CHAPTER - 2

Sociological changes in cultural context

I

Raymond Williams observes that culture may be defined in three different ways:

The ideal, where culture is a process of human perfection in terms of absolute or universal values, the documentary, where culture is the body of intellectual or imaginative work, and the social, where culture is a description of a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour.  

Generally the authors and novelists have attempted to infuse into their mode of theme or characterisation the patterns of living based upon the aforesaid triple variety of culture. In fictional literature art is weighed differently depending upon the authors who come from different circumstances or patterns of living. While some might utilise art exclusively as propaganda, or convert a social character into a sort of abstract of a dominant group, others might utilise art as
imitation of the universal, ideal truth wherein an adjustment, and not conversion into the ideal truth, is expected of the characters.

In the fictional works of Narayan the ideal basis of culture appears to have formed the structure of his theme and the trend of his vision to a large extent. A close study of his works generally bears this out. The young and old, pursuing certain values in ordinary behaviour of life that form the social basis, however finally come to realise that they have failed or succeeded in achieving perfection in terms of absolute universal ways. The social system that seems to continue as part of a perennial cosmic order eventually enables Narayan’s human abstracts to understand that any attempt taken by them to establish a particular pattern of living shall be ultimately thwarted by the ideal truth existing as a part of the social system. In examining the cultural context, broadly speaking, a few major institutions or concepts appear to have formulated the points of view of Narayan, such as family, marriage, social relationship and perennial adherence to tradition or myth. Yet, of all the aforesaid institutions, family is the archetypal social institution that basically regulates all other institutions and concepts operating or emanating within the infrastructure of society. In the vision of Narayan, family as a part of society, chiefly appears as a part of the absolute cosmic order. Hence marriage, social relationship or adherence
to tradition and other concepts could only be considered as relative extensions of a family which forms the main perspective of Narayan’s works.

As defined by Anderson and Parker family is a socially recognised unit of people related to each other by kinship, marital and legal ties. 4

It is an institution prevailing in India as old as her culture and civilization. Narayan though not keen on presenting ethnic and communal issues in the treatment of family life, presents a very natural picture of an Indian middleclass family which is typical of his own. The portrayal of all other concepts of social life as such emanates from Narayan’s vision of a family life which is basic to all his fictional works. The contemporary Hindu middle class family in terms of kinship or consanguinity, holds up the interest of the author out and out. To him the family is the archetypal social organisation existing in the subcontinent since time immemorial. William Walsh affirms,

against the presence of town, firmly and freshly evoked and amid a net of family relationships that his heroes engage themselves in their characteristic struggles. 5

In most of Narayan’s novels and stories the author makes an attempt to project his events and characters chiefly against
the collective interest of a joint-family set-up, or even a single family set-up, whether it remains intact or is being split up. The moral aberration of some one's life pattern which hampers the progress of family life in general, or the ideational upliftment attempted by some one else that might pave the way for more progress, could only be studied more effectively against the prevalence of a traditional joint family system or a single family system. In Narayan's fictional narratives both the systems depicted by the author hold up the interest or interactions within the infrastructure of the kinship association equally. In Swami and Friends the parent-child relationship forms a very significant part of Narayan's study of family life. Swaminathan's authoritarian father and the truant-boy have from the beginning been at tug of war with one another. As the former keeps on guarding each whereabouts of Swami at home, it eventually creates a kind of dismay in the boy's mind that turns into an act of rebellion afterwards. As H.M. Williams says:

Father seen through Swami's eyes has authority - but it is mainly sensible and loving authority of parenthood so unlike the authority of school which Swami resents.

At home Swami is much more attached to his paternal grandmother than to his parents. The over-affectionate old lady provides him with all kinds of pleasures and privileges against
the strict administration of a disciplinarian father, who tries to get the mollycoddled youngster released from her clutches lest he should be ruined by her. The boy's mis-adventures and notoriety usually encouraged by her are counterbalanced with the stern discipline imposed by his father throughout. In utmost simplification the conflict is depicted against a joint family system: Swami, the curious innocent lad ought to have his obvious choice of getting closer to his granny because he receives both love and response from her which his father cannot provide. The ties between Swami and his granny get stronger as they share each other's feelings against Swami's parents. If on one hand Swami shares his granny's bed, listens to the stories narrated by her, explains freely to her all about his plans and aspirations of boyhood, makes jokes at her if the latter fails to understand anything of the game of cricket and other things and practically behaves like the sole authority of the old lady by totally intimidating her to the level of a mere helpless subject, at the sametime he is also full of apprehension for his father's interrogations that emerge as bolts from the blue if he is found to be late or pretends to be 'sick' in going to school on Monday mornings especially or is reluctant to take up arithmetical exercises when asked to complete them at once! The growing lad more or less moves in between love and fear - each crossing its desired limits - and his truant nature occasionally disclosed to his authoritarian father, crushes perhaps his ego, which he could reveal easily before a grand
mother only. Hence starts Swaminathan's identity crisis in the novel—a result of parent-child tussle, in which the child though not in a position to defy his father openly, yet in a precisely indirect way out to take revenge on both the father and mother and also on the authorities at school who equally deprive him of his liberty as a player. In his own world of friendship or human relationship he tries his best to get rid of a cold fear for guardians at home or at school but the efforts prove to be useless at the initial stage. To add to all these, his helplessness is rather redoubled when a little brother is born to him after covering a sufficiently good age gap between them both. Hence one day he operates his own foul play:

There was a piece of cloth under the bed. In a flash, he stopped, rolled the baby over, pulled out the cloth, and was off. He held his mother responsible for all his troubles and disturbing the baby and snatching his cloth gave him great relief.

Thus keeping at par with such mischief displayed by Swami H.M. Williams rightly concludes:

There is a hint that Swami is partly ousted from his position in the family circle by the arrival of a baby brother. This is loosely linked with Swami's later rebellion culminating in his running away from the Board High School.
As the identity crisis in the growing school boy is imminent, quite spontaneously he resorts to a variety of reactions. He develops a kind of pre-adolescent pretentiousness matched with a little hurly-burly in his normal activities which help him make his position at home and at school more stable. The detailed list of articles he places before his father on the eve of his examination assures a solution to the growing crisis of being ignored or lost:

<table>
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<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unruled white paper</td>
<td>20 sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruled white paper</td>
<td>10 sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black ink</td>
<td>1 Bottle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clips</td>
<td>3/6/12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pins</td>
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As such there is a point of argument made by the growing lad: without such articles placed at his disposal how could preparation for any examination really start?

His selection of friends at school varying sharply from each other - Rajam the snob, Mani the vagabond, Somu the self-important monitor, Samuel the ordinary - throws light on a subconscious motivation for achieving for himself a kind of collective identity or freedom. It assures him of a sense of leadership and also enables him to make up for his self -
obliteration at home. His divided loyalties between his parents and friends, zest for playing cricket, way of over-admiring the qualities of his friends with a queer sense of hero-worship, comic susceptibilities to the mood of anger or gloom and his zeal for temporarily joining the Nationalist movement with which he damages the window of Headmaster's room wearing a Gandhi-cap - all in a casual manner exhibit his quest for identity. Here an average reader might come across a precise reference to the repressed spirit of contemporary lower middle class citizens and employees, who with all their integrity of purpose, could neither please their alien rulers or employers adequately, nor stick to their native culture and tradition fully.

Thus the quest for identity that befalls them does not merely appear as a sociological necessity, but has been neatly highlighted or focussed in the portrayal of the child-hero who provides a caricature of the nature of relationship existing between the rulers and the ruled. The various pranks of the growing lad, from an artistic point of view only, convert the reality into a myth, and make the meaning of social relationship more suggestive and contextual. Two instances may present here the growing spirit of the reactionary school-goer. First, his encounter with Ebenezer, the Christian school teacher at Albert Mission School, and secondly, his supervision at home during absence of his father of a reception he has arranged on inviting
Rajam, his classmate, the Police Inspector’s son. In the former, one may discover how Swaminathan is openly defying Jesus and the fanatic Christian school teacher Ebenezer who bluntly condemns the Hindu God and the Bhagavad Gita before an audience of Hindu boys:

"If he was a God, why did he eat flesh and fish and drink wine?" As a brahmin boy it was inconceivable to him that a God should be a non-vegetarian. 10

In the latter, one may watch how he has ordered his granny to see that everything passes off well when Rajam visits his house as an esteemed guest. It is interesting to observe how he takes on an air of mock-heroic self-confidence and exhibits a pretentious supervisory smartness on receiving the Police Inspector’s son. The rebellious mood thus is transformed and to some extent chastened into a level of heroic sycophancy providing a ludicrous duality—which from a closely cultural perspective one may trace in one’s own childhood yesterdays in any oriental domestic set up:

"Mother, what are you preparing for the afternoon tiffin?"

'Time enough to think of it’, said mother.

'You had better prepare something very nice, something fine and sweet. Rajam is coming this afternoon. Don’t make the sort of
coffee that you usually give me. It must be very good and hot."

Yet inspite of his set of tricks to befool his father or Headmaster, he fails in the long run to justify his mode of action. the 'Tate' of the Malgudi cricket club obviously could not displease Rajam whose friendship he is craving for at the cost of expecting severe punishment from the Headmaster who just won't allow him to attend practice of any match during school hours. Hence follows his escapade: a surreptitious departure causing unusual tension at home and at school. A thorough search gets him out at last: crestfallen, fatigued and sick! At this critical moment one may find how his authoritarian father stretching out his loving arms to warm up the prodigal and penitent son, whose home-coming brings in a sigh of relief to all his family members. The inordinate care and consideration of Swami's parents, particularly his father, shown in restoring the boy to his former self resolve all suffering or suffocation of Swami in connection with his search for an identity. Perhaps a kinship association, or a family alone could serve as a panacea for any self-created disruption. The return of the prodigal in the Indian context acknowledges how family is a much stronger institution, among all social institutions, that could overpower the misadventures of a person in the long run. William Walsh says:

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The family, indeed, is the immediate context in which his sensibility operates, and his novels are remarkable for the subtlety and conviction with which family relationships are treated.

