the
exception, in tales that attract (s) the attention of literary critics.\textsuperscript{53} True to H. M. Williams' observation that "Narayan tends to write the same book over and over,\textsuperscript{54} The Vendor of Sweets has thematic shadows of The Financial Expert. Jagan's desire to entrust Mali the reigns of business in the event of his renunciation of the worldly existence is an echo of Margayya's advice to his son Balu to take charge of the tin box.

Throughout the novel, there runs a tragic vein underneath the comic situations. The initial amusing parody presents Jagan as a flawed being struggling against himself pathetically to find a meaning in life. Protagonist's search for a meaning in life remains incomplete, it rather ends in ambiguity. His hopes and aspirations relating to his son remain unfulfilled, his reading of his son turns into misreading, he fails to fathom the mysteries of his own creation, and this misreading remains a source of comedy in the novel. Jagan's hypocrisy, his seemingly "simplicity," his illusions about life and about his son make him a comic figure, while his futile attempts to search for a balance in life make him a tragic figure. This tragedy in him evokes our sympathy for him, draws us closer to him. To quote Miriam Allot:

\begin{quote}
Novelists who belong to the tradition inaugurated by Richardson and culminating in Conrad and Henry James show that to explore beneath the surface appearance of things is to draw near to the central areas of tragic appearance.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

The Painter of Signs marks the beginning of a distinctive productive phase in Narayan's literary career, where the writer without expressly dramatizing his self as in The English Teacher finds unobtrusively appropriate space for self reflection, weaving in it threads of fact and fiction. The theme that he had addressed about four decades back, that woman's validity as a human being depends, rightly, on how she sees herself, is repeated here in another form. If Daisy had echoed Savitri, it would have offended the modern reader's sense of proportion and disrupted their "horizon of expectation." So he created Daisy as a woman who like Savitri when feels losing her identity runs away from home, but, unlike her (Savitri), she does not submit to the hostile world, rather challenges it and remains true to her belief and identity.
The primary effect of the text gained in the beginning undergoes a sea change in course of the movement of the narrative and, by the end of the text, the reader tends to reject the views on Raman that he had formed in the beginning. S/he gradually takes a correct view through a subtle combination of both the presentations. For about one sixth of the text, Raman is presented as a diehard rationalist who does not "do anything unless I see some logic in it" (8). He expresses his irritation and exasperation at the conventional values of the world, scoffs at her aunt for her star reading habit and debunks the lawyer for his irrationality. But in his initial encounter with Daisy, he is tossed between rationalism and romanticism which culminates in his internal debate justifying his muddling thoughts on her:

Our puranas were full of instances of saints failing in the presence of beauty.

The gods grew jealous of austere men and manoeuvred to disturb their rigours, and their purpose; their agency was always a woman of beauty (40).

This sets up a mechanism to oppose the earlier conjectures. Thus the reader begins to modify his original impression on the protagonist by juxtaposing the recency effect and the primary effect. Almost in the middle of the text, in page ninety four, Raman behaves with Daisy like a lunatic, thus negating all the impression that the reader had formed of him initially. For about sometime now, the reader finds him rueing the day "that ever brought him to her notice" (108), and simultaneously justifying his action, "I have done no wrong. Most natural event between a man and woman" (111). So in each successive stage, the reader assimilates all the previous information about him, and at the end s/he gets pleasure in feeling that Raman is purged of his extreme rationalism and extreme sensuality.

This balanced view on life for him is true pursuance of his vocation, the vocation of a painter of signs, which also happens to be the vocation of the author. The following passage in the novel is a kind of self narration for the author:

He wanted to say many things to her which would express his innermost feelings, with all the intensity, muddle and turbulence. He wanted to place his whole life before her in a proper perspective so that she might take
him seriously. He rambled in a reminiscent manner. He did not know where to begin or how to continue. He wished to express to her that meeting her had been a landmark in his existence—how much he owed her; wanted to speak of his philosophy of life; wanted to justify himself as a sign-board painter. A sign-board painter might look ordinary, but he concentrated in his hands the entire business and aspirations of a whole community. He had to explain why he chose this medium, and that took him back further to the starting point, and from there he drifted further back to his college days and to his adventures and romances at that period; how he paid attention successively to a short girl, a tall girl, a fat girl, a lean girl—more imagined than actual (126).

