CHAPTER – II
THE NATURE AND TREATMENT OF INNOCENCE

It seems to be a pre-requisite to understand the basic meaning of the term innocence with all the shades of its connotation, meaning, because innocence constitutes the nucleus of this section of analysis. It is primarily defined as the quality or fact of being innocent, and is realized in a number of connotations as follows in *Oxford English Dictionary*: “freedom from sin, guilt, or moral wrong in general; the state of being untainted with, or unacquainted with, evil; moral purity; freedom from specific guilt; the fact or not being guilty or that with which one is charged; guiltless; freedom from cunning or artifice; guiltlessness, artlessness, simplicity; hence want of knowledge or sense, ignorance, silliness; and of things: Harmless, innocuousness.” It may be pointed out that the above-mentioned frame of meanings may serve as a point of reference, as one turns to analyse the nature and treatment of innocence in Narayan’s novels.

Although almost every character in a Narayan novel has a nuclear innocence as the generally shared human trait, the typology of innocence intends to focus on three distinct categories of the characters in Narayan’s novel: (a) the
children, (b) the grown-ups passing through the second childhood and (c) the rustics.

Narayan presents a characteristic spectacle of his innocent characters. Although he underlines several faces of innocence, the markedly telescoped type seems to be located in his child characters. One encounters several types of child delineations in Narayan but *Swami and Friends*, Narayan’s first novella, may be considered as a full-fledged study of innocence. It seems logically significant that Narayan, who was to delineate the entire life span of his characters in his later novels, should being at the beginning of life itself. The theme of innocence in *Swami and Friends* may also be taken as the suggestively introduced first Stage of the ashrama-system, namely, the brahmacharyashrama.

At the outset, *Swami and Friends* may be read as an episodic story of school-boys, realized through their typical psychology and characteristically dramatized misadventures. The school-boy’s epic has the most striking and all pervasive ring of innocence about it. The novella seems to exude it. It may also be pointed out that although all the boys in the novella seem to be dramatizing innocence, it is basically Swaminathan, the central consciousness in it, probably inspired by the child-God, Balasubramanium Swami through whom it is chiefly realized.

The basic theme of illusion versus reality – one of the installing features of Narayan’s later novels—has been deceptively dramatized through the
misadventures of Swami and his cronies in *Swami and Friends*. Narayan seems to have employed the strategy of two-pronged consciousness for the dramatization of the theme. Putting it differently, the entire experience of the school-boys is perceived as their fresh, innocent, untainted and unacquainted awareness, and it is simultaneously filtered through the adult and experienced consciousness.

*Swami and Friends* unfolds the episodic story — installing yet another structural device in Narayan’s later novels — mostly in the third person narration affording the novelist the desirable distancing for the delineation of the characteristic world of Swami and his friends. The novelist also seems to be well-equipped with minutely observant eye and the reportorial gift to underline the pre-adolescent psychology of Swaminathan and his mates.

Although the overall nature of innocence in *Swami and Friends* is realized through the school-boy’s psychology, it has been primarily focused through their ignorance. One way of reading *Swami and Friends* may be to underline the various stages of dramatization of the inherent ignorance of the school boy’s world, to note their unacquaintance of the adult experience, to underline their indulgence in the fantastic imagination, and, more importantly, to focus on their imitative faculty to play the adult roles.

Swami, the young hero in *SAF*, is the central consciousness of the novella. In other worlds, what he notices and especially what he does, constitute the stuff of the novel. Although a mere school-boy type, Swami stands out
remarkably as a bouncing and enlivened character. Narayan projects the boy’s innocence through his overall psychology exemplified mostly in his misadventures. This treatment of innocence, on the face of it, may indeed appear plain and straightforward. It is only when one takes a closer look at the young hero’s milky innocence with its equally naive shades, that one realizes how convincingly and deftly does Narayan delineate the boy’s character, telescoping his imagination at every conceivable instance.

It seems essential to note Swami’s different modes of innocence to understand its nature and Narayan’s treatment of it as the inherent trait of children’s world. It may also be pointed out that through Swami, Narayan seems to install a typically average and ordinary hero, belonging to middle class, realized through a family frame and overall influence of the (Hindu) cultural ethos.

The basic strategy employed by Narayan to project Swami’s (and his cronies too) innocence seems to playfully expose the ignorance. Narayan’s sense captures the scene at the tennis court as Swami is seen marvelling at his father’s excellence in the game. The reader, however, notes the fact being just the contrary as he reads: “Swaminathan found that whenever his father hit the ball, his opponents were unable to receive it and so let it go and strike the screen” If this underlines Swami’s utter ignorance of the game, his observation, “that the picker’s life was one of grave risks”, may create a ripple of laughter. But the most charming instance is the one when Swami with the inborn dread of Mathematics,
unable to find the right solution through the mazy and bewildering figures, tries
desperately to find some clue to the problem, of all the things in the ripeness of the
mangoes. He asks: “Father will you tell me if the mangoes were ripe?”
Narayan then amusedly catches his young hero at the pooja-room, as the latter entreated
and appealed to god to turn the three pebbles (in his box) into six pies enabling
him to buy the covetous hoop. But the delightfully high class expose is witnessed
when Swami, playing the mythic role of Tate, pleads with Dr. Kesavan to oblige
him with a medical certificate and states that he has “delirium”: “I have got it, I
can’t say exactly. . . But isn’t it some, some kind of stomach ache?”

As one considers the character of Swami in its entirety, Narayan’s intention
of presenting the young hero breathing under the eternal shadow of fear, becomes
clear. Swami, as an average type exemplifies the innocence and is realized
predominantly as a coward and mediocre boy. Perhaps less than four feet, the boy
has always been scared of his father, secretly fears the class bully, Mani, feels
threatened by the coachman’s ruffian son, has a perennial fear of the headmaster
and, finally, after the breach of promise, shows no guts to face his captain.
Narayan offers three instances as Swaminathan feels cold sweat; as the
coachman’s son grins ‘Mali ciously’ and takes “out of his pocket a penknife”, as
the police lathi-charge the strikers and Swaminathan pleads: “Don’t kill me.
I know nothing”, and finally, as he undergoes the nightmarish and nerve-racking
experience in the Mempi Forest: “He clearly heard his name whispered. There
was no doubt about it. Swami... Swami... Swami... Swami... , and then the
dreadful suggestion of a sacrifice". The last instance rings remarkably authentic
as Narayan reveals the innocent child's hallucinatory fears. Considering the
overall scare-ridden image of Swaminathan and his cowardly behaviour, the
reader may be inclined to think that the young mind always seems to be suffering
under, with may be called, young mind always seems to be suffering under, that
may be called, fear psychosis. It is one of the rare reflections of Swami's
innocence too.