In Narayan’s subsequent work *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) Chandran, the bachelor-hero, offers a rather complicated approach to the usual norms of family life. Being a rash student-leader or organiser of symposia in Albert Mission College, the undergraduate dreamer mistakes the ‘threshold’ of a Hindu middle-class household as an ‘extension’ of his college campus where he could do anything by means of an individual liberty. He calculates, under the spell of a characteristic self-deception, that just as he could come out successful in the Bachelor of arts examination, likewise any encounter or examination he could easily venture to get through in his usual day to day life of an eligible bachelor! Chandran’s falling in love with Malathi is only an ephemeral visual experience: a trying circumstance for the platonic lover who mistakes an abstraction for reality. The marriage proposal that comes up amidst multiple opposition is thwarted and dismissed when their horoscopes do not match,

He had done with the gamble of life. He was beaten. He could not go on living, probably for sixty years more with people and
friends and parents, with Malathi married and gone. 13

The experience of exile in such a case may be taken as the outcome of a disruption of family life or the outcome of a natural failure of communication between custom-bound parents and their ‘progressive’ son. For Chandran, it is a psychological experience, more organic than external. Though he takes his plight as only an outcome of a taboo or superstition to which popular notion is attached, and has to sacrifice his individual option or pleasure for the sake of such superstition, he rules out any open confrontation with the elders and prefers an exile. The dejected lover leaves Malgudi following an option to stay away from home - the nucleus of family life which he accepts as the source of all his inescapable turmoil in life. The deluded young man passes through lots of experiences during his stay in Madras as parts of his exile. Yet none of what he went through such as his companionship with the extrovert-sensualist Kailas, or most purposelessly leading the life of a wandering monk, could assure him a complacent phase of existence. These alternatives only intensify the pangs of an exiled life thus providing him with a sense of futility in the long run. Hence he resolves to return home. As a chastened and grown up substitute for Swaminathan he hopes to resume the life of a down-to-earth bread-earner. There is enough penitence in
him. He starts contemplating over the mistakes he has committed
hankering after a panacea of wasteful love:

He sought an answer to the question why
he had come to this degradation. He was in no
mood for self-deception and so he found the
answer in the words of 'Malathi' and 'Love'.
The former had brought him to this state. He
had deserted his parents, who had spent on him
all their love, care and savings. He told
himself that he had surely done this to spite
his parents, who probably had died of anxiety
by now. This was all his return for their
love and for all that they had done for
him. 14

Of course these set of ramblings, however futile these
might have proved, help examine himself with a sense of
objectivity, the importance and value of family life. The
custom-bound joint family life in India emerges as a replica of
order, sanity and neatness where a disillusioned one could find
ample scope for rejuvenating one's faith in himself. Referring
to his own interpretation of Indian joint family system which
Narayan has offered to the faculty members of the Quadrangle
club in Chicago, one may however come to agree that such system
probably flourishes to a large extent in India alone. By way of
responding to the restless queries made by the Americans — to
whom joint family system has always appeared as a strange
phenomenon — Narayan explains:
This system of living affords protection to the oldest and the youngest in the family. A family in which several brothers live together with their wives and children produces an extreme sense of security in the children.

Probably such replies instigate a few of the audience make further queries:

Is that scene on page such and such typical of an Indian family household? Could Chandran’s life be considered an example of a joint family living?

In other words the home coming of the prodigal, a more chastened and refined prodigal, is an attempt to renew the original phase or purpose of existence which only a family could provide him with. As Chandran returns home he locates his room in all its tidiness being maintained by his careworn mother during his exile:

Chandran went to his room and there found every thing just as he had left it. The books that had been kept on the table were there......... There was not a speck of dust on anything nor a single spider’s web. Infact the room and all the objects in it were tidier than they had ever been. The sight of things spick and span excited him. Every thing
excited him now. He ran to his mother and asked panting: 'Mother, how is it everything is so neat in my room?'

In part IV of the book there is more elaborate and dexterous conceptualization of family life. If platonic love fizzes out and friendship is only a passing phase, it is only the family that remains intact, absolute and all-pervasive, flourishing as a part of the cosmic order. One may observe how following the home-coming, Chandran's most intimate friend Mohan provides him with an entirely new definition of marriage and social relationship, which ironically coincides with the conventional code of conduct associated with the native concept of marriage:

If one has to marry one must do it for love, if there is such a thing or for the money and comforts. There is no sense in shutting your eyes to the reality of things......... and get a good-looking companion, who will sew on your buttons, mend your clothes, and dust your furniture while you are out distributing newspapers and who will bring the coffee to your room. In addition to all this, it is always pleasant to have a soft companion near at hand.  

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The counsel of the poet which soon the newspaper-agent follows, depicts the oriental view of marriage. An arranged wedding, that comes to be solemnised by means of austere formalities, rituals and ceremonies, is believed to endow prosperity and happiness to the young couple who, as the Hindu scripture says, are united in the holy thread for not one birth but seven births to follow. Swami and Chandran belonging obviously to contrasting age groups, have one thing common in both. Each intends to live a life of his own either in the garb of childhood pranks or platonic abstractions, which respectively correspond to the sociological implications of progress and evolution. The adventures of Swami in connection with his effort to become the 'Tate' of the cricket team or to smash the window of Headmaster's room in a positive sense of progress represent the steady, though incompetent rebellious mood of contemporary Indian subjects preparing themselves for a struggle for Independence following Civil Disobedience Movement. Yet the political background of it has been artistically overshadowed taking into consideration the universal human response to such a national event which emerges with more of socio-cultural context than being merely political. On the otherhand Swami's option for making friendship with Rajam, the son of the Police Superintendent of Malgudi, and his attempts to please the latter in all respects, may be considered as a caricature of the
subordinate employees of the time who quite astutely make
efforts to please their alien employers or masters to win a
little favour for themselves. This shows how in a negative
sense Swami discloses the idea of progress culturally prevalent
in Indian society in the mid-thirties. Although afraid of
authorities, the child-hero attempts to establish himself as a
self-opinionated sycophant of his companions that sum up his
basic quest for freedom as a part of the theory of progress or a
prelude to the struggle for Independence that is already in
progress in mid-thirties.

In Chandran the author probably highlights a more intimate
or introspective trend of evolution which seems to have made up
for the limitations one notices at the end of Swami's
unfulfilled adventures. Chandran is not only the grownup
substitute for Swami, his transition from the level of a
frustrated lover or self-styled wanderer to that of a settled
newspaper agent or a chastened and happily married person
indicates how family as a part of society remains an absolute
phenomenon to which caprices of an individual only ultimately
succumb. For instance on 'visually' falling in love with
Malathi he offers a good many queries typical of a middle class
sensitive Indian bachelor. Being completely ignorant of what
caste she belongs to or any point of information about her, he
hastily concludes that if his country is to 'attain' salvation,
all kinds of division between community, caste, sects or
sub-sects must at once vanish. Such ramblings of an indignant youth could be taken as baseless, firstly because he is incapable of having any information about her, and secondly because he is too weak to wipe out the aggregate of such established codes of social existence on the plea of progress. If the concept of progress is confined to one's quest for freedom or identity which remains rather incomplete despite a few occasional flashes of one's achievements, the concept of evolution presents the totality of such achievements that pass through series of failures and successes in life. Thus inspite of a good many social interactions that come up on the way of Chandran's decision to go on exile or variations found out in the attitude of his parents, relations or friends following such a bold self-experiment termed as 'exile', he resolves to come back home and accept the norms of custom-bound life which discloses the author's inherent longing for resuming a peaceful and secure family-life as manifested in Chandran. As Narayan himself formulates it, evolution, and not progress, provides the full identity of man, who should at least for securing such an identity, surrender himself to society. Narayan's plan to convert an experience of ephemeral love-making to a form of marriage duly sanctioned by authorities, however, coincides with the author's own experience as a lover. The difference between the author and Chandran is that while the author had faced series of hardships like re-matching of horoscopes or remedies to get over the ills of the original ones, which
records the concentrated 'reality' of the author's experiences thus leading to his marriage with his sweet-heart, Chandran's account of visual love and frustration turns out to be, sociologically speaking, a 'myth' of universal human interest. Yet in the context of the actual or mythical episodes the concept of evolution may be suitably applied.

II

In The Guide (1958) the protagonist Raju, unlike his predecessor Chandran, offers a more complex study of generation gap against a custom-bound Indian Hindu household. Unlike Swami or Chandran, Raju comes across the most untimely death of his disciplinarian father at a very tender age. A sensitive and extrovert youngster who least bothered about his studies in childhood he has rather come to reveal himself as a master of strong common sense with which he accommodates with the new situation. With the consent of his widowed mother he disposes off the old shop and rearranges the new one, started by his father at the railway station, thus laboriously replacing coconuts and other fried stuff by kinds of old books, journals and magazines that give it an updated look. Despite a dynamic approach to his occupation as a shopkeeper which very soon paves the way for establishing his identity as a tourist guide one may easily come to conclude how behind all these initiatives there
only prevails the genuine encouragement of a loving old mother. She as the living guardian of the youngster never hesitates to let him use his own choice of a profession, and is indirectly instrumental in bringing about the meteoric rise of Raju as a tourist guide.