The passage permits the domination of the narrated by the narrator, allows self-narration to commend to the past, a rupturing effect by the narrator author who, in the guise of Raman, is directly addressing the implied reader. The passage closely resembles the following passage taken from the author's autobiography My Days where he unreels his own college days:

Sighing over a pretty face and form seen on a balcony, or from across the street, or in a crowd, longing for love—in a social condition in which, at least in those days, boys and girls were segregated and one never spoke to anyone but a sister—I had to pass through a phase of impossible love-sickness... Any girl who lifted her eyes and seemed to notice me became at once my sweetheart, till someone else took her place (104).

Raman marks each detail, from the comic but profound words of the town hall Professor "This will pass" to the proprietor of Bhandari stores, with an absolute accuracy. These observations of the character on life are deeply interfused with the author's personal tone. The author like his character has an acute observant eye as narrated in My Days about a particular incident in his childhood.

I had numerous questions welling up within me, all sorts of things I wished
to know about the man—his name, where he came from, if he slept wearing the ladder, what he ate, and so forth! but before I could phrase them properly, I had to be moving along with my questions unuttered (8).

This repeated going back to the past is an attempt on the part of the author to fasten together his past and present, to overcome the state of self-ignorance by self knowledge in the moment of narration. This self-reflexivity is not a weakness on the part of narrator, rather it strengthens the reference of the text. Narayan's attempt to narrativize a part of his life story is a process of his configuring the disorganized experience of the past. Raman's frequent quotations from legends, mythologies and literature to reinforce his views and to rationalize his irrational acts are, in a sense, versions of this kind of theoretical self-consciousness. Daisy's narration of her life in the middle of the text informing the reader of her past is a self-conscious narrative device employed by the author to justify the creation of this ultra modern character Daisy; otherwise, there was every possibility of the text creating a void in the reading, denying the scope for him (author) for a moralising end.

After about four decades of creating Savitri, the writer when looked retrospectively on his writing ability, he became conscious of doing injustice to womenfolk and felt a strong urge to rectify it by creating Daisy. Daisy challenges male hegemony and acts according to her choice. Raman is a mild, weak version of Ramani, Daisy is an aggressive form of Savitri, and the man-woman relationship in *The Dark Room* makes a volte face in *The Painter of Signs*.

A writer at a certain stage of his literary career gets tempted to look back on his past, a fact that also happens to Narayan who while looking back on his past feels the need for telling a story that would serve as "a means of interpreting one's (his) own life, past," a process that he has already experimented in *The Painter of Signs*. If we go back further, we will find it in *The English Teacher* and faintly in *The Vendor of Sweets*. *A Tiger for Malgudi* augments the narratives of *The English Teacher* and *The Vendor of Sweets*. *The English Teacher* closes with Krishna, the protagonist achieving spiritual quietude after a long mental turmoil, and the narrative in *The Vendor of Sweets* closes with Jagan preparing to enter the vanaprastha ashram, but without replaying the complete cycle of ashrama dharma. As if to complete this cycle, *A Tiger for Malgudi* is born.
The intertextuality of the three novels, The English Teacher, The Vendor of Sweets and A Tiger for Malgudi is found when three passages, one from each, with identical attitudes and feelings of the protagonists, are taken to underscore the point that the characters are specific entities in real life disguised by the author. In The English Teacher, after establishing communion with his dead wife, Krishna felt a kind of joy that could only be compared to the partial epiphany of Jagan or to the immutable poetic joy of Raja at the feet of his Master. At the first purplish dawn, at the moment Susila’s presence began to withdraw from him, Krishna felt an experience that he wanted to communicate to his reader:

We stood at the window, gazing on a slender, red streak over the eastern rim of the earth. A cool breeze lapped our faces. The boundaries of our personalities suddenly dissolved. It was a moment of rare, immutable joy—a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death. (ET 228)

This finds an echo in The Vendor of Sweets when Jagan after listening to the hair dyer felt as if a new world had flashed into view. He suddenly realized how narrow his whole existence had been between the Lawley Statue and the frying shop; Mali’s antics seemed to matter naught; Am I on the verge of a new Janma? he wondered. Nothing seemed really to matter (119-120).