Another significant mode of Swami's innocence seems to be reflected as
the young hero plays the role of the egoist or perhaps the egoist in the making.
Needless to say, it is the manifestation of Swami's innocent mind that he honestly
believes in his mythic stature and feels proud to be called the Tate of M.M.C. It is
in this context that the influence of Mani, the boy with the club and his devil may
care attitude and, Rajan the super snob, assume great importance. Swami's
middleclass psychology may account for his egoist's role. Unknowingly perhaps,
he begins to imitate both of them. Suffice it to recall Swami's slighting reference
to the infants as he literally manhandles them on the day of the strike, his excitedly
breaking of the window - panes and his own contribution to the harassment of the
cartman's poor son. It ultimately amounted to Swami's feeling that he was the most
reliable and in fact indispensable bowler in the M.C.C. team. Incidentally, it is in
Swami that Narayan installs the first rebel hero in the Malgudi novel.
Narayan's young hero is endowed with all the negative attributes unbecoming of a real heroic figure. But he has also been offered the most redeeming quality: the inherent goodness. Among others, the novelist offers three distinct illustration of Swami's good behaviour: as Swami desperately tries to save the ant after its 'death by water' and prays for the departed soul; as he, after refusing to buy a lemon for his Granny, feeling guilty and ashamed of himself, returns home (thinking her to be dead) with a repenting soul; and as he, unknown to his father, tries to preserve the spider as a pet and stealthily pockets it. It is for the subtle understanding of the school - boy's psychology reflected in the last instance that William Walsh pays a glowing tribute to Narayan.

It is the parting scene in *Swami and Friends*. Swami, feeling guilty and yet anxious to restore the treasured friendship of the most valued Rajam, offers him a present through Mani. The enter scene has come out vividly. But more than the authentic portrayal of the parting and the tearful Swami, what is subtly and unmistakably underlined is the nature of human discrepancy. The innocent Swami believes that the receding figure of Rajam was in fact waving a goodbye to him alone. But he was not quite sure whether Rajam had been really given his address by mani and the author comments: for once mani's face had become inscrutable.

Narayan's first ever characterization of pre-adolescent boyhood also happens to be his first ever study of innocence. Considering the portrayal of the boyhood innocence, what stands out is the novelist's unsentimental attitude
coupled with his detached view and objective stance. The episodic structure of the novel underlines several instances focusing on different shades of Swami's innocence. Although Narayan dose not seem to be interested in delving deep into the boy's mind (nor would the episodic structure of the novel permit him to), he certainly seems to have grasped the school - boy psychology reasonably well. The overall projection of Swami's mind with Narayan's Realistic portraiture of the school boy has made Swaminathan a living character.

In the final analysis, it may also be pointed out that Swami's innocence seems to have been viewed through the writer's bi- focal vision of comic irony. Narayan also seems to have employed the strategy of the rite de passage as the erring boy realized his folly and returns to the commonplace world of reality. It may be too preposterous to imagine a spiritual growth as such in Swami, but the subtle suggestion of the dawning of his realization may not be altogether waved off. Swami does not seem to be a mere flat character in Narayan.

Swami's friends may be viewed from two points of view: their individual delineation may be taken as the projecting medium of different shades of innocence and treating them as the psychological projection of Swami's mind. Somu, the Monitor of the class seems to lead the friends. He exemplifies the figure of confidence and is known as the uncle of the class. He has also earned the reputation of being hardly ever questioned by the teachers. Though not a brilliant student, somu has an easy way of taking things. The reader reads all about these
traits through the narrator’s *telling*. There seems to be a subtle suggestion of the egoist and a ring of innocence in Somu. Somu however ends up as a thumb-nail character.

Mani, the most dynamic of Swami’s friends, is the class bully. The boy with the club is chronic repeater. Although he bullied everybody and it was said that when a teacher tried to prod him he “nearly lost his life”, Mani was Swami’s confidant. Narayan makes a judicious combination of *Telling* and *Showing* in Mani’s characterization.

Interestingly, Mani’s devilry has an inevitable ring of innocence. Many an instance proves that his reputation as the muscle-man remains not more than a myth. Suffice it to recall his confrontation with Rajam, his demythicizing fight with Somu, and his dread of his own uncle. What seems to be important is, despite playing the proverbial bully, Mani is remembered not for the dark colours in his portraiture but for the deep lines of innocence. One may recall how desperately he tries to squeeze the leaked questions out of the school clerk in exchange of the brinjals. The episode underlines the devil’s ignorance and naivete and leaves the reader amused. But it is in the parting scene that Mani, the innocent devil exemplifies life’s discrepancy and a sense of ambiguity.

Mani, in the final analysis, may be regarded as a psychological projection of Swami’s fantasy. In his restoring Rajam’s friendship to Swami, he also seems to play a catalyst. One may be tempted to take him as a possible installing figure.
of Vasu in *TMEM*. He may, however, be taken as a fascinating study of devilish innocence. As for the characterization, Mani, though remains a cardish character, has the potentialities of a round one.

Sankar, reminding us of Narayan’s flair for (God’s) names, has been realized as a type-cast, a “Mr.Know All” of the class. He stands out distinctly with his characteristic traits. Once again Narayan resorts to telling as he delineates this character. Funnily enough, we are given two diagonally opposite images of Sankar. As a scholar-extraordinary, he is been always respected for his scholarship (even by Mani) and is rumoured to have outwitted even the teachers. The other image of Sankar, creating more amusement, may also be regarded as a type-cast, conceived by the school boy’s innocent imagination. To a section of the students he is known as a psychophant who earns his high percentage of marks by “washing clothes for his master”10. He remains a one liner flat character.

Samuel, reminiscent of Golding’s Piggy in *Lord of the Flies*, is better known as the ‘pea’ on account of his size. The “pea” as Rajeev Taranath suggests, exemplifies the average and the ordinary as the recurring traits of the Narayan heroes: “He was just ordinary, on outstanding virtue of muscle or intellect”11. Like Mani, Samuel too is Swami’s close friend and confidant and “the bond between them was laughter”11. Although a one liner, Samuel symbolizes the novelist’s point of view: “They were able to see together the same absurdities and
incongruities in think. The most trivial and unnoticeable thing to others would tickle them to death”11.

Rajam, the last and a sort of foreign friend of Swami, is yet another unique exemplary of innocence. To the average and ordinary Swaminathan Rajam remains an ideal sort. As he, epitomizing the egoistic nature and the snobbish attitude, lands in the uneventful and quiet life of Swaminathan, the latter’s very existence seems to reverberate with excitement. Thus, although Narayan has given him enough attributes to stand on his own, he may indeed be regarded as the symbolic representation of Swami’s psychological yearnings and egoistic dreams. Rajam too is a type-cast: an innocent snob. Narayan’s observant eye and the reportorial experience help him to portray this Indian English Sahib’s son with all the stock attributes of that class.