In the Indian context the moral influence of a mother has been basically restricted or limited in a lower middle class setup. The grown-up son, being the only socially acknowledged bread earner of the household, has to weigh his self-interest in life against the verdict of a dependent mother, however loving or dutiful she might have been to him earlier. After all, the Indian context of family life both before and after Independence is more of a patriarchal nature than a matriarchal one, where even a teenager—male child socio-culturally comes to act as substitute for a deceased father thus inheriting the legacy of his father's position, profession or 'instant' control over all female members, including a mother. The mother-and-son infrastructure of the family, with moderate reputation and balance in economy, would have continued intact had not the tourist guide fallen headlong in love with Rosie, the scholar's wife. The instant response of the loving mother to Raju's narration of his accompanying Rosie to the snake-charmer is a kind of utterance which perhaps sums up her unconscious prophecy of Raju's future suffering or tragic end:
"They are probably from Burma, people who worship snakes', she said. 'I had a cousin living in Burma once and he told me about the snake-women there'.

'Don't talk nonsense, Mother. She is a good girl, not a snake worshipper. She is a dancer, I think.'

'Oh, dancer! May be; but don't have any thing to do with these dancing girls. They are all a bad sort'.

Here one may clearly come across the conservative attitude of the mother which more or less is prevalent in Indian society till date. Her apprehension that her son's association with 'the snake woman' may lead to a kind of mis-alliance holds true in context of the ideal basis of culture which her lower middle class status has always stuck to. In the series of events that come up in quick succession, Raju's blind admiration for Rosie and his mother's gradual indifference to her—when she comes to stay with Raju on being disallowed by Marco to accompany him back home—make the mother-and-son relationship somehow strained. A growing bitterness, aggravated by Raju's incidental loss of business and reputation around the railway station, dramatically sets in which only widens the gap between Raju and his mother. Yet one could still locate the chastened influence of a maternal image: the arrival of his mother who comes to the prodigal's rescue at the most critical hour. The tussle between a social
and antisocial mode of conduct incidentally synchronises with the association of an ideal culture. As Raju himself narrates in first person:

She clung to my arms and screamed, 'Come away. Are you coming or not?' And the porter, the whiskered man and everyone swore 'you are saved today, because of that venerable old lady'²¹.

The reticence of a shocked mother is soon followed by an untoward confrontation between Raju and his maternal uncle on the same issue: should there be free access of a married woman to the sacred threshold of a change-resistant household? Behind the threats of the hefty uncle, who openly challenges to oust a puny nephew and 'his keep' from home one may discover the innate faith in kinship formalities and family ties which the former most articulately emphasizes upon in his characteristic tone of sarcasm:

"Do you know what we do when we get an intractable bull calf? We castrate it, we will do that to you, if you don't behave."²²

The counsel offered by Gaffur to avoid the company of a married woman, does not have even the slightest impact on Raju. Ostracised completely from his kinsmen, associates and neighbours he comes to live a life of grand disillusionment. By
astutely using his worldly commonsense he not merely enables Rosie to fulfil her ambition in life, he also succeeds in acquiring fame, position or affluence for both her and himself. Yet the disillusionment is gradually aggravated when Raju discovers her still having a soft corner for her husband who infact had driven her out. However to get over the frontiers of such disillusionment he commits forgery which serves as a climax to a purely self-directed or documentary culture that he has been displaying throughout.

The protagonist's separation from his mother, following his uncle's decision to take her back with him, is rather the initial stage of his separation from society or the custom-bound locale that has time and again laid stress on the absolute body of values as means of achieving perfection in life. In converting Rosie to one of the greatest dancers of the sub-continent or stage-managing to impose his image as her 'husband', Raju only makes attempt to get through a documentary experience of culture: a culture which like a pseudonym lands him only at the goal of futility. He could neither enable Rosie (or Nalini?) to fully forget her real husband, nor he could assert his position as an 'acknowledged' husband or confident master of the house. The novelist however portrays Raju as an extra-marital lover or adventurer of the first order. He falls headlong in love with Rosie the moment he discovers her alighting on the railway platform with her husband. A kind of 'visual' love soon turns into a blind love for the married woman
which in the Indian context is highly controversial despite confrontations made by Raju. From the perspective of keeping up the ideational values of social living unimpaired—which seems to be exclusively the choice of Narayan, the moral analyst—perhaps the nemesis of such a misalliance or unholy love resumes when both the Jack and Jeal are at the height of their status. The extramarital romance which the protagonist undertakes in fact destroys him more than the woman, and to draw evidence in support of his moral lapses probably Narayan has depicted the nemesis in double phases of forgery and imprisonment that practically put Raju to death in every body’s eye, may it be his mother, Rosie, Marco, Gaffur or Mani. In this context Raju only anticipates Mali in _The Vendor of Sweets_ and Rann in _Talkative Man_ (1986).

On the contrary, one may also find out how Raju’s platonic infatuation for Rosie turns into love while he learns about her misery as a wife and not an educated woman or trained dancer. The wife in Rosie appeals to him more as a human being needing his care and co-operation and the wife is a principal member of a family like the husband. Since Rosie has always been, as narrated by her, a victim of utter neglect and humiliation in her conjugal life, Raju tries his utmost to keep her with him, not as a mere romantic partner, but as an instrument of filial love and bondage which she was deprived of being with Marco, her indifferent rationalist-husband! Such ungrudging way of
showering upon Rosie his filial love and affection forms the basis of Raju’s documentary view of human relationship which just can not last long in a conservative society dedicated to absolute ideals of culture.

Secondly life in a custom-bound lower middle class family is only a source of dullness and rigidity to any up and coming youngster engaged in exclusively guiding the tourists. Raju, who has rather passed through various environmental changes in the expanding topography of Malgudi—like the construction work of the railway station or the enlargement of the locale as a centre of tourism, culture and public relations—makes himself adaptable to the forces of modernisation that an average Indian experiences in post-Independence period. When Malgudi, a half-agrarian half-urban township is fast turning into a city following Independence, it gradually acquires a socio-cultural dimension of its own. While on one hand it is connected with the Mempi hills, forests and the Sarayu, on the other the speedy development of railway communications to various parts of India draws a variety of visitors who explore and bring to limelight the historical, mythical, natural and environmental richness or resources attached to it. Even Raju’s shop, a microcosm of Malgudi itself, draws a crowd of young collegegoers who everyday come by train to attend classes in Albert Mission College and for them magazines or books would certainly be of more interest than the fried stuff once kept by his father. As a result of
urbanisation a sensitive youngster like Raju is exposed to a
free observation of all kinds of people, whom as such any one
with average smartness and intelligence would come forward to
co-operate or help: hence the choice of becoming a tourist
guide.

Affable by nature or instantly available to every one Raju
represents the transitional phase of an Independent modern
India, where purely an independent job or an independent way of
action or thought keeps him absorbed. A longing for achieving
freedom of the highest order, ironically speaking, has made him
purely an 'involved' type, a contrast to the cold-blooded
research scholar-husband who ignores his wife. In stead of
taking himself as an intruder, he rather thrusts himself upon
Rosie and Marco since his infatuation turns into a kind of
filial attachment. As Raju recollects before Velan:

   I was accepted by Marco as a member of
the family. From guiding tourists I seemed to
have come to a sort of concentrated guiding of
a single family. Marco was just unpractical
.................it was here that a handyman
like me proved invaluable. 23

The transition from a rather 'partially' matriarchal family
to the conjugal set up of Marco and Rosie, in the garb of a
self-styled intruder-cum-guardian suggests possibilities of
one's formal involvement being steadily converted into a familiar one. An excessive pity on Rosie ironically leads to the separation between Rosie and Marco, or between Raju and his mother, which is followed by a meteoric rise and fall of both the guide and the dancer who circumstantially get separated from each other for good. Yet, an ex-criminal providentially converted to a Swami or spiritual guide, offers a more meaningful enquiry as to whether he is ultimately in a position to resume a kinship tradition or not. While being compelled by the rustics to keep on fasting, he is not only amazed to discover their innate faith in him, he too comes to accept in a quite ungrudgingly heroic gesture the burden of a universal human family, which, he realises, alone could restore his identity in a society that has always attempted to uphold ideational values. As Raju mutters to himself:

"If by avoiding food, I shall help the tree to bloom, and the grass grow why not do it thoroughly?"............ for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested.  

Such an attitude of mind, which Raju eventually develops in course of his fasting makes him comprehend the identification of one with all around him for whom he ventures to offer a fast- unto-death: embodying in his word and deed the ancient or the Vedic proposition of one cosmic human family. The penance
of Swami converts him to a Messiah or Patriarch undertaking a mission for welfare of all his kinsmen. He is out to propagate an archetypal filial bond that unites one with the other in a single human family.

On the contrary, Rosie, whose genesis one finds out in the family of fallen temple dancers is overlooked by Marco who not only takes dance as a street acrobatic, but takes himself as a saviour to her, for by agreeing to wed her he concludes he has provided her with adequate status in society and as such she ought to remain contented as being a scholar’s wife. Rosie’s unfulfilled desire to build a career for herself is, sociologically speaking, the after-math of a neglected conjugal lot which undergoes a meaningful transition following the intrusion of Raju, the self-styled extramarital partner to Rosie who at the cost of much personal risk and suffering fulfils the dream of Rosie’s life. Yet inspite of the transformation, the Indian wife concealed in the danseuse, eventually comes up with a peculiarly nostalgic recollection of her husband, that initiates all kinds of disruptions thus finally leading everyone in the trio to share his or her nemesis. It is evident that in Indian context a conjugal mode of family relationship being attached to a sacred ceremonial bondage, outlasts all other sorts of human relationship.
The Guide, unlike any other Indo-anglian fiction may be considered as an experiment on the varied concepts of family life and relationships. Unlike Rosie or Marco, the protagonist is finally capable of transforming a kinship formality into a universal sociological experience. As he moves from the position of a 'picar' or extra-marital lover to the position of a 'pilgrim' or dedicated lover of all humanity he offers the highest kind of polarisation to the post-Independence elite. His falling in love with Rosie, at first sight, unfixes him upon the tradition-oriented level of order that he has hitherto been contemplating as the successor of his late father. One may find out by interpreting the theory of Deterioration that by way of making an extra-marital romance with Marco's wife he passes through a series of disorders, degradations or humiliations - the highest being an eventual commitment of forgery - and out and out ruins himself at the cost of a purely subjective approach to the events of life. Despite a preference for living a permissive life of his own, he steadily rushes into an era of disorder or complete moral decay. However the ex-prisoner turning into a Swami helps in restoring order, a quintessential experience which rests more on possibility than reality as a part of the Deterioration theory of sociological change. The resolution to take up a fast-untto-death, with adequate clinging on the part of the protagonist to absolute values, shows him as an astute restorer of order which he infact had lost for some time. Either from the standpoint of maintaining his own style
of kinship formalities or from the standpoint of a person circumstantially behaving like a picar and then turning into a pilgrim or 'holy man' he establishes both artistically and philosophically the characteristic features of the theory of Deterioration: thus moving from the phase of conception to that of extinction and vice-versa.