And the same sensibility is seen in A Tiger for Malgudi when Raja, the tiger, expresses his feelings at a certain moment of his association with his Master:

At such moments I felt lighter at heart and my physical self also became secondary. My sight became clearer; if I lifted my gaze to the horizon, the sun shining on the land filled me with joy: the leaves of the mighty banyan trees sparkling like gems, the bamboos swaying their golden stems with their filigreed leaves—I felt I could ask for nothing more in life (165-166).

So all the three protagonists—Krishna, Jagan and Raja—move towards finding a spiritual illumination, all are a little like Ulysses for in searching, in hoping to arrive and finally, in finding the object, all strive to re-discover themselves. All the three pass through same sensibilities of loneliness and
separation and realize in the end that these are the ultimates of worldly existence. What Krishna reflects when he undergoes the painful experience of loneliness and separation:

Wife, child, brothers, parents, friends... We come together to go apart again. It is one continuous movement... The law of life cannot be avoided. The fact must be recognised. A profound, unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life. All else is false (ET 218),

is also reflected in Jagan when he says:

'Yes, yes, God knows I need a retreat. You know, my friend, at some stage in one's life one must uproot oneself from the accustomed surroundings and disappear so that others may continue in peace: (VS 126),

and the same reflection is seen in Raja when he echoes his Master’s philosophy:

No relationship, human or other, or association of any kind could last for ever, separation is the law of life right from the mother's womb.

One has to accept it if one has to live in God's plans (ATM 174).

This repetition of idea is not an exception, rather a norm, "an author may repeat in one novel motifs, themes, characters, or events from his other novels."

When the reader comes from The Man-eater of Malgudi to A Tiger for Malgudi, s/he notices a sharp difference between the two titles. The preposition for in the latter is not without meaning, it carries an impression that as if Malgudi itself is in need for a hermit tiger who, while replaying his past action will inform the message of inevitability of the passage of four ashramas in one's life.

As real author, Narayan is at pains to stress, in the introduction, that his story has a basis in its philosophical truth. The reminiscent mode of narration reinforces the impression that the tiger is symbolic of man playing various roles, and the narration is not far away from reality. The narrator for the bulk of the novel is Raja, the tiger, but his narration is related by another unnamed narrator, the implied author, both for whom the world is a means of self-transcendence. What is required is the change of perception. The autobiographical nexus merges with the metaphysical authority of
the fictional author that exercises a controlling mechanism on the text. Again with a change in perception, the reader can read the work as a personal allegory about the writer. Author's life time occupation of the profession of an artist and gradual merger of his self into his art is represented by Captain and the Master respectively. To quote Syd Harrex in this context would not be inappropriate. Harrex says,

> The tiger's career as a reluctant circus performer and film-star and later a poetic disciple-the former a crude and tasteless form of entertainment, the latter an ennobly experience of life—could be interpreted symbolically as a descriptive history of writing: also a cautionary tale based on Narayan's own experiences as a writer.58

Let us see how the author renders a philosophical treatise to an interesting piece of reading, and how he tempts the reader to finish its reading. Effort of the writer to make the story enticing is evident from the beginning when in page seventeen he introduces jungle life and jungle superstitions. The reader is enchanted with the belief prevalent among the jungle animals about how the stripes came to the tiger. Conversation among animals and birds, description of their manners and habits, their thoughts and musings are so lively and beautifully presented that the reader gets a unique experience, that as if he is watching a three dimensional picture on jungle life.

Sequence of events that goes on building up suspense and then resolving it by sudden turns control the attitude and degree of the emotional involvement of the reader. The events are well structured to give the narration a sense of authenticity. For example, the tiger during one of its usual night prowls in villages is attacked by the villagers with flaming torches, hatchets, crowbars and staves, and the suspense is heightened by lengthening the action, but the tension is deflated suddenly when "Luckily for me a mishap occurred at this desperate moment. A boy who was capering with a torch at the end of a bamboo pole . . . held his flame too close to the fence, which caught fire. Their attention was now diverted . . . " and "I ran out and escaped into the night" (28). The same suddenness in the turn of events resolves the suspense built up during the narration of circus life of the tiger. The bizarre incidents like forcing the tiger to jump fire-rings or drink milk along with
a goat or stand on its hind legs constitute a masterly crescendo of tension heightened by the tiger's heart rending roarings. The tension is relieved with the killing of the goat by the tiger taking advantage of Captain's diversion of attention following a sudden collapse of gallery seats.