In the treatment of Rajam’s innocence, Narayan seems to have stressed some noticeable and refreshingly endearing comic overtones. Suffice it to recall a few comic instances realized through the litter snob. As the only Knowledgeable member, Rajam fails to understand the words like ‘obliged’ and ‘remittance’ in the letter send by Messers Binns from Madras and ultimately returns the letter to the firm stating, “We are sorry that you send me somebody’s letter. We are returning this somebody’s letter. We are returning this somebody’s letter. Please send our things immediately”12. His comment on the villard bat, “There are actual springs inside the bat, so that when you touch the ball it flies”13, his playing the role of an
adult when he invites Swami and Mani as trying to show off by ordering and
humiliating the cook and finally boasting that, "I went in and gave the cook such a
kick for his impertinence that he is lying unconscious in the kitchen" have an
unmistakable comicality.

Rajam, like Mani and Swami, has the basically endearing quality: the
quality of being good to others. He exempting it on several occasions: his
forgiving of Mani’s hostility and accepting him as a friend, his restoring of the
valued friendship between ‘enemies,’ and finally his supposedly expressed
gestures of forgiving Swami ‘crime’ and accepting him as a friend, underline
Rajam’s basic good nature. He, however, remains a type with some rare and
illuminating traits.

Swami and Friends remains Narayan’s major study of innocence. It may be
essential to note certain patterns and issues emerging out of Narayan’s treatment
of innocence in the novella. By and large, Swami and Friends remains a pace
setter and, therefore, the patterns and issues to be noted, become a recurring
feature in the later Malgudi novels.

Swami and Friends seems to deal with, although unobtrusively, the theme
of illusion versus reality. The theme seems to be Narayan’s capsulized notion of
life to project which the novelist uses the lense of innocence. If the traditionally
conceived middle – class family frame functions as a sort of backdrop, the cultural
ethos serves as the stage for the ‘central consciousness’ to enact his assigned role.
The progress or the spiritual growth of the protagonist may be viewed in his (as a deviating individual) realizing the folly and return to the world of reality. The cyclic structure of the novel underlines the protagonist’s journey, corresponding to Narayan’s similar notion of the universe. The innocent boys do not display any marked growth in Swami and Friends but, taken symbolically, the deflation of Swami’s ego and his getting chastened, may be regarded as his realization indicating a subtle growth of his consciousness. What one witnesses at the end of the novel is the restoring of the balance, temporarily topsy - turvied, the reconcilement of the warring issues overpowering the entire scene for sometime, and finally the return of the deviator to the world of normalcy. Narayan seems to employ the strategy of rite de passage to underline the protagonist’s realization. The novel closes on the suggestion of a positive assertion of the average and the ordinary.

Besides Swami and Friends, as a full-fledged study of innocence, Narayan presents some child portraits and sketches underlining innocence. The section, considering the child delineation in Narayan, may be confined to his novels only, although the writer has a fascinating gallery of child-portraits like Dodu and Swami displayed through his short stories.

The first innocent face peeping out of the Malgudi novels, after Swami and friends, belongs to Chandran’s brother seenu, in (TBA). He is of Swami’s age and displays more or less the latter’s mental mark - up including his cricket fascination.
Although Seenu remains a blurred figure among Narayan's children, he plays a purposeful role in the novel. The cricket fan, totally unaware of Chandran's frustration, on account of the latter's unrequited love, tells him to "buy a junior Willard bat" for him as the dejected lover leaves for Madras. If the boy exemplifies utter ignorance of the adult world, he, although symbolically, stresses the absurdity and incongruity in life. He also seems to be suggesting the paradoxical and ironical nature of life. In terms of characterization Seenu remains a one-liner or better still, a pencil sketch.

The next canvas a trio from _The Dark Room_, Babu, older than Swaminathan and his two younger sisters, though given some individual traits, play extremely small roles. They are basically realized as stock characters and types. For instance, the girl's inherent fascination for the dolls, Babu's for cricket and their basic interest in the story speak for the typicality of the children's world. Narayan seems to project the authentic glimpses of the childhood behaviors as the children sharply react to the absence of their mother and display spontaneous happiness as the returns, respond characteristically to the changing mood of their father and, finally, get carried away by the cook's mysterious tale: "the girls every nearly threw Babu and held him away from the cook's visual range".

The children in _TDR_ may also be viewed symbolically. The daughters, Kamala and Sumati, seem to stress the mother's role played by Savitri. It becomes apparent in Savitri's overall concern for them. As the girls feel excited at the
doll's display, the dolls seem to reflect Savitri's past of gay abundance and
carefree world contrasted against her dull and caged existence of the present. It is
her anxiety and deep concern for the children that Savitri pockets her pride and
returns home. As for Babu, he seems to symbolize the male point of view. His
blunt refusal to be with the sisters and assertion as a male member may remind
one the Wordsworthian epigram: the child is father of the man: As for the
characterization in The Dark Room, the trio remains, in Forster's world "as thin as
the gramophone records".

Narayan's autobiographical novel, The English Teacher, presents Leela
(Krishnan's daughter) as she grows from a seven month old baby to a four year
old child. Her character is realized through a judicious combination of Telling and
showing. It is perhaps the autobiographical element that makes Narayan tender as
he delicately delineates the child's innocent character. The novelist reveals
Leela's character through four distinct phases in the course of the novel.

The first phase marks the happy arrival of the baby, underlining the
affectionate care of the mother and the excessive anxiety of her father. Narayan
seems to have used her arrival to project the protagonist's sense of life and his
delicately realized concern for human relationship.

Leela, in the second phase, grows under the benevolent and tender care of
her father, after the premature death of her mother. She asks innocent questions
like, "Father, why is the door shut?" and equally innocently accepts the
explanation that, “Mother is given a bath”\textsuperscript{19}. When the father tells her that she may be able to read a lot of stories all by herself if she pleases Goddess Saraswati, Leela bowls the story-teller asking him: “Oh! What will you do then?”\textsuperscript{20} the child certainly creates a ripple of innocent laughter. One may, perhaps, feel that Leela of his phase grows and looks more mature than her tender age would permit.

The third phase marks Leela more as a symbolic character than as a motherless innocent child. She initiates her father to the headmaster's \textit{Leave Them Alone} school and eventually becomes instrumental in Krishnan's obtaining the essence of pure joy and good in the company of the children. The little girl seems to play the catalyst in the life of her own father.

Leela in the final phase too may be viewed symbolically. In the rehearsal of the roles, it is the teacher who seems to learn the root cause of human misery from his own daughter. In other words, it is through Leela that Krishnan ultimately realizes the essence of human life in the context of the law of Karma: “The law of life can't be avoided ...... All struggle and misery in life is due to our attempt to arrest this law...... A profound unmitigated loneliness is the only truth of life. All else is false”\textsuperscript{21}.

Considering Leela’s character in its entirety one may view that although she being as a tenderly conceived innocent child, she ends up as a symbolic character. One may venture to say that Narayan’s Leela, at least in the second half
of the novel, look like a child wearing an outsize garment of an adult and recalls the epigram: The child is father of the man.