The implication of coming back to the stage of conception as a part of the Deterioration theory also highlights Narayan's innate faith in an agrarian culture. It is not in Malgudi, the growing township, but in the outskirt of a village where Raju finds the opportunity to transform himself into a spiritual guide. If he is circumstantially forsaken by Malgudi, the miniature counterpart of a growing urban India, he is thus providentially embraced by Mangla, an embodiment of age-old macroscopic rural India. V. Panduranga Rao remarks:

Narayan has always believed that India is her villages .............. it is the rural India that traps Raju and positively sublimes him. 25

One finds not only the echo of Raja Rao's Kanthapura (1938) but a positive impact of Gandhi's ideal of 'Swaraj' or resurrection of Indian rural culture, artistically hinted at, in the penance of Swami.
Besides, Narayan hints at taking back all his readers to the saga or Vedic or pre-historic India where it is believed to have prevailed a state of universal brotherhood devoid of barriers in caste, creed and custom. An ethos of antiquarianism depicted in the fast-unto-death episode probably constitutes the essence of reviving the spirit of a cosmic family life that is long lost to the people of India in particular, as well as mankind in general. The penance of Swami philosophically establishing the motive of taking the entire mankind back to the pre-historic saga of creation may be viewed as an allegory in itself. The author who is more a social philosopher than a social realist is quite eager to add supernatural or miraculous dimension to the stature of the holyman which the Indian people have time and again acknowledged while trying to assess the achievements of a Swami. It rains or not is immaterial: the instant dedication to the cause of the people in the form of a fast-unto-death is enough material for them to convert the enigmatic experience to an allegory or myth, the intensity and depth of which probably one may not find out in contemporary body of fiction attempted in India. The circumstantial conversion of the ex-convict to a Saviour as such has some unique features in a way, unlike other myths or legends depicted by the author. Hence the documentary only turns out to be an ideal experience of culture to each section of the crowd. The Swami appears to have come out completely independent of the shadow of an ex-criminal and as such moves to a metaphysical and
ideational prison-life thrust upon him by the most obedient humanity which gives the myth an unconventionality and flare of its own.

In Indian society a holyman performing a ritual has a significant social purpose. The episode of Raju acquiring a kind of 'enforced sainthood' originates from a particular incident which the author recollects in his autobiography:

A recent situation in Mysore offered a setting for such a story. A severe drought had dried up all the rivers and tanks; Krishnaraj Sagar, an enormous reservoir feeding channels that irrigated thousands of acres, had also become dry............ As a desperate measure the municipal council organised a prayer for rains. A group of Brahmins stood knee-deep in water (procured at great cost) on the dry bed of the Kaveri, fasted, prayed and chanted certain 'mantras' continuously for eleven days. On the twelfth day it rained and brought relief to the countryside. 26

The penance of Swami, as Narayan affirms, is based upon such incident: the theme from an actual social practice steadily grows into a kind of documentary narrative. One may not only trace out the author's constant references to ceremonial rites or rituals which he assiduously performs as parts of his own faith in them, the association of such rites also provides the readers with diversities of interest. If the
austerity and reserve maintained by the spiritual guide in performing an act of fast-unto-death adds dignity to his stature, on the contrary, the prescription made by Raju's formidable uncle to deprive him of excesses committed in matters of unlawful love most mock-heroically intimidates the young lover. The rites of an enforced sainthood in the metaphysical context of Indian social life have been as relevant as the agrarian practice of physically castrating a bull-calf. Hence Indian social life is ritual-oriented irrespective of ideational or routine experiences. Probably, if Raju undergoes a moral downfall it is because he accepts a kind of misalliance with an already married woman, which is out and out devoid of marital or nuptial rites that he ought to have undergone as parts of maintaining a 'sacred' life. The moral analyst-narrator appears to have persistently laid emphasis on rituals that have highest social sanction in context of a person's life, right from his birth till death. Rituals, as discussed above, not only mark the beginning of one's elevated career or period in life, it also acts as an inevitable remedy in shape of a certain practice which all sections of society, high and low, have accepted as being both the historic and definitive pointers to a cultural pattern of life.
The Vendor of Sweets offers a specimen study of old age in the cultural context of Indian family life. The episode of the gentle eccentric father at war with an aggressive foreign returned son is perhaps the vital issue that forms the basic theme of old age in the book. Purely against the concept of a tradition-oriented Hindu joint-family set up the theme develops, which has been more vividly depicted in the present novel than the earlier ones. In Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts and The Guide the author’s treatment of a single family system upholds the genesis of family relationship. In Swami and Friends one notices glimpses of human relationship confined to the aggregate of three generations inhabiting together: Swami, his parents and grand-mother. They all make up exclusively one common family. In The Bachelor of Arts there is a happy ending corresponding to the arranged marriage of Chandran with Susila where the novel ends. In The Guide Raju never marries: on the contrary he is the only son of his parents, who for the time being 'passes' for Rosie's husband and eventually is compelled to act as Patriarch of one universal human family. In all these novels, notwithstanding the problems of generation gaps, platonic abstractions or over-idealisation of one's own view of life, the protagonists ultimately come to realise that they are parts of one single family set up: the set up being either actual or self-imposed. In The Vendor of Sweets the concept of
joint family system has been delineated both in terms of present experiences as well as that of the flash backs - which helps one understand the cultural context of family life with greater vividness.

Jagan, an ex-freedom fighter of the Gandhian order who even had courted prison and is at present a reputed Sweet-vendor of the town, lives in a characteristic utopia of self-deception. While he rears in himself incalculable ambitions for shaping the fortune of his only son Mali, the widower-father has been chiefly responsible for making the youngster thoroughly wayward. Excessively pampering the motherless boy and hardly caring for his obtrusive discontinuance of studies, he learns that Mali is preparing to write a novel for a competition. Yet the supposed 'cash fetching' novel is never attempted and by surreptitiously taking away quite a lump-sum from Jagan's secret casket he goes abroad. Contrary to the sly whereabouts of the wayward son, the excessively loving father is still ludicrously planning to derive a greater creative output which he hopes his Americanised-son would fetch for him! He is rather caught in the cobweb of a superiority complex which his son's trip abroad has brought him in:

He had never thought that he could feel so superior about it. Now it seemed to him worth all the money and the pangs of
separation. 'My son is in America', he said to a dozen persons everyday, puffing up with pride on each occasion.27

His psychic obsession for a self-esteem which he thinks would be strengthened by the fact that Mali has gone to America is only a tragi-comic irony that temporarily keeps the householder blind in affection and ignorant about the series of events to follow soon at home. An introvert of the first order he has always stuck to the ideals of a joint family system and specially after his wife's death he has taken keen interest in preparing food for his son himself, though while growing up the latter starts taking his meals outside. The reminiscences of how he had gone to select his wouldbe bride being accompanied by his critical elder brother, or how his shorttempered wife had gradually come to adjust herself as a dutiful daughter-in-law in a joint family set up, have always given him a self-confidence as a householder. To add to all these his typical habits as a vegetarian Hindu, like avoiding to take sweets or salt completely or drinking only four ounces of water a day boiled at night and cooled in a mud jug kept open to the sky spell out his longing for maintaining a sacred life of his own. The austerity or chastened formality practised at his end is rather ironically matched with his cold-blooded acceptance of the fact that Mali has tactfully 'taken away' a lump-sum from his secret casket. The 'knowledge' of the said incident instead
of making him agitated or unnerved, keeps him strangely poised or controlled. P.S. Sundaram observes: 'When he becomes aware of this, does not know whether to feel cheated and be righteously indignant or to admire the independence and resourcefulness of his offspring. 28

The blind admiration of the ignoramus is rather a version of eccentricity that forms the contemporary idealism in Hindu joint families. Sociologically speaking the eccentrics are the products of an ideal culture whose abstractions and self-deceptions get the better of realities. As Vidyabhushan and Sachdeva explain when man passes through the stage of eccentricity,

the abstract is more 'real' to him than the actual. 29

The series of Jagan's utopian calculations however come to an abrupt tragic end when Mali returns with Grace, a half-Korean half-American girl and introduces her as his 'wife'. The 'Americanised' son returns to his father with the expectation
that the affluent old man would financially assist him in initiating a project for manufacturing and selling novel-writing machines. Here one may witness the genesis of a tug of war between the father and son or an East-West encounter which is apparently the climax of generation gap that they both have already experienced though in a restricted way prior to Mali's departure from home. Mali's strong aversion for the spinning wheel, vegetarianism, holy Indian scriptures as parts of a hackneyed civilisation and bold assertions to urbanise or westernise the Indian milieu by way of introducing the 'computerised' literature or a 'permissive' pattern of living terribly disappoint Jagan. The East-West encounter appears here to be harrowing when a hitherto tolerant father discovers the root of an ageold household steadily crumbling down to pieces by an equally intolerant son trying to hack it on the plea of westernisation.