Pictorial imagery, cinematic device, and the device of defamiliarization used in the novel add to the richness of narration. Vivid description of fight between the narrator tiger and a tigress creates an image of words and the reader feels like watching a show:

With her back to me she was watching the herd in the meadow. I was furious and jumped on her back and tried to throttle her . . . But this lady surprised me by throwing me off her back with a jerk. My claws were buried in skin, but that did not make any difference to her as she turned round and gushed my eyes and bit my throat. Fortunately, I had shut my eyes, but my brow was torn and blood trickled down my eyes" (18-19).

Added to this, the use of minimum words in the scene renders a sense of suggestiveness that helps the reader exercise his power of imagination:

She followed me quietly, although both of us were limping.

But by the time the scars on our backs were dry a litter of four were added to our family ... (21)

In a few words, reader is informed of the conciliation and mating of the two and then their begetting. Cinematic devices like parallel editing, background projection are used in the work that make the narrative lively and engrossing. To give an example of parallel editing, in page one hundred and eight there is the description of Madan directing Jagu how to fight an imaginary tiger while "At another end of the lot Captain was handling Raja." Background projection is a cinematic device which is, what Don Livingston says, "the motion picture production method of bringing location to the studio . . . " Such a device intended to bring special effect on the narration has been used in the novel when the fight between Jagu and Raja is arranged in a make shift studio, but not on an exact location. Narayan gives a sense of remoteness to the narration when he describes how the
villagers on seeing their flocks vanishing believe it the work of a devil and are even prepared to perform propitiatory ceremonies. Or, while narrating how they react differently to the size and prowling habit of the tiger, he (the author) creates an atmosphere of purposeful vagueness to achieve defamiliarization effect.

Talkative Man is a story about story telling as TM, in the mode of metafiction in reverse, has made it clear in the very beginning that the story has very specific entities in real life. Drawing an analogy between Savitri-Satyavan legend and Rann-Sarasa story and playing to the imagination of the reader, he (TM) drives home an imaginary story to be taken as real. Narrating a story to someone else becomes often the mode of release from even a divine curse as in Brihadkatha the impropriety of overhearing a story brings on Puspadanta a curse from which he can absolve himself only by narrating it into another. TM tells the tale to overcome his boredom citing the instance of Narada who is acursed that unless he spreads gossip each day, his skull would burst. TM's storytelling is the actional function of hypodiegetic narrative. To quote Rimmon-Kenan.

Hypodiegetic narratives may have various functions in relation to the narratives within which they are embedded... some hypodiegetic narratives maintain or advance the action of the first narrative by the sheer fact of being narrated regardless (or almost regardless) of their content.60

TM's story-telling exercises a power over Varma, so also Sarasa's narration of her life story leaves a strong impression on TM. Varma can be any listener as TM can be any listener/narrator. It is also the aim of the author to exercise power over his million readers as a story teller Chambers argues that story-telling is often used as an oppositional practice, a practice of resistance used by the weak against the strong: "oppositional narrative," he claims: "in exploiting the narrative situation, discovers a power, not to change the essential structure of narrative situations but to change its other ("the naratee" if one will).61

TM's story "that enchanted Varma was the one about Dr. Rann, which I told him off and on spread over several weeks" (2). This kind of intervention announcing the presence of the narrator
in a text is an indication of subjective realism. Again, repetition of the story is not unusual because audiences have always shown their pleasure in listening to the known stories. Even while listening to known stories, they prepare to pretend to act as though a repeated beginning is a fresh beginning and the beginning of the text is the initiation of the process of telling the story, not the story itself. The story that TM goes to tell is not a written story read aloud by the teller but a story told with the narrator remembering and reconstructing it as in the tradition of oral story-telling. Oriental anecdotal manner creates an atmosphere of plausibility, convives the audience to accept the story-teller’s viewpoint, entices the listener to acknowledge the illusion created around the character and the situation, and TM’s story concurs in all these.