As one continues to analyze Narayan's treatment of innocence, a few memorable young characters come into view. They are treated as a group because, basically they are not conceived as full – fledged child characters and in fact play adults in the course of time. The group consists of the young Balu in (TFE), the growing child Raju in (TG) and the school boy Mali in (TVS).

The first impression that Margayya's only son Balu – taken as God's gift, conceived after the parents' prayers and offering to the God of the seven hills – gives is one of a completely spoilt and pampered child. Of the three, Balu is the only one who is realized as the enfant terrible. He demands all the attention and continues howling till he gets what he wants. A shrewd child, Balu knows the weakness of his father and fully exploits it. He is also realized as a sort of eccentric child. The first mark of Balu's idiosyncracy is his obsession for all sorts of miniature articles: "The boy revelled in vision of miniature articles - a tiny engine, tiny cows, tiny table, tiny everything, of the maximum size of a mustard seed"^22, Balu's streak of eccentricity is prominently seen as he intentionally gets his finger burnt touching the hot metal plate of the lamp. If the act exemplifies his utter ignorance of reality, it may, however, be viewed symbolically, as Alphonso-Karkala suggests, as the projection of Balu's getting burnt in the fire of lust as a young man.
Interestingly, Narayan’s own childhood dread of schooling seems to have been transmitted to all the school going children in the Malgudi novels. Balu’s dread and total lack of interest in learning may be attributed to the pampered and spoilt child’s easy and indulgent life. Although his hatred of school is realized as the natural attribute of the spoilt child, it has rich symbolic overtones. It has thematic relevance and may also taken as the projection of Margayya’s slighting attitude towards the Goddess Saraswati.

But Balu is chiefly realized as an eccentric child. Significantly, his eccentricity is primarily dramatized the formidable Malgudi gutter. The first mad act occurs as the reckless child throws Margayya’s account book into the dark water of the gutter. It may basically be taken as the wild but innocent act of the boy little knowing that the account book was in fact Maragayya’s bread-giver. It may, however, be interpreted symbolically as it precipitates Margayya’s crisis and has a thematic relevance. The other, equally eccentric, act of Balu is dramatized as he tears off the board record and throws the bits into the gutter again. The second act may not, however, be taken as an innocent one. In fact it underlines the end of Balu’s innocence or a departure from the world of innocence.

In the delineation of Balu’s character (as a child), Narayan presents yet another projection of innocence: a sort of innocence of the eccentric. One also notes that Narayan’s child does no more have the pureglow of innocence markedly displayed in the early portraits. There also seems to be a suggestion of the
deviating tendency in the present portrayal of the child. As a character, Balu remains a typecast and plays a catalyst for Margayya.

Narayan presents one more face of innocence in *The Financial Expert*. As a matter of fact the infant son of Balu remains a face only, possibly the only infant character in the Narayan novel to have symbolic implications. The infant epitomizes Margayya's restored world of values and family relationship. But, more importantly, the infant also symbolizes the continuity of life and a meaningful struggle for existence.

On the scale of innocence the young boy Raju in *TG* stands between the only eccentric and pampered Balu in *TFE* and the reserved loner Mali in *TVS*. Narayan presents Raju, like his cousin Balu, without physical attributes but, certainly with characteristically childlike qualities.

As a child Raju seems to have enjoyed the love, moderately through, of his parents. The father, in particular, seems to have a deciding influence in every sphere of the young boy's life. The influence is first felt as Raju, to his utter discomfort and disliking, is send to school. It is again the father who asks him to mind the shop. It may be noted that the inherently free spirit of the boy naturally hates the world of control and confinement. It is here that Raju shares the common feelings of his age group, dominated by the childlike attitudes.

As the town prepares itself for the installation of the railway station too gets excited. He spends most of his time at the sight in front of his house and gradually
develops a sense of possession for it. Although a purely innocuous feeling of the child to want to possess things, in the context of the later development in his life, the innocent instinct acquires a psychological dimension. In other words, his childhood instinct to possess things may be taken as Raju’s inherent trait which was to be fully realized in his wanting to possess another man’s wife. At the location of the station, mixing with other urchins, Raju not only picks up certain swear-words but he also uses them. An act, which may be endorsed by the child psychologists; but even here, one, may see a symbolic projection of Raju’s inclination for forbidden things, as it was to be fully realized in his disastrous and scandalous affair with another man’s wife. It is in the same line of thought that one may relate the young boy’s fascination for the train, as a temptingly foreign object, to his future affair with Rosie.

The influence of his mother also makes a life-long mark on Raju. His childhood yearning for story is fulfilled by his mother. She tells him a particular story of Devaka umpteen times. This apparently simple act too has a thematic relevance. It may be taken, unconsciously though, as the mother’s preparing the son for the role of a saint (who was required to tell stories to his devotees). Again, Narayan tells us how the mother keeps shifting the sugar tin-pot to a higher and naturalistic act, the novelist seems to be suggesting two things simultaneously: if the shifting of the sugar-pot speaks for the care taking mother, Raju’s wanting to
reach for it suggests his fascination for alluring sweetness in life reflected later in his attraction for Rosie.

The death of Raju’s father may also be viewed symbolically. In a way, with his death also disappears the controlling hand the figure of authority, things any child may dislike. Raju’s looking after the railway shop, after his father’s death and thereby playing the adult, may be read as the end of Raju’s innocent life and the beginning of the experienced one.

Raju, like Balu, is mostly realized as a child – type displaying the traits of that age. His character, however, has more symbolic overtones. Again, in terms of the child – delineation, his instinct for deviation seems to be more marked than the earlier children in Narayan’s Novels. In the final analysis, Raju too suggests the epigrammatic: The child is father of the man.

As we turn to The Vendor of Sweets to note Narayan’s treatment of innocence, we are given such a flimsy vision if it that we may even doubt its very existence. The last of the trio, Mali in (TVS), though plays a significant role at his later stage of life, as a young boy he remains a blurred figure. It is through Jagan that we hear his being a loner, a motherless boy and rather than a reserved son. His fascination for the headache pills may be taken as a childlike trait; it, however, underlines, symbolically though, Mali ’s instinctive desire for the forbidden things to be projected fully in his later life (his going to America and bringing Grace home). As a child character, Mali remains a thumbnail sketch.
Considering the trio in their entirety, one may tend to agree with Uma Parameswaran that in Narayan’s later novels, “Children are purely secondary who highlight the idiosyncracy or attitudes of adults”\textsuperscript{23}. In fact Narayan’s interest in the child portrayals seems to be waning in his later novels. It may be attributed to the fact that the child happens to be just a small part of the adult character. One may possibly suggest that the novelist seems to be preoccupied with large and more serious issues of life. Or, perhaps, it may be Narayan’s way of suggestion that as “The world is too much with us” (in the context of modernity), pure innocence simply does not blossom here.