But the question that arises is, what makes him come back to Malgudi if he is so much interested in the ideals of an occidental culture? Could any one returning fresh from abroad change overnight the cultural topography of a custom-ridden locale like Malgudi? What reasoning one might dictate in Mali's come-back to India and that too with a foreign woman as his 'wife'? One just could not make out how a young man has been so eager to come back home who even does not have any communication with his father since his mother's death in childhood?
The answer to all these queries is simple if one scrutinises the kinship motivations that the father and son have expressed for each other time and again. Mali, in a sociological sense, has returned not to Malgudi, but to Jagan—despite a generation gap between them both—for he is optimistic that the excessive consideration shown by his father in the past shall have an easy renewal if, as a son, he only mentions his plan to start the project. Being always mollycoddled by Jagan he, since his childhood, has made himself an irresponsible or self-styled dependant on him: hence the repetition of the old game. On the other hand the infatuation matched with Jagan’s sound economic status is perhaps the crux of Mali’s return home.

Yet in the fitness of things that have come up beyond the expectations of a chastened householder, kinship formalities are no more in vogue: the ‘real’ as such comes to overtake the ‘abstract’. He could neither trust his son in preparing to start any such industrial project, nor would he ever come to believe that novel writing machines are at all substitutes for the holy scriptures like the Ramayan and the Gita. His unabated faith in living a simple and religious life does not make him spare even a single pie for the said project, which to him appears no more than a hoax. Such faith, purely as an outcome of an orthodox Hindu mentality, unfixes him considerably when he
ponders over the violation of the age-old caste system made by Mali in bringing a Christian woman home. Caste system in India has not only integrated and simplified the division of labour on the basis of providing social life with various functions ranging from priesthood to scavenging as formulated by the ancient social thinkers, it has time and again influenced the ethical principles underlying the modes of human social relationships, customs and traditions closely identified with the social status of a particular caste or section of people.

As a chaste Hindu Jagan interrogates himself whether he should have allowed a half-American woman to have access to his ancestral threshold. Yet he is helpless in the present circumstance. On outwardly maintaining a courteous relation with her, he manipulates to keep the sanctity of his caste intact. While frequently proclaiming or pretending to be a Gandhian disciple favouring the abolition of caste, he exclusively from his side proposes to cook for himself on the plea that he eats in order to live only on what he prepares with his own hands. The 'secular' pretentiousness is only a verbal pretext, because he takes adequate measures to see his 'sacred' formalities in conducting a Puja or ritual or preparing his vegetarian diet are in no way allowed to be polluted by the access of an American-Korean hybrid. Yet the decency of his conduct makes Grace most ironically admire him in context of Indian caste system:
"I had heard so much about the caste-system in this country, I was afraid to come here and when I first saw you all at the railway station I shook with fear. I thought I might not be accepted..........

'Well, we don't believe in caste these days, you know', Jagan said generously 'Gandhi fought for its abolition'.

The greatest disappointment occurs when he discovers from Grace that she and Mali are 'not' married and she just 'passes for his wife'. In course of the father-and-son conflict one may locate how there emanates a kind of separation: the conservative, caste conscious humble Hindu householder comes to stay fully separated from free-sex partners calling themselves a couple. To the former the entire household is 'polluted' and hence a segregation - though under the same roof - becomes rather a social necessity in context of the violation of a filial bond instigated by Mali. The unlawful association of the youngster with a girl 'imported' from abroad adequately draws a line of demarcation between the orthodox father and the sensualist son. In chapter XII the author, by way of adopting a flash back technique, records how Jagan's marriage was celebrated with all formalities one expects to come across as parts of Hindu custom. Jagan had not merely accompanied his elder brother to have a glimpse of his would-be bride, the
marriage negotiations were undertaken by way of detailed observance of successive codes on the part of the guardians and other elders of both the families.

In India marriage as a sacred ceremony is believed to have ushered in a stability in relationship between members of both the families 'for seven generations to follow', hence it is accepted as the highest kind of socio-cultural alliance or code of conduct based on performance of Vedic rites, social kinship get-togethers, community dinner, blessings conferred upon the couple by all elders of merry making of the first order. Besides in Indian Hindu as well as other communal set ups dowry system constitutes an 'acknowledged' code of matrimonial alliance. The father or guardian of the bride is expected to hand over a good amount in terms of cash or kind to his counterpart, the groom's guardian and inspite of the former's economic insecurity or the latter's greedy calculations the provision of dowry system has always prevailed as a sacred version of presenting one's daughter a kind of gift which she carries with herself while going to settle-down with her husband. In a male-dominated Indian Hindu society the bride's guardian or father is supposed to hand over the dowry directly to the groom's guardian in the nature of submitting himself to the 'demands' of the groom's guardian. Inspite of the maladies one experiences in the prevalence of dowry system the author records how it is gracefully accepted as a social practice in
performing a marriage ceremony which also elevates the status of both the families.

Yet such flash-back revelation of one's adherence to most sacred customs, as Jagan feels, runs parallel with the gross misuse of socio-sexual liberty on the part of Mali and Grace which a moral analyst like Jagan cannot approve of. Hence the transition from kinship formality to one's effort to safeguard one's ethnic interest and family reputation which one ought to accept as matters of paramount importance living in a ritual bound Hindu community: a kind of hypocrisy or double dealing is infact required more than an ineffective simplicity on such occasions. The act of separation is fully executed by Jagan as a mark of protest against the moral pollutions discovered in Mali's latest activities:

He did every thing possible to insulate himself from the evil radiations of an unmarried couple living together. There was a ventilator in between the two portions of the house; he dragged up an old stool and with the help of a long bamboo shut it tight. Now the isolation, more an insulation, was complete.

The attempt to separate himself is associated with a kind of reaction that he rears in himself on receiving his married
sister's letter in which she has condemned and threatened him thus enquiring how has he accepted

a beef-eating Christian girl for a daughter-in-law ?

Thus the return of Mali with a half-American 'wife', or Jagan's manner of separating himself rather topographically from them both, may be interpreted as a viable outcome of East-West encounter that the sub-continent is fast undergoing following Independence.

Prior to Mali's return home his letter to his father indicating how he is accustomed to the eating of beef or advising how this ought to be accepted by the people of India that alone might solve the cattle problem of the country, may be taken as an abstract of Narayan's own experience with an Indian friend in the United States. The Bombay-born Indian gentleman, being the product of an orthodox Hindu family and reared out and out as an austere Gandhian rebel during the Freedom movement, dedicated himself totally to the Americal pattern of living where he went to complete his higher studies. He fell in love with an American girl, married her, got himself fully ostracised from his Hindu parents and family and went on justifying his conversion to his guardians in India as follows:
"Am actually eating not just ordinary meat, but beef, the best in the world, and it has not done me any harm, it has not destroyed me physically and morally. On the contrary, I have never felt better in my life. India will never become a modern nation, unless we Indians get over our blind superstitious prejudice against eating beef."  

The exchange of various forces of culture, following rapid progress of communication and an adequate expansion of technical knowledge pave the way for steady corrosion of conventional values attached to the age-old parent-child relationship, indigenous way of living, observance of ceremonies and rituals or habitual reverence for old scriptures and customs in one’s household. Instead one’s obsession for earning easy money by way of initiating a ‘borrowed’ industrial project or leading an utmost ‘permissive’ life that encourages complete abuse of one’s moral, individual or sexual liberty virtually shakes the foundation of a genetic culture. Unlike Raju, Mali is portrayed as a veritable parasite whose sole concern in context of a paternal relationship is money, which Jagan downright avoids to provide him for a futile borrowed project. On the contrary the patient and forebearing Hindu father continues to live a life of sacred isolation (which he names as insulation) maintaining his Gandhian view of discipline in all matters especially reading
the Gita or using the Charkha. He perhaps best represents the values of the East if Mali abruptly proxies for the values of the West. R.S. Singh observes that:

The Sweet Vendor appears like the aged followers of Mahatma Gandhi who are still in power and those young people who are trained in America and are efficient and dynamic are denied opportunities to use their talents in the regeneration of their country.  

Age-old taboos and practices have always been parts of one's social existence, and family, as such, is the nucleus through which taboos or customs are maintained by the acknowledged guardians of a household. Thus the clash of culture or the eventual polarisation maintained by the father and son comes to a point of climax when Mali, being fed up with Jagan's complete indifference to his proposal, is caught and imprisoned for having violated the laws of prohibition and the aggrieved householder leaves a 'tainted' home to opt for a retired spiritual life on the otherside of the river. He decisively chooses to become a hermit in a way of his own. The determination of Jagan to renounce his business, home or family may be viewed from what the scripture says that a home without mutual faith or understanding is not fit to live in. A family in the oriental context is a sacred institution in which a man and woman are wedded to each other following public
acknowledgement in kinds of ceremonial rites and customs. But to Jagan's utter dismay, his house has lost all its sanctity and beauty of living. It rather becomes a source of gross misuse of individual liberty and dignity, beginning with an illicit carnal relation between Mali and Grace, or finally culminating in the imprisonment of Mali. The subsequent act of renunciation devised by the Sweet-Vendor may be interpreted as a kind of protest or a necessity to reform the computer-free sex-alcohol-obsessed son of his who has all along been upon the 'wrong track'.