TM is Narayan’s vehicle, his narrative alter ego, just as Varma is the alter ego of TM. They are the intimate representatives of the reading audience. Both devote themselves as detached story-tellers having the same narrative function, “as the eye for humanity” (31). TM’s detachment not only creates a role for the implied reader but also it establishes a necessary understanding between the reader and the text. When TM declares “I don’t aspire to become a so called creative writer . . . but only a journalist who performs a greater service to society, after all a dreamy-eyed poet or a story-teller” (31), the text makes a parody of the writing genius of Narayan (since the author keeps himself distancing from the narrator). The reader, however, reads TM’s declaration as an understatement while remaining conscious that the text also specifies “how it should be read, freeing ourselves from the demands of poetic seriousness.”⁶² TM’s declaration reinforces paradoxically the spirit of seriousness. Narayan’s journalistic stint in the beginning of his literary career establishes Talkative Man as having a reflexive text which has reference to other preceding texts. To quote Mark Currie in this context:

Self-contemplation, or reflexivity, is fundamentally critical because it refers to other texts, to narrativity in general not only from some Olympian position of metalingual distance but from within the discourse on which it reflects.⁶³

This self reflexivity in Narayan’s work suggests the intertextual nature of the past to signal certain
cultural issues. As Harrex says:

Talkative Man, I submit, is the culmination of such a process in that,
Narayan, by a strategy of implicit admission, acknowledges that this
novel has an identifiable sub-text: namely his preceding fictions. 64

A reader conversant with the rakshasa motif in The Man-eater of Malgudi responds immediately to the same now reappearing in Talkative Man. TM describes the setting in which he enchants Varma with the story of Dr. Rann:

My chair was generally set facing a calendar portrait of that impossible
demon Mahisasura with serpents entwining his neck and arms, holy ash
splashed on his forehead and eyeballs bulging out through enormous
side-whiskers, holding aloft a scimitar, ready to strike. I never liked that
picture . . . too disturbing (1-2).

In its setting, Talkative Man repeats earlier works. The Boardless Hotel, Truth printing works, Town Hall, Sarayu River and many others that appeared in earlier works repeat here also. Narayan conducts his reader along with TM and Rann to the streets and different sites of Malgudi as if to rediscover it. Even characters found in earlier works—Gaffur, the taxidriver and Nataraj, the printer—reappear here. Repetition of patterns like oppositional type characters and order-disorder-order structure are found in the novel. TM is another Nataraj and Rann is another Vasu, and order is restored in Malgudi with the exist of Rann from Malgudi. This kind of re-enactment of characters and events in the work invites the reader to recall earlier works of the author and to interpret his creative genius. These repetitions linked in chain fashion make up "the structure of the work within itself" and determine "its multiple relations to what is outside it: the author's mind or outside his life; other works by other authors; motifs from mythological or fabulous past; elements from the purported past of the characters or of their ancestors; events which have occurred before the book begins. 65

Devices like delay, gaps and elements like dramatic situations make the story interesting, create suspense and arouse curiosity. By withholding the real identity of Dr. Rann for a consider-
able period, by delaying the unmasking of Rann's hypocrisy, Narayan creates and compounds the suspense, and with Sarasa's unfolding of her husband's deceit, the curiosity of the reader to know about the stranger is quenched. The recency effect of the text gradually opposes the primary effect formed of Dr. Rann, and by the time the text closes, the reader rejects his/her high opinion on Rann that was formed in the beginning. The text ends with a permanent gap as the reader fails to get a final hypothesis on Rann.

The story is replete with melo-dramatic situations. It has the flavour of a detective story that delights the reader. TM's constant spying on Rann, his stealthy entry into the room of his guest and his act of reading his (Rann's) diary and letters in his absence, his meticulous plan to retrieve the granddaughter of the old librarian from the evil design of Rann, all add to make the story engrossing. Sarasa's sudden arrival on Malgudi scene, the manner in which she reclaims her husband, theatricality of Rann in presenting his speech at Lotus club are the elements of melo-drama that make the story enchanting.

Process of self-reflexivity continues in the next novel The World of Nagaraj where the writer fancies himself a common man like the "Common Man" cartoon of his illustrious brother R.K. Laxman. For Narayan, existence is a comedy and man in his existence is a comic figure with his incongruous and pitiful central role in it. The novel captures substantial human nature with its shortcomings and inherent contradictions. It reads wide disparities lying between a man's aspiration and his actualities and his utter helplessness in the web of existential situations. Through his protagonist Nagaraj, Narayan makes an attempt to capture and present this satirical rhythm in man's life.