In \textit{Mr. Sampath} child delineation may be taken as mere pencil sketches presented by Narayan. Ramu, Srinivas’s son, comes to be realized as a one liar. In fact he may be taken almost as non-existent unless, of course, one is determined to look for him. As an individual he makes a pathetic appearance on account of the total negligence of his father, Srinivas. The hair-thin character may, however, is taken as an oblique comment on Srinivas’s unhealthy obsession with the press and his total neglect of the household.

Later in the novel, Sampth introduces his daughters to Srinivas. Their number (shocking the family-planners), their faded and almost worn-out dresses, and, to top it all, their most mediocre presentation of the dance sequence strike the reader as a pathetic and pitiable scenario of the otherwise colourful and gay film enacted, and presented by the roguish Sampath. The daughters, suggestively
though, seem to comment on Sampath’s household image as a caring father and a
householder.

The same story of child delineation is repeated in *Waiting for the Mahatma.* In fact, the picture becomes paler and vaguer in this novel. The children, as the
nameless figures, make the most static presentment. At the refugee’s camp they
appear as the innocent victims of communal riots. Once again the novelist’s
symbolic intention becomes clearer as Bharati, playing their “mother,” gives them
“the names of flowers and birds”\(^\text{24}\). The children in *(WTM)* as characters remain
absolutely airy.

As we consider the nature and treatment of innocence realized through
different shades of child characters in the Narayan novel, certain observations may
be made as regards the novelist’s child delineation. At the outset the novelist does
not seem to be interested in presenting his child characters with physical attributes.
Instead, the children are realized through their characteristically typical roles.
Most of them have two dimensions and some have just one.

Narayan does not deal with the psychological studies of his child
characters. He seems to be content with the general notion of child psychology.
But he offers his types or the stock figures certain idiosyncratic traits: Rajam for
instance, plays a snob in *Swami and Friends* and Balu plays an eccentric in *(TFE)*.

The full- fledged studies of innocence (Swami in *(SAF)* have been realized
through a two- pronged strategy: the innocent perception of the adult-world is
simultaneously filtered by the authorial commentary. But the characters, not presented as full-fledged cases of innocence, seem to have been projected symbolically: Ramu in (MS) and Balu's infant son in (TFE) may be cited as instances.

The treatment of innocence has also been realized with the double awareness of perception. If the innocent experience is generally viewed in the Blakean sense of it (as the divine innocence), it has often been viewed in the Wordsworthian sense (reflected in his epigram: The child is father of the man), projecting either the adult mind (Leela in (TET) or the adult role of the child (Raju in (TG)).

The foregoing analysis of the nature and treatment of innocence in the Narayan novel may give us a fairly good idea about his child characterization. It may be essential to note the child delineation, synoptically though, in the novels of other writers, to get a wider perspective to view the child characterization in Narayan’s novels.

Anand’s Coolie, a study of a teenager, may make a striking contrast with Narayan’s Swami and Friends. Munoo, the coolie, is inseparably linked with his creator’s keen awareness of the existing class discrimination and the horrifying poverty in a section of the society in India. These basic factors have a telling influence on the consciousness of the young hero, Munoo. Suffice it to say that if the social concern has been regarded as Anand’s forte, it may never be called
Narayan’s cup of coffee. And, if the portrayal of the underdog, with surrealistic details of the milieu and the obviously identifiable sections of the society make Anand a committed writer, Narayan, the creator of *Swami and Friends*, is anything but committed.

Class has never been a deciding factor in Narayan’s child portrayals. And when the caste appears (in *Swami and Friends* for instance), Narayan’s comic filter, as in Ebenezar’s denouncing of the Hindu gods and extolling Jesus Christ, turns the whole episode into a sort of hilarious experience. As for the class, what Walsh says about the Narayan’s middle class in general may apply equally in case of his children as well: they “are neither too well off not to know the rub of financial worry nor too indigent to be brutalized by want and hunger”\(^{25}\).

Narayan’s children, Swami, Balu, Raju, Mali and others, have been provided with almost cozy and comfortable life and a loving and caring parental background. This may, indeed, not be the kind of Indian spectacle which Naipaul witnessed: “The India of Narayan’s novels is not the India the visitor sees. He tells the Indian truth. Too much that is overwhelming has been left out; too much has been taken for granted”\(^{26}\).

To this kind of criticism, one may point out that Narayan’s creative perception does not focus on the slum areas of human colonies and expose the squalor and stench surrounding them, or, people squatting and defecating openly.
Narayan, instead, views the moderately well-off society whose members find themselves engaged in the mundane but equally happy chores of life.

Narayan seems to be content with the general human psychology and does not deal with the mind-boggling issues in life. Two instances from Swami and Friends may be contrasted against the two from the works of other writers. When Swaminathan, unable to get a piece of cloth to dust the books, notices one under his baby brother and acts fast: "In a flash, he stopped, rolled the baby over, pulled out the cloth, and wash off. He held his mother responsible for all his troubles, and disturbing the baby and snatching its cloth gave him great relief." Undoubtedly, it is a funny scene. The action reflects Swami’s state of mind — he hates to be bothered in his vacations — and has been realized authentically. It gives him great relief. But that is all. It is in this context that one may recall O’Connor’s delightful story "My Oedipus Complex." Particularly significant is the young hero Larry’s psychological upheaval on account of the stranger who shares his beloved mother and the devil of a baby that monopolized her. Later, to avenge the monopolizer, he intentionally pinches the infant and feels happy at the latter’s discomfiture. The other instance is related to Swaminathan’s obsession to possess a hoop. In fact, the entire hoop episode has been realistically dramatized. Swami’s mad desire to own the one, his wild and fantastic dream of it and finally his total disappointment and frustration has been authentically brought out by Narayan. But, contrasting Swami’s obsession against Paul’s mind-boggling experience in
the story, “The Rocking Horse Winner” may underline the striking difference between the two. The whispers about money, young Paul’s desperate efforts to make his mother happy, the psychological torture the boy undergoes and finally the painful spectacle of his death belongs to the world of fantasy and psychology, absolutely unknown to Swami, to Narayanan.

In terms of child delineation Swami’s forest escapade in Swami and Friends stands out. The episode, as has already been pointed out, speaks for Narayan’s admirable insight into child psychology. The nightmarish experience the innocent boy undergoes has probably no parallel in Narayan. But, despite his harrowing experiences, as Swami is brought back safely, thanks mainly to the cartman Ranga, everything seems to be appearing in the preordainedly conceived world. Huck to Mark Twain’s Hucklebery Finn may be recalled in the context of Swami’s forest escapade. Obviously, the young American’s widely conceived sea journey and his extraordinarily realized experiences on the large canvas of the world seem to be inconceivable in the four-inch confines of Swami’s Malgudi. The entire escape may, however, be viewed symbolically as Narayan’s employment of the rite de passage underlining the realization of the erring child.