Yet a vital question arises here, a question that needs an objective enquiry to the problems of East-West encounter or generation gaps that the author has put forth more exhaustively in The Vendor of Sweets than in any of his novels. If the youngster is deprived of minimum knowledge and education of a family life, as he lost his mother in childhood, and as such is excessively pampered by his father throughout his teens, how then one expects him to learn overnight the criteria of inhabiting 'a desirable' life at home in the Indian context? He is not merely alienated from the expected code of conduct prevalent in a Hindu household, he quite naturally returns to his father, and not home, for more than any one he knows his over-affectionate affluent father, being a Mammon worshipper or hoarder of plenty of cash, would never disallow him or grudge him paying some more cash. In other words the youngster
mistakes the filial connection between himself and his father as only a material connection: hence his knowledge of family relationship has been purely a dialectical or questionable factor. Devoid of any opportunity or training to know things like economic self-discipline, or struggle for existence, he has rather no alternative other than misusing his relation with father, with Grace, and finally with society, which has always remained an illusion to him. Neither he is fully aware of the leaps and bounds of a Hindu middle class society, nor he is able to obtain what is in fact worth-imitating in an occidental society. His addiction to westernised mode of living followed by immature behaviour or instant imprisonment embodies a kind of incomplete self-knowledge of youngsters in post-Independence India. Thus analysing the nemesis that befalls Mali one may agree with H.M. Williams who says:

Our pity is invoked not so much for Jagan, confused and betrayed as he is, but for his up-rooted, unhappy son, so alienated from his home and town that he ventures out only after dark. 35

Yet on the other side of the picture the decision of Jagan to lawfully bequeath his business and property to his only son suggests his genuine acceptance of the oriental concept of renunciation. There is a substantial imitation of a thoroughly
Gandhian culture present in his ways of separating himself from his son and ultimately leaving home for good. His most reticent way of making arrangement for a separation at home, taciturnity maintained in speech, innate faith in taking a resolution as dictated by his conscience while passing through shocking discoveries of Mali’s immoral activities, to a large extent make him maintain the most non-violent non-cooperative spirit which probably he had earlier experienced as a freedom fighter. Such an adherence to Gandhian culture, might help him keep himself aloof both physically and humanly for a considerably long time from both Mali and Grace on the pretext of carrying on business at the sweet-mart or holding prayers or puja whenever he is present at home, an adherence that comes up in dramatic chain of sequences while he is studying the Gita, playing the charkha, using 10-watt bulbs at home, preparing vegetarian diet or most reticently planning to non-co-operate with ‘the brave-new-world’ trying to threaten him at home:

He was bewildered by his son’s scheme and distrusted it totally. He was aware that pressure was being subtly exercised on him to make him part with his cash. He was going to meet the situation by ignoring the whole business, a sort of non-violent non-co-operation.
Apart from a few techniques of self-defence contained in such mode of existence, one may also find it as a revival of an indigenous culture which ancient people had also strictly adhered themselves to. Jagan’s renunciation of worldly life however coincides with the Indian law of inheritance. By admitting a self styled hermitage for himself as part of a rebirth, which makes him more or less an ideational realist, he enables Mali rather to gradually acquire a kind of self-knowledge by means of a self-humiliation called imprisonment. No doubt he is severe and justly chastening himself while welcoming Mali’s temporary jail life, for as a regular reader of the Gita he apprehends a kind of humiliation for his son which he sums up as the most viable alternative to improve him in future life when he backs home and settles up:

"A dose of prison-life is not a bad thing. It may be just what he needs now." 37

The ultimate separation between father and son perhaps builds up a message for the younger generations to realise what family life actually implies in context of an Indian society. The ultimate restoration of a kinship tradition always succeeding a family-tussle may be viewed as a speciality of Narayan’s novels for which perhaps he has never encouraged a nuclear family to take shape in his narratives in the strict sense of the term. M.N. Srinivas affirms,
It would be a gross oversimplification to suggest that the Indian family system has changed or is changing from the joint to the nuclear type........... The Indian family system, like caste, is resilient, and has shown great adaptability to modern forces. 38

The gradual breaking up of joint-family system, corresponding to the steady exchange of sociocultural forces as part of Westernisation of contemporary Indian society, has received adequate coverage in The Vendor of Sweets or the childhood description of Nataraj's parental household in The Maneater of Malgudi, but quite cautiously the author has ruled out depiction of a nuclear family system which is rather considered as the most prevalent pattern in Indian society in current times. P.S. Sundaram observes:

Though the joint family system is breaking up all over India, the sense of kinship is strong in a Narayan novel. 39

Raju's mother however accompanies her brother by leaving the legally-disputed household at Raju's disposal or Jagan initiates a separation at home being compelled by his own conscience that cannot admit pollutions of anykind brought in by his progeny, thus in each case a single family set up grows up, not a nuclear one in the modern sense of the term. It may be
due to the author's innate faith in the sense of kinship against which the present experience in context of a single family may fast fizzle out. Raju being unable to come back to a mother or a society that has circumstantially forsaken him, in a rather abstract way is compelled to act as guardian of a cosmic human family which is sociologically speaking the extension of a joint family only. Chandran comes back to his parents, Mali is 'supposed' to come back home as he may not have any other alternative, and other protagonists or youngsters too in their own manner have to devise a return home. It is because the author’s faith in kinship or joint household appears to have formed the crux of his narratives. R.S. Singh says how

Narayan’s view of life is essentially Hindu view. 40

The values thus attached to the existence of man in middle class Hindu family have as such grouped an individual's life into four parts which Narayan has neatly executed in the aforesaid novels. H.M. Williams affirms,

The references to the four 'ashramas' or stages of life: student, householder, hermit and holyman are reminiscent of [The Bachelor of Arts] and [The Guide]. 41
One may more impartially or objectively come to conclude that the four successive stages of life depicted in purely oriental context have been as such found in *Swami* and *Friends* and *The Bachelor of Arts* where the protagonist is identified with a student, *The Guide* and *The Vendor of Sweets* where the protagonist acts as a householder, hermit and holyman. Yet in *The Vendor of Sweets* the portrayal of householder, hermit or holyman has been more neatly built up corresponding to the hereditary Indian Hindu family life. This provides a kind of balance of interest one comes across in Narayan's novel. The economically self-disciplined householder maintaining stability in his business has naturally developed a kind of self-confidence in himself. The 'ashramas' or 'stages of life' as inhabited by Jagan however disclose a paradoxical resemblance with the forces of Linear theory of sociological change that have been in vogue in current times. One may come to identify the successive roles played by Jagan as householder, hermit or holyman, with factors leading to the basic development of social life from a stage of mere philosophical speculation to a positive stage of performing an act of perfection or order. Inspite of a confrontation with his foreign-returned son, he remains absolutely indifferent, bold and steady in his decision to spare not even a single coin on the former's computer project.
Thus he not only judiciously compensates for his extremely lenient attitude shown to Mali beforehand, but also discloses a kind of self-determination which rather restores his position as a strict father, guardian or householder. Yet simultaneously one may also find out how, being at home, he has already started living the life of 'a hermit' thus offering to his son a good deal of parallelism and contrast. Unlike Mali keeping himself involved in free-sex life, type writing machine, computer project and throughout making correspondence abroad, Jagan is complacent in his lot while keeping up a life of utmost self-restraint, simplicity and frugality while being dedicated to the spinning wheel or the Gita. The 'hermit'-cum-householder at last turns out to be a hermit for whom time has come to quit home following Mali's imprisonment.

But the resourceful hermit does not deprive Mali of inheriting his property or business, he even is willing to buy a ticket for Grace if she desires to go back to America which may be taken as the aftermath of his metaphysical self-realisation of a sense of duty as a guardian to them all. Thus in displaying all these roles Jagan places himself successively at par with the distinct stages of development of an ideational social system. His ultimate mode of renouncing his material possession seems to be a relevant sociological solution that not only ends the crisis at home forever, but also paves the way for his son to learn through failures in life. This may be viewed

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broadly as a positive stage of perfection, a stage of dedicated spiritual perfection in which a person is in fact able to guide, regulate and control the affairs of his progeny or subordinates. Jagan is resourceful in making plans for his son’s future; hence his exit as a hermit one may relevantly justify keeping in view both the oriental context and the Linear theory together.

The Vendor of Sweets comes out at a point of time when people of India are as such eager to acquaint themselves with the idea of a technological civilisation flourishing in the West. For instance, Grace accompanying Mali to India or staying with him being ‘passed’ for his wife evokes a good deal of ethnic and moral controversy. She appears as a by-product of the occidental civilisation whom the Indian youngster uses not merely as a free sex partner, but more than that as representative of a ‘permissive moral’ which he proudly considers to have ‘imported’ from the American society. Yet the permissive morals, practised by Grace do not hinder her way of imitating the Hindu rituals like decorating the threshold of the house on a Friday. Grace, more than Mali, is polished, affectionate and dutiful, who on the otherhand tries to imitate an oriental culture that seems to appear as an act of contradiction of what Jagan had earlier thought of her following her accompaniment of a wayward son! Grace, unlikely Rosie, gives a new connotation to the issue of liberation of womanhood.
Being a hybrid of American-Korean blood and eventually humiliated by Mali on the pretext of his hypocrit-sensualist designs, she rather discloses the identity of a true feminine self demanding an understanding of the conservative Jagan. While Rosie's relation with Raju serves only as a means to an end, a selfish motivation to become a recognised artist thus neglecting the interest of Raju, the all-sacrificing lover and benefactor, Grace rather turns out to be an honest follower of an indigenous culture. She rather 'liberates' herself from the hypocrisy or inhibition of Western civilisation on becoming frank or humble before Jagan. Possibly for this reason she wins the love and goodwill of Jagan in the long run.