Allusions and quotations scattered in the text add to the process of defamiliarization. Biblical ([[Almost what Cain did to Abel" (152))], historical ("Nagaraj was stuck there much like Casabianca on the deck of burning ship (159)) and mythological allusions culled from Hindu mythology ("at the end of Kaliyuga, when a new Avatar of Vishnu called Kalki is expected riding on a white horse and weilding a blazing sword (161-162)) and allusion to literary texts like the Gita and Macbeth defamiliarize the text, but at the same time these allusions enrich its meaning. Literary quotations
from Macbeth used in the text inform appropriately the peculiar situation in which the protagonist is placed and these highlight his helplessness in the face of his wife:

He listened in silence, echoing secretly Lady Macbeth's lines, I would, while it was smiling in my face,/ Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums, And dash'd the brains out, /had I so sworn As you have done to this (180).

A typical gap, i.e. information gap crops up in the text when it withholds immediate divulgence of information about Tim's withdrawal from the household of Nagaraj. The reader comes to know of it only when Gopu comes to Malgudi and demands from Nagaraj about the cause of his leaving home; the reader also joins him in his demand to know of it. A past-oriented delay appears towards the end of the text when the cause of Tim's unannounced, abrupt return from Kismet is not immediately informed but is later filtered through Nataraj's wife when she whispers it to him. This type of delay is only local, it makes the reading enjoyable as one gets pleasure in solving a problem.

Narayan has used here some of the devices similar to those used by film editors. Double-take (when one scene is superimposed upon another) is used in the scene where the marriage negotiations between Saroja and Tim was going on with the man from Delhi. Nagaraj being present there was thinking about the looks of his (Delhi man's) children, "some obscure foreign types with narrow eyes and high cheek bones, of a shade less than coffee" (88-89) while taking part simultaneously in the marriage negotiation.

The elements of post-modern fiction like silence, broken speech, meaningless answer and possibility of continuity of the story are found abundantly in the novel. Tim's silence on most of the questions of Gopu in presence of Nagaraj indicates his defiance to the elders and uncovers lack of authority on him:

'We want to meet Saroja.'

'She has gone out.'

'Where'?
No answer

'We wish to visit your home......'

'It's far off.....'

'But you said it was here.....'

No answer (158).

Further, Nagaraj's meaningless replies to his brother on the latter's inquiry about the whereabouts of his son Tim, his frequent broken speech and speech within himself, his double dialogue inform of a man lost in existential problems.

Often books speak of other books; it is as if they speak among themselves. Even a seemingly original book has its full blossom from the seed of another book as sometimes some incident or information in a story that remains unclarified or a character's idea or pronouncement that remains unintelligible gets clarified in a succeeding story, a process called "midrash." Seed of a story sown in The Painter of Signs blooms fully in GrandMother's Tale. In The Painter of Signs, Raman's Aunt's urge to tell about her grandfather's Poona days through the code chosen by Raman finds full expression in GrandMother's Tale when Ammani's tale of her mother echoing the tale of Raman's Aunt gets recorded by the author. To quote the passage from The Painter of Signs:

He knew she would revert to her grandfather's Poona days. He had heard the story piecemeal again and again how her grandfather had run away after his marriage, deserting his young wife, how years after ... .(36)

Raman, the painter of signs is an earlier version of the author as they both are supposed to record the story of their progenitors, the only difference is that Raman listens to his great grandfather's exploits whereas the author listens and records the heroic tales of his great grandmother:

She sat as usual on the swing in the evenings, invited me to sit beside her, and narrated stories of her early days-rather of her mother's early life and adventures, as heard from her mother when Ammani was about ten years old (8).