Finally, one may recall Golding’s Lord of the Flies in the context of Swami and Friends. Considering both the novels in their entirety, what appears strikingly noteworthy is the nature of innocence in them. It may be said of the boys in Swami and Friends that although they indulge in the praks, as for instance
are seen enjoying the discomfiture of the cartman’s boy as they play the adults and torture the former, they may never play a dangerously rough game. Mani’s devilry, too, remains more of a myth than an actuality and even the torturing of the cartman’s boy eventually turns into a funny episode. The milk of Narayan’s boys may never have the devilish desire to bite into the “bloody beast” like the boys in Lord of the Flies as they sing: “Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!”

Human life is often compared to journey which begins in childhood and ends (normally) in old age. Although the two stages of the life-span, namely childhood and old age, are poles apart, possibly in every sense of the term, they, however, seem to share one trait in common: innocence. If it is the most naturally realized trait of childhood, it may have a symbolic realization in old age as well. An individual at the end of the life-span realizing the illusory nature of experience may once again enter the holy state of innocence. Since old age seems to repeat and reflect the childhood state with a variance, it is often regarded as the second childhood. It may be pointed out that although every old character in Narayan may be viewed through the typology of innocence, the present section may deal with only those characters who are primarily realized through the second childhood. The other old characters may be viewed through those typologies which they belong to.

The concept of second childhood has a universal endorsement. Shakespeare, for instance, seems to be describing it in its popular sense: “Last
sense of all,.../ Is second childishness and mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

Considering the nature of the typological study, we may, however, take second childhood in its essentially basic sense of innocence. It is primarily for the divinely conceived childhood trait of innocence that the old ones seem to be impelled to return to it. It may be significant to see how it happens: as the individual heads towards the other side of existence, the inevitable and the inescapable phenomenon called death whose awareness may be making him numb, it may be imagined that at the penultimate stage he would gradually shed off all the accumulated layers of (illusory) experience and stand in the pure robes of innocence.

Granny, in (SAF), seems to lead the innocently conceived old folks in Narayan’s novels. It may be relevant to note the significance of the granny character in the traditional Indian family. Granny occupies a unique position in the joint-family system which, though fast disappearing, has still some relevance, at least in Narayan’s India. One normally associated her with a widow, having a longish but ascetically arduous life, Left to her own self, she has an isolated and rather lonely, not necessarily unhappy, existence. It is here that the grandchild, also facing the same predicament finds her as the only confidant and develops an inevitable link and attachment with her. The granny grandchild often makes an inseparable team and exemplifies the bond of mutual consideration. Both of them
basically need each other chiefly as listeners. If the Granny wants someone to listen to her stories from the mythology and the puranas, the grandchild desperately needs a listener for his inexhaustible tit-bits and a confidant for his secrets. But most importantly, the granny imbibing the traditional orthodoxy, epitomizes the cultural norms sharply realized through her religiosity.

Significantly, Granny in (SAF) is realized as the most respected and important member of the Srinivas family. As a character, too, Granny seems to have won the favour of writer. It may be noted that the novelist, who shows neither patience nor interest to tell the story of the new arrival (the birth of a baby), has, so it seems, all time in the world to talk about Granny and devotes a full chapter and several mentions for the old soul in Swami and Friends. Her significance in Swami’s life cannot be exaggerated. She seems to be waiting every time to play his patient and eager listener. Swami, on his part, bursting with the latest news or dying to share a secret find Granny the Godsend. In short Granny’s very existence seems to be earmarked for the grandson.

As regards the nature of her innocence, it seems to have been realized through her association with her grandson. Their relationship epitomizes the old proverb: Birds of a feather flock together. Therefore, to understand the nature of Granny’s innocence is to read her story in relation to Swami.

To begin with, if Granny’s garrulous nature is fully reflected in her untiring energy to relate her family associates to Swami, she equally exemplifies the trait
of forgetfulness. The naïve soul finds it awfully difficult to recollect the details of
the story of the "gold medal." To Swami’s utter misery and annoyance she keeps
mixing up his friends and innocently puts Rajam’s head on Mani’s or even the
Pea’s shoulders. And much to Swami’s chagrin, the old lady proves to be
shockingly ignorant and naively confesses, to the utter disbelief of her modern
grandchild, that she hardly knows anything about cricket.

As one notices Granny’s innocence, realized primarily through her
ignorance of the new world of Swami, one also notices the novelist’s comic filter
to reflect it. In the final analysis Granny as the member of the second childhood
lives up to the role. As a character, she is realized as a type and symbolizes the
cultural ethos.

Granny in (SAF) installs her prototypes in Narayan’s later novels. One
encounters Sriram’s granny in (WTM) or Raman’s aunt in (TPS). These two
characters are old enough to be qualified for the second childhood.

But the novelist does not seem to have cut out their roles to stress naiveté or
innocence. They may, however, be dealt with under the typology of sanyasa.
Krishnan’s mother in (TET), although plays the granny, is mainly realized to stress
the influence or traditional orthodoxy, and may also be dealt with under the
typology of sanyasa. One also encounters quite a few grandpas in Malgudi novels,
who either having too short a role to play --Krishnan’s father in (TET) or the
septuagenarian in (TMEM) -- or stressing other dominant traits and therefore to be
considered under the typologies, do not figure as the members of the second childhood.

But there seems to be a unique character who, though neither plays the child nor an old man, qualifies to be an innocent soul. One may recall Raju’s last role of Swami in (TG). On the last day of the feast the Swami, despite his extremely weak condition, insists to be taken to the water basin. Since it was difficult to hold him on his feet, the narrator says: “Raju ... had a tendency to flop ... They held him as if he were a baby”\(^{31}\).

Read symbolically, it may mean that the Charlton, having cast off the sinner’s rebels, and played the selfless and sacrificial role for the community, seems to achieve a childlike divinity of innocence. It is in the context of Raju’s transformation into a childlike state that one may recall a scene where Dimmesdale, the suffering and guilty priest, is compared to a child in Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter: “He still walked onward, if that movement could be described, which rather resembled the wavering effort of an infant with its mother’s arms in view, outstretched to tempt him forward”\(^{32}\).

Thus, Narayan’s notion of innocence does not remain confined to the obviously thought of children. He shows its realization through the second childhood too. Symbolically speaking, it may be taken as experience bowing before innocence. It may also be taken as the assertion of the ordinary.
The rustics in the Malgudi novels, as the rustics in Hardy’s novels for instance, appear chiefly as background characters. And true to the nature of the background characters, besides expressing the voice of the community (Vox Populi), also play a chorus to the main action. It is through the background rustics that the significance of the flat characters seems to be realized.

Turning to the rustics in the Narayan novel, our first encounter is with the rustic called Ranga in (SAF). The rustic from the neighbouring village, passing through the Mempi Forest in his bullock cart, notices, by some preordained scheme perhaps, the unconscious and feverish Swami lying on the open ground. Ranga acts fast. He takes the nearly dead Swami to the Forest Officer encamping nearby and thus plays a crucial role in restoring Swami to life.