Yet the ideas which Mali borrows during his trip to America are only dismissed by Jagan for two reasons. Firstly he does not find any relevance or justification in manufacturing a story writing machine in a country like India where great scriptures of olden times like the Ramayan are time and again read, remembered or recited by even the most illiterate ones, or in a country where as suggested by the stonemason, Gayatri, the Goddess of syllables is supposed to come out or manifest herself spontaneously on stones without even any mental effort or manual attempt of any one! Secondly the family life or social life in India, as Jagan realises at sixty, is a self-contained concentrated experience. It does not need intrusion of any alien force to enrich itself anymore as it abounds in enough
resources and ideas of its own. Jagan reflects on deciding to leave home:

"I have probably outlived my purpose in this house. If I live for ten or fifteen years more, it will have to be on a different plane. At sixty, one is reborn and enters a new Janma." 42

The proposal to settle down in the retreat is synonymous with the making of a myth. The inherent longing for witnessing the manifestation of the Hindu Goddess of syllables, holds adequate interest in suggesting the retired householder how, after so much disruptions, life could renew itself in a completely new form. The renunciation of the old father promises a settlement for the 'lost' son, which unfolds the meaning of the age-old theory of inheritance in a more clear and meaningful way, thus converting a myth into reality. Of course, one does not come across how the father or son shares the experience of renewing a new sort of life, which the author has left to the readers only to conjecture, but one can find out that the formalities of quitting the ancestral house or setting out for the retreat have been completed by Jagan, which is enough indication for turning the reality into myth. K.R.S. Iyengar concludes:
The soul of Narayan's fiction is not this delicately self-adjusted mechanism of ironic comedy, but rather the miracle of transcendence and the renewal of life, love, beauty, peace.

IV

The treatment of fair sex in a broad cultural perspective adds meaningful dimension to the context of Indian family life. Independence brings home not only adequate opportunities to fair sex in equating themselves with men in different spheres of life, social, cultural, academic or professional, it also to a large extent transforms the age-old conservative civilisation to a progressive one. The Painter of Signs (1976) that follows The Guide or The Vendor of Sweets completes that picture of emancipation of women. Each novel succeeding the other with the gap of approximately a decade provides interesting studies of womanhood. In one of his interviews the author said:

I value human relationship very much, very intensely. It makes one's existence worthwhile—human relationship in any and every form, whether at home or outside. I think I have expressed this philosophy in my work successfully.
Human relationship, as Narayan views it, has not been confined to the variety of male characters only. In equal proportion it is also adequately displayed in the group of their female counterparts. A good many factors like amendment of the Hindu Law that enables daughters to claim half of the paternal property, large scale spread of education, opportunities provided to fair sex to compete with men in different fields of life and the changing criteria of an Indian marriage that prefer a recognised academic qualification of a girl in an arranged marriage, make the issue of liberation of women a topic of national interest. The relationship problems, as parts of sociological change, thus offer more diversities or complexities of interest in post-Independence group of novels and stories attempted by the author.

In *The Painter of Signs* one comes across the growing relationship between Raman, a settled young signboard painter of Malgudi and Daisy, a dynamic propagandist of family planning against the parallel filial relationship between Raman and his aunt, who has practically brought him up like a mother since his childhood. Incidentally Raman is asked by Daisy to design and finish a piece of work for the Family Planning. He, like Chandran, only gets attracted to her 'visually' which soon he manages to overpower by dint of his usual 'rational' way of looking at things. Yet she, like Rosie, once visits Raman's moderate habitat at Ellaman street and of her own accord.
proposes that he should accompany her to a few neighbouring villages for undertaking a certain Family Planning survey. She astutely says that the main purpose of his accompaniment is to choose appropriate sites for fixing up propaganda messages. Maintaining purely the flair of a refined boss, whom usually a subordinate employee cannot provide a negative reply, she wins the consent of the ebullient youngster to whom her visit appears as a blessing in disguise. Ironically enough restraint of any kind fully fizzes out in him who takes it as a chance to fall in love with the beautiful lady who 'bosses' him to task.

The author, himself a close scrutinizer of human nature and a versatile story teller, does not reveal before the readers till the last as to what stuff Daisy is made of. Physically she is charming but it is extremely difficult to get at her mind or motive. She perhaps stands as the latest model of women's liberation movement in twentieth-century India, astutely combining in herself a tactful moodiness with a dashing outspokenness while talking on her 'mission'. At the same time she could become as familiar and hospitable in her spirit as she could downright eliminate any feeling of compassion on the pretext of carrying on her work as a 'small family - happy family' propagandist. Referring to her survey tour, the author observes:

-At every place, she had the same routine. She had a perfect timetable between her arrival and departure. Settled down at
the local school or on the veranda of a hospitable home or hut or in the shade of a tree summoned an audience of men, women and children under the big tree and spoke to them quietly, firmly, with conviction. Explained to them the process of birth and its control. Daisy explained physiology, anatomy, and sexual intercourse, with charts or, if a black board was available, with sketches in chalk. She never felt shy or hesitant, but sounded casual.

Subjects ranging from production and exchange to population explosion, family planning, birth control or vasectomy have become parts of a twentieth century Indian milieu. The social changes these bring about could be placed under the category of cumulative change in modern sociology where knowledge under a western influence gradually comes to acquire a more functional or secular role than a sacred one. Yet the question arises as to how far in a country like India where millions are rotting below the margin of poverty-line and illiteracy, the barrier between knowledge like birth control in its empirical sense, and its proper application to the actual living condition of masses of people, be removed? Could a community with its ageold ignorance or superstition so easily submit to the scientific or surgical programme launched by the modern elites? An incessant drive to eradicate illiteracy, superstition and taboos has been initiated by the Governments,
authorities, groups of trained people or specialists which in a more secular or urban context also provides adequate encouragement to educated women to include themselves as a part of the drive. Daisy, a product of the neo-liberation movement, is directed to speak to people on birth control without any inhibition on her part, for the elite or experts intend to use her as an attractive or convenient medium for enforcing family planning on the illiterate masses.

The family planning drives organised by Daisy is temporarily mistaken by the romantic Raman as a means to spell out possibilities of a physical relation between them both. But his advances to embrace her during a night halt in a cart have been ruthlessly thwarted by her, which is in fact a good lesson for him. Raman attempts to withdraw completely from any acquaintance he is likely to have with her and resumes his former self, that reminds one of Raju's style of backing out following Rosie's order to vacate the peak house in The Guide. Raman also develops an apprehension that Daisy, as a mark of her uncertain temper or supposed offence might even inform the police and get him trapped.

Here one may conclude that Raman ought not to have reared in mind any possibility of a love affair, or even a romance with Daisy. Taking different aspects of her into consideration like her 'missionary' zeal in preaching messages of birth control,
her most mechanical way of getting into a spirit of public speaking - if a topic like 'conception' or birth control is just hinted at - or her open aversion to the very idea of conception or achieving motherhood he has already been conversant with during the course of the survey tour, he ought to have been conscious beforehand. Like Chandran or Ravi in Mr. Sampath (1949) he may take a longer time in parting with a spell of visual love. M.K. Naik rightly says how in case of the young painter of signs, one rightly anticipates

Youth cutting its emotional milk teeth,

though as such, the process seems to be a time-taking affair. The former activities of the sign-board painter resumed as usual brings him back again to a life of self-assurance. Yet this is all for the time being. Daisy comes to him once more, either on the pretext of making some payment that she owes him or in a more intricate way to resume her old acquaintance. Raman makes a proxy for Raju, feels as if he has adequately restored his position as Daisy's wooer by way of a double self-assurance and becomes an unfailing visitor to Daisy's flat. One cannot assuredly make out if she is genuine in resuming her acquaintances, for this time she discloses the more enigmatic part of her personality which could easily entrap the emotional youth as the instrument for satisfying her carnal desires. Though verbally she speaks of her characteristic apathy for love
making, marriage or settling down as wife and mother, she strangely allows Raman to be with her as her bed-partner and even stay with her if it is too late on the latter's part to get back home. If Raman takes it as a prelude to an affair of pure love making probably Daisy from her side is shrewd enough in avoiding to make any commitment for a marriage. One may find out the platonic conversation of the self-proclaimed 'rationalist' artist:

He felt now that he was regaining his personality, which has been drowned in Daisy-ism, too much of it. Daisy-ism was all right-interesting, titillating, and diverting up to a point........ 47

And circumstantially maintaining a physical attachment with Daisy he takes a decision to marry her at an early date to which also she acquiesces. Ironically enough he discloses to his aunt his decision which creates enough ripple on the calm surface of a conservative household. The old lady, like Raju's mother, cannot approve of her nephew's marital connection with a woman of sufficiently controversial position or of a different community altogether and of her own accord proposes to go away on pilgrimage to Kasi wishing to breathe her last there.

Here the author, himself a supporter of joint family system chalks out a kind of separation between the old lady and her
nephew thus giving it a more shrewd and definitive shape that one misses in the Guide. The blind option of the young platonic lover to wed a Christian woman rather psychologically unfixes her, as hitherto she had been playing the role of the youngster's caretaker, guardian or adviser in all aspects. The author elsewhere has defined the role of the old people in Indian joint family set up:

For old people their original domestic life has an appearance of continuance, the old parents never lose touch with the affairs of the family, giving plenty of advice and guidance, sometimes offering them a different point of view, all of which gives them a feeling of having something to do.