The play of remembrance and construction is indispensable in retrospective retelling. In
fact, by banking upon a narrator who narrates from memory and hearsay, whose memory sometimes fails to quench the inquiring mind of the listener, and who perhaps stumbles while remembering in the process of reconstructing an event, the problem of textualizing the story becomes bigger. Narayan solves it by calling attention to the tale as a borderline between fact and artefact. The author having heard the tale from his Ammani interprets it by rewriting it. Rather than complaining about its faults, he repairs them, foregrounds the story and records only those aspects which serve his purpose. A reliable fictional author/narrator who wants to share knowledge with the audience of the time which he records/narrates cannot tell everything that is relevant to his story since it would take a lot of space, and the attempt would break up reader's interest. Hence he can rely upon a shared background of assumptions, he can tell us only those things that belong to background and which he feels necessary to emphasise upon. Author's recording of his Ammani's tale of her mother may not all be imaginary. He selects and constructs the events, offers sufficient continuity of subject matter to make the chronological sequence significant. That the story is not all imaginary can be gauged from the fact that the introductory part of the text is only a repetition of some events that appeared in author's autobiography *My Days*.

In the tale many things remain unanswered. Why did Bala take the way only to Poona, how did she cover all the distance alone, why did Viswa so easily accept Bala's proposal to leave Poona, what did happen to Surma after Viswa left her, how did Ammani's husband acquire such a huge property are the questions that remain unanswered. But these unanswered questions do not hinder the understanding of the text, nor do they prevent the reader from deriving pleasure in reading, because the gaps have been left within the convention of a story-teller's tale. "No tale," says Iser,

> can be told in its entirety. Indeed, it is only through inevitable omissions that a story will gain its dynamism. Thus whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections for filling in gaps left by the text itself. 66
In an episode in Book XIX in *Odyssey*, the hero Odysseus disguised as an old vagabond gained entrance to his home in Ithaca. The maid of the house and Odysseus's old nurse, Eurydice, while getting ready to wash the stranger's feet could recognize him from the scar on his leg, a scar identical to a scar sustained by her little master years ago during a wild boar hunt. During one of Viswa's visits to Bala, after their marriage, Bala found a black patch under the left ear of Viswa, and in their subsequent meetings, Bala repeatedly touched it like a camera focus. After a long digression, Bala in her quest for Viswa while got puzzled about the real identity of Bhatji (Viswa) at Poona, she recognized him from the black patch under his ear. But Bala did not immediately disclose it, nor did she charge Viswa, she waited only for an opportune moment. This postponement is not unnatural in story-telling, it is a part of a recurring oral pattern of delay, a device to keep the audience in suspense.

The tale has two endings; one, when Bala dies and thus closes a sequence of the story, the heroic tales of her chasing and taming her husband as Sarasa in the *Talkative Man* had chased her husband but could not tame, the other sequence ends with the death of Ammani's father Viswa. Extension of the story from Bala's death to Viswa's death may seem, at first, superficial but when it is considered as the tale of a generation (which Indian classical story-telling tradition generally follows), then it is befitting to complete the story of Ammani's parents. And by the time the story ended, the reader was informed of what s/he wanted to know.

Narayan's narratives always encourage the reader to have a careful reading of the text so that s/he does not miss the charm of the stories. Narayan's stories find it irksome when they are vigorously scrutinized through literary canons of western criticism. They are devised to delight and while doing so they transmit in a subtle way the vision of the writer. For a reader, the stories may seem over-simple but the simplicity is only deceptive, behind it are woven intricacies of story-telling method, both occidental and oriental, that allure the reader to read more and more. And it is, what S.Krishna says, "his (Narayan's) alchemical art that transforms them into a living experience in which the reader fully participates."
Notes


4 qtd in Martin 156.


7 qtd in Copley 1.


15 qtd in Philip 96.
16 Martin 156.
17 Martin 163.
20 Rimmon-Kenan 121.
26 Martin 16.
27 Rimmon-Kenan 121.
29 Gregory Currie 82.
30 Rimmon-Kenan 120.
31 Martin 169.
32 Cobley 127.
34 Rimmon-Kenan 122.
2000) 51.

36 qtd in Bennett and Royle 44.


39 qtd in Coble 220.

40 Cobley 157.


43 Mark Currie 31.

44 Kermode 84.

45 Kermode 85.


48 K. Chellappan 56.


50 Rimmon-Kenan 127.

51 qtd in Coby 157.

52 Cobley 12.

53 Martin 103.

54 qtd in Philip 106.


59 Don Livingston, *Film and Director* (Faridabad: Sterling Publishers, 1958) 80.

60 Rimmon-Kenan 92.

61 qtd in Benette and Royle 46.


63 Mark Currie 69.


65 Miller 3.

66 qtd in Rimmon-Kenan 127.