Ranga is a minor character, a one liner to be precise. But although he is bereft of any individuality and exists as a mere dot, his character illuminates for a moment as he plays a symbolically conceived role of a saviour. In the final analysis, he is realized as a ficelle, a character serving a specific purpose.

Following the pace-setting trend of Swami and Friends, Ranga seems to install the rustics in the later Narayan novels. As a rustic, Ranga is realized as a naïve, unlettered, God-fearing and essentially benevolent person.

The rustics in Narayan’s The Bachelor of Arts figure with all the characteristics of that class symbolized in Ranga (Swami and Friends). Interestingly, the rustics in The Bachelor of Arts too seem to be saving the
protagonist, Chandran, if not from death, certainly, and more importantly, from self-deception.

The rustics in *The Bachelor of Arts*, as a typical village community, receive the desperado Chandran as a sanyasi and regard him as a genuine ascetic 'under the vow of silence.' In their taking the fake Sadhu as a true sanyasi, they are realized as the gullible community. Ironically enough, when Chandran, pricked by conscience, decides to leave Koopal village, the gullibles entreat him to stay on and thus, in a way, compel him to play a sanyasi. The rustics in *The Bachelor of Arts* may be realized from two points of view. As they entreat the sanyasi to stay on and thus bless them with his spiritual presence, they seem to install a similar village community in *The Guide*. It is here that they symbolize the traditionally realized religiosity and their essentially spiritual need for a holy presence of a saint. One may also note the undaunted faith of the community in the spiritual power of an ascetic. The rustics may also be realized as they play the choric roles. It is in this symbolic sense that their presence, though mute, acquires wider dimensions as the collective unconscious before which Chandran, the dissembler, squirms and finally quits the scene, giving up the borrowed role of a sanyasi. As the faith in the rustics entreats the fake saint to stay on, and the collective unconscious of the rustics almost compels him to leave the scene, Narayan's irony acquires a double dimension. But more important than the irony seems to be Chandran's realization of the illusory existence dawns through the rustics.
The Dark Room presents the rustics unlike the usually conceived background characters. Here, they seem to play different roles. Appearing as a pair of husband and wife, they do not give the feel of the community and have rather individualized roles. The rustics are: Mari and his wife Ponni. Mari may recall *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, as he works as a day time locksmith and plays a petty burglar at night, visiting the neighbouring Malgudi. Interestingly enough, Mari, like his cousin Ranga in *SAF*, plays a saviour as he, playing the preordainedly conceived role, saves the drowning Savitri whom at first he takes for “Mohini, the Temptress Devil”\(^{34}\). Mari is, perhaps, the only comic rustic in the Malgudi novel. When, for instance, a coughing old man paralyzes his burglary, Mari quips: “Your cough will burst you soon, don’t worry”\(^{35}\). Mari is also a drunkard but, unlike many of his prototypes he is a devout husband and loves and respects his wife and strikes a clear contrast to Ramani, Savitri’s husband. In his last appearance as he cries “Locks Repaired”\(^{36}\) and as Savitri feels unable to call him back, the rustic underlines her helplessness. Although a minor character, Mari is illumined as the saviour of precious life and becomes one of the ficelles in the Narayan novel.

Ponni, the overpowering wife of Mari, is realized from two specific angles, the comic and the symbolic. As a comic caricature, Ponni is realized as a cocksure woman who has mastered the art of totally paralyzing the drunkard. In fact she feels thrilled to relate the story of controlling the drunken husband: “I trip him up
from behind and push him down, and sit on his back for a little while; he will
wriggle a little, swear at me, and then sleep"37. In her symbolic role Ponni, as a
happy and respected wife, strikes a clear contrast to Savitri. In fact it is through
Ponni that Narayan presents the perfectly happy wife in her primitive surrounding.
In the final analysis she may be realized as a foil to Savitri. Narayan presents yet
another spectacle of the rustic community in The Financial Expert. The rustics in
this novel may be viewed through different angles. At the outset they are
introduced as the ‘blanket-wrapped rustics’38 squatting in semi-circle and telling
their perpetual economic problems to Margayya, (TFE), under the banyan tree. As
one considers them in the context of the typology of innocence, their entire
existence appears illustrative of their naivete. The rustics from the neighbouring
villages, being basically unlettered, fail to follow Margayya’s quizzical ways.
But, sandwiched miserably between the humiliating harassment of the bank
officials and the perennial financial worries, they have no other way left but to
accept the verdict of their master, Margayya. Narayan underlines as irony in
human life as the naïve rustics regard the cunning schemer as their saviour.

As regards the character delineation in The Financial Expert, some rustics
seem to have been given individual traits. One may recall the perpetual borrower
named Kanda in this context. Says the narrator: “He was a gambler and drank
heavily, and he always asked for money on the pretext of having to marry his
daughters, of whom he had good number”39. Although such caricatures underline
deft touches of comicality, they seem to be basically cast to project Margayya’s native shrewdness as *The Financial Expert*. Most of the rustics, however, are chiefly realized, as in *The Bachelor of Arts*, as the voice of the community. They also reflect the cultural ethos and perform, suggestively though, the choric function. Their importance in Margayya’s life can hardly be exaggerated. They are realized as an inseparable part of the rise and fall of his fortune. The final scene, as one anticipates Margayya’s return to the folds of the banyan tree, may be symbolically interpreted as the rustic community’s willingness to accept the prodigal son. It may also indicate the community’s mute but suggestive assertiveness.

Taken in their entirety, the rustics give an impression of an improved version of character delineation as compared to the earlier types. Although the rustics in *The Financial Expert* are flat and serve as the background characters, they also play a centrally related role. Thus, if they are realized as the sympathizing and protective community in the context of Margayya, they may be symbolically regarded as Margayya’s essential naivete, goodness and foibles.

*Waiting for the Mahatma* may stir our memory of Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* which admirably evokes the spirit of the village community. In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, as Sriram visits a village, as a Quit India campaigner, one hardly gets the essential feel of the village or the necessary awareness of the village community. The rustics, far from being realized for their thematic relevance, as in
The Financial Expert, have in fact been presented as one or two liners. They do not serve the basic purpose of the background characters or play the chronic role. The rustics, however, seem qualified to be realized through the typology of innocence.

At the very outset, the rustics exhibit their illiteracy and utter lack of formal education. Surprisingly enough, they seem to be totally unaware of the important happenings— as big as the national movement and, in fact, seem to have totally isolated and insulated themselves from the rest of the country. No wonder, then, if the Quit India movement has little significance for them. Utterly ignorant ("Will Mahatmaji become our Emperor, Sir?" asks one), they appear slothfully self-complacent and would be happy to live forever under the Raj. In the final analysis the rustics in Waiting for the Mahatma are realized as the nameless and faceless community and exemplify the static society.

But Narayan seems to have abundantly compensated for his extremely thin and sketchy depiction of the rustics in Waiting for the Mahatma, in (TG). The rustics in the novel, besides displaying their general and formal elements of naivete and innocence, the threading principle of the Malgudi novels, may also be viewed for their symbolic roles with ironic overtones. Significantly, the novel depicts the village community—once again realized on the outskirts of Malgudi— as the shaping force of the protagonist's destiny. Typically, the total awareness of the village comes to us as the protagonist keeps noticing the cyclic seasons as the
landscape changes. He also comments on the different village festivals as the devotees offer him the seasonal offerings of fruits. And, barring a solitary instance when the villagers under the disquieting tension of the famine lose their heads and get involved in the quarrel at the village they are chiefly realized through the temple precinct only.

But Narayan’s basic intention in telescoping a village does not seem to evoke the naïve spirit of the Indian village as such. Mangala presents a different spectacle in The Guide. The very name seems to be charged with spiritual ardour. In fact with its river and the temple, the village seems to symbolize the idyllic and the spiritual India. Only the central image of the spiritual guru was missing. And, as if by some mysteriously conceived preordained scheme, the figure of a guru too walks into the temple.

It must have been a moment’s decision. As the rustics first beheld the ascetic, the thought to accept him as their guru must have dawned on them like a lightning, like a revelation. In the sweeping action that follows, the rustics are enveloped into the unique irony of the world. The rustics not only take the ex-convict and the sinner for a sanyasi, they also accept him as their spiritual guide and play themselves the role of his disciples. The village community, firmly rooted in the culture of the soil, might have plainly taken the arrival of the sanyasi and his playing The Guide as the part and parcel of the preordained scheme of life. The community would neither question the sudden appearance of life. The
community would neither question the sudden appearance of the ascetic nor would they doubt its purpose. The relationship of the rustic disciples with their guide has throughout been presented with ironic overtones. Thus, although the Swami seems to be guiding them, it is the rustic community which, in fact, seems to be controlling the life (and even death) of their master. It is the village community which, in the final analysis, turns the sinner into a saint and in the process the rustics play the catalyst for the protagonist.

Velan seems to be leading them kindly to the Star, the Mahatma. He epitomizes the quintessence of the rustics. Accordingly, he is realized as a simple-minded, naïve, God-fearing, tradition-abiding conformist of the preordained world. In his instant acceptance of the sanyasi as the spiritual guide, is subtly symbolized the naïve rustic’s undaunted faith in the Karma-principle and the reverence for the ascetic. Significantly, Velan’s waiting for the Mahatma, unconsciously perhaps, unlike the futile and meaningless waiting of Estragon and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, comes to a fruitful end in the appearance of an ascetic. It is here that Narayan seems to present his positive vision of life.

The apparently simple relationship between Raju and Velan ironically underlines the stuff the disciple is made of. At the outset it is realized that if Raju plays the guru, almost throughout, it is Velan who lives the disciple. When, for instance, Raju, forgetting the course and the purpose of the story, suddenly stops narrating it, the disciple, not feeling the necessity to ask anything about, plainly
accepts the whole thing as it is. The narrator comments: "He was the stuff
disciples are made of; an unfinished story or an incomplete moral never bothered
him; it was all in the scheme of life"\textsuperscript{41}. Or, when Raju after his confession,
anticipates to be denounced by Velan for playing the dissembler and the imposter,
the disciple merely says: "I don't know why you tell me all this, Swami. It is very
kind of you to address, at such length, your humble servant... I'll never speak a
word of what I heard to anyone"\textsuperscript{42}.

Velan may certainly be regarded as Narayan's major minor character.
Although, basically a flat character, Velan plays the most meaningful role of a
catalyst in \textit{The Guide}. His role, as a self-styled disciple, has been realized with
ironic overtones. Like his earlier counterparts (Ranga in \textit{SAF}, Mari in \textit{TDR}
and the rustics in \textit{TBA}), Velan also plays a saviour to the protagonist. But
besides providing the impostor with the necessities for his survival, Velan also
installs the ex-convict and the sinner as the reverential sanyasi. Later, however,
the same disciple obliges the impostor to undergo the penance (by fasting) and, in
a way, to walk into the jaws of death. But Narayan's irony goes deeper still. It
may be pointed out that although Velan seems to have become instrumental in
Raju's death, he also seems to be responsible for his martyrdom. Thus, Velan's is
a unique flat character which, without being comic, becomes remarkable. Finally,
in the reversal of the roles, as the disciple dictates the master, one may read the
assertion of the ordinary.
Except Velan, the rest of the rustics in *The Guide*, mostly realized as the background characters, perform as the collective unconscious, the choric role. A few, however, come out as one liners and stressing their basic innocence, serve as functional characters. Narayan hives them no names to underline their symbolic nature.

Velan’s recalcitrant sister, a mere dot of a character, becomes instrumental in establishing Raju’s reputation as a holy saint. She attributes the change of her heart to the simple look of the ascetic: “he does not speak to anyone, but if he looks at you are changed”\(^43\). Another rustic honestly attributes the obtaining of the Swami. It is through the rustics again that Narayan underlines the basic theme of his novels: illusion versus reality. One may recall the instance when, unknown to the presence of Raju, the rustics talk about him as a great soul. One of them opines that Raju may not be the kind of yogi who “can travel to the Himalayas just be a thought”\(^44\), another says philosophically, “who can say? Appearances are sometimes misleading”. The instance also underlines a double irony. An appearance has already been taken as a reality which now seems to be taken as appearance by the rustics.

But the rustics are also realized as an absolutely ignorant lot, particularly in the context of modern reality when, for instance, a villager sees a mosquito close-up on the screen in a documentary film on Malaria, he exclaims: “No wonder if they get Malaria. Our mosquitoes are so tiny that they are harmless”\(^45\).
Apparently, the scene is viewed through Narayan's comic lens. One may also read a subtly suggested note of human absurdity and inconsistency, as one realizes that the rustic's comicality is cast against the sacrificial penance of a man trapped in his own game.

In sum, the foregoing discussion concerning the nature and treatment of innocence in Narayan novels reveals the primatically realized innocence viewed through a variety of human spectacle, from childhood to second childhood. Significantly, the pervading nature of innocence in Narayan's novels underlines the equally pervading influence of the cultural ethos, noted in the context of character delineation. As for the treatment of innocence, most of the characters in his typology, realized as minor or secondary characters (Swami in (SAF) excepted), have been dealt with mostly with comic-ironic filter. But most importantly, almost all the characters in this typology have been revealed as flat characters and realized through the extremely short but significant roles like the ficelles, the catalysts and the foils. The typology also marks the characters for their choric and symbolic function. It is in the diversified nature of the roles played by Narayan's flat characters that one reads their significance as characters. And it is through them that the novelist underlines the positive assertion of the average and the ordinary.
NOTES