Now she naturally takes herself as unwanted, having nothing more to do at home in the aforesaid context. In addition to his preference to marry a Christian woman he also bluntly replies - probably keeping in view the 'most simple' way of solemnising a marriage ceremony as suits to the fancy of the working woman - that he is going to wed her in a 'Gandharva' style. As he reflects:

That was the type of marriage one read about in classical literature. Daisy said that although she had no faith in ancient
customs, she would accept it, since it seemed to her a sensible thing. 49

The old story repeated again: an orthodox Hindu widow, like a feminine version of Jagan the widower, is not able to make a direct protest, yet she has enough strength of mind to part with a wayward whimsical youngster. Throughout she has acted as both mother and father to Raman in bringing him up in the best possible way while clinging to the routine formalities or customs prevalent in a lower middle class Hindu household. How could she tolerate admitting an inter-communal marriage which to her is only an ‘evil practice’ encouraged in a casteless secular society? Precisely, she withdraws reticently completing her maternal duties to the prodigal. Does she really need to communicate anything more to him? Has she not most ungrudgingly and neatly brought him up to the present stage which ironically goes against her destiny in the fitness of things? Probably Raman has got himself delinked with a loving memory of his aunt’s maternal obligations which once had made him sympathetic to her as a mark of filial bondage:

Raman could hear the sound of the grindstone coming from the backyard. Aunt must be busy making something, he thought ............... Morning till night, planning something for his delectation for years, unwavering attention to his needs. 50
The dichotomy between a selfless maternal love and rash adventure of young love, or between memory and desire, is perhaps the crux of the separation of the old lady from Raman. Like as in *The Guide* here the progression of theme, starting with a depiction of filial attachment between Raman and his aunt and culminating in the decisive departure of the latter following the former's preference for an inter-communal marriage, unfolds a parallel spirit of the theory of Deterioration in terms of family relationship. The chastened and ideational order prevalent in a Hindu household one finds out at the outset, is undoubtedly the outcome of an incessant effort of the widow, whose only source of hope perhaps has been her nephew. The values of discipline or punctuality displayed by the old lady and the youngster, reminds one of the prevalence of an initial order. With the intrusion of forces of a technological civilization embodied in establishing a hydro-electric project or a family planning centre, the cultural topography of Malgudi undergoes radical changes, where the security of an age-old native culture is imperilled by the intrusion of an alien vagrant culture. Malgudi has become, as the author observes:

> a jungle where other beasts are constantly on the prowl to attack and bite off a mouthful if one is not careful.⁵¹
Daisy is perhaps one of those specimens who, on the pretext of being a family-planner rushes into Raman's household and completely annihilates whatever love or loyalty that existed between the aunt and her nephew till now. She most selfishly extracts the best possible services offered by a calligraphic artist in lieu of offering temporary sensual pleasures to the latter, thus bringing about a complete moral disorder or deterioration to his family.

An assiduous family planner by profession, she ruins the ideational foundation of a custom-ridden family thus offering most meaningful studies in Deterioration theory as part of sociological change. Therefore her own departure is highly suggestive. It implies the restoration of order in Raman's lot which may also be followed by the aunt's return to his leading to a renewal of the filial bondage.

The departure of the old lady is followed by many a plan undertaken by the would-be 'groom' to fetch a would-be 'bride' home. Arrangements are made elaborately. Adequate caution is taken by Raman to see that his 'bride' is neither offended nor disturbed either in her too much of self-opinionated orations or in her agreeable spirit which luckily is in his favour at present. She in her usual way also makes two conditions—they should never have children, and if by chance they have any, she would give the child away for the sake of carrying on her social
services. She bluntly uses a first person singular or second person singular even while visiting Raman's place that undergoes all kinds of arrangements or replacements:

"I love this river behind your house'. He noted with some slight pain that she still said 'your' house, rather than 'our.'"52

However, Daisy's agreeable mood to come down to Ellaman street as Raman's wife disappears enigmatically when she suddenly decides to take up an unusually long professional tour. Most mechanically she packs up and vanishes from Malgudi thus leaving the foolish youngster in a tragicomic lot of his own.

Though the garb of a suspenseful narrative has been characteristically maintained by the author, one may not overlook how it clearly depicts in a dramatic way a woman's clear cheating of a man. Daisy, who herself narrates before Raman the way she had point-blank refused to accommodate herself with the usual norms of feminine conduct that had foiled her marriage negotiation with some one when she was in her teens, represents the category of modern women who are mostly selfwilled or strong in mind and actions. Her natural way of living, both before and after she finishes her training under the supervision of a Christian missionary - who even named her Daisy - has been a kind of living that is secluded, cold-blooded or too much of a pragmatic type. Bereft of any feminine emotion
or averse to the idea of living a normal married life, which she also has occasionally mentioned, she appears as an embodiment of the negative spirit of the emancipation of women in recent times, negative because she misguides a youngster with typical pranks adopted by her in her own way. In spite of Raman’s advances made to her during the survey tour, which she radically denounces at first, she herself allows him to resume the same on the pretext of satisfying her own sensual need the urgency of which she must have felt owing to her weariness as a professional worker or propagandist. She appears to have provided herself with a cold mechanical accessibility to sex, which she gradually must have come to identify as a kind of compensation for a life of secluded exhaustion. Her full self-surrender to Raman, ironically considered, is only an act of utter hypocrisy and selfishness which one may acknowledge as sheer negative factors persisting in westernised society of free India, which the dedicated romantic lover could not have comprehended till the last. Daisy, with her peculiar spirit of assertiveness matched with a slight masculine voice, her sweet physical appearance matched with a precision in talk and action, and her exposure to pure statistical or prosaic approaches to personal as well as professional life matched with a harsh outspokenness, could comprehend sex as a casual experience only: the concepts of love, marriage and settled motherhood are words perhaps one may not discover in her self-composed dictionary of family planning!

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The context of emancipation of women which one also discovers in The Guide and The Vendor of Sweets probably has a positive dimension. In The Guide Rosie despite her aim to secure an identity as a dancer with the cooperation of Raju becomes eventually indifferent to her benefactor. Yet she never attempts to use him as an instrument of a carnal passion. She is basically an artist who excludes herself from the limits of hypocrisy till the last, however academic or professional she might have become in course of her career. Grace in The Vendor of Sweets confesses how her ethnic self-respect as a woman is violently crushed by Mali's obsession for imposing a relationship of vagrant sensuality upon her. Her self-revelation brings out a humanitarian outlook with more conviction and faith of her own. In both Rosie and Grace, there is some well-defined or relevant feminine ideal which they try to establish in their own ways. Rosie at least penitently recalls how much she owes to Marco, or Grace says how much of moral loss she owes to Mali as being deluded by him. Grace though a foreigner by herself is most objectively treated by the novelist. She laboriously attempts to behave as a Hindu wife while washing the doorsteps or decorating the threshold with white flour on a Friday. Her utmost attempts to imitate an Indian style of living shows her whole-hearted devotion to middle class Indian culture. Daisy in relation to the liberation factor behaves much unlike both her counterparts. She makes complete misuse of individual liberty by practising
fraud in terms of providing sexual allurement to a youngster. Her prosaic approach to sex, accompanied by a cold and methodical approach as a family planner, make her display a negative trend of the liberation episode.

To conclude, the exploration of different myths and anecdotes as available in the ancient Hindu scriptures finds ample coverage in the works of Narayan in the later period. With the exception of *The Maneater of Malgudi* (1962) perhaps in no other fictional narrative a more direct method of infusion of such anecdotes into the depiction of characters and events is found out in such contextual proportions till one comes across the later group of works including *The Painter of Signs*, *A Tiger For Malgudi* (1983) and *Talkative Man* (1986). As the mode of human relationship is becoming more and more crucial and materialistic thus giving rise to a complete elimination of the code of conduct or system of values, the social philosopher and moral analyst in Narayan, more than the chronicler or narrator of events probably comes to a point of conclusion that a recall of myth might rejuvenate in the reader's mind the urgency or necessity of maintaining a standard of minimum humanitarianism. The miracle of modern technology culminating in the installing of space stations has diverted man's mind from maintaining a peaceful family life to the point of restlessly exploring the infinite avenues of knowledge. To a large extent it deprives him of any kinship adherence to ethnic memories connected with
legends or fables which time and again have been providing and enriching human experiences with feelings of oneness. The impact of science, rather a misuse of science, transforms them into either grybbbers of money or seekers of power which add to their moral depravations: hence a return to the myth.

Secondly, from the perspective of treating a work of art an author ought to present his observation of reality in a manner which is supposed to make the observation more convincing to the body of readers or critics. He ought to use his own technique of parallelism and contrast as criterion of placing his observation. In Narayan’s narratives, the occasional intrusion of myths and legends builds up the method of such observation, which also serves to intensify the motive of the moral analyst. It appears when a parallel myth is introduced to depict a real situation, it makes the presentation of reality artistically more real and convincing thus implying a contrast between ordinary and extraordinary (or mythical?) realities of a situation. Narayan explains that the inexhaustible vitality of our classical mythology helps the writer make the contemporary reality more real.

Besides the sporadic uses of myth to a large extent lay stress on the author’s faith in a persistent natural order.
prevailing over contemporary degeneration of values. This kind of inherent awareness probably makes his protagonist realise that an exile from home or an aggressively self-imposed action at home ultimately does not pay him as the latter is helpless against the forces of socio-cosmic evolution.

In course of Raman's fanciful obsession for wooing Daisy he not only tries to show an utmost adjustment of being her sycophant, he also in a manner contrary to his own nature attempts to maintain unusual economy or restraint in his speeches and actions, lest she should get 'humiliated'! To sustain the thematic suspense of such relationship of love Narayan frequently refers to the popular myth of king Shantanu's blind love for Ganga, the paragon of beauty. He flatters to make her his wife at the cost of most horrible conditions laid down by her. She bluntly declares that she would marry the king provided he does not ask any question on any of her actions which she chooses to perform as his wife and she would give him up the moment he violates such condition. Subsequently as per such an agreement, she throws away seven of her children to the river soon after they are born and Shantanu cannot interfere with it however harrowing it might be for him. On giving birth to the eighth child she is stopped by the aggrieved father to repeat such heinous act and thus she leaves him for good. In case of Daisy and Raman, the myth applies from purely a sociocultural point of view, though the marriage never
takes place or they have as such no chance of having children. The platonic lover most ironically agrees to remain silent when the 'hypothetical' first baby is given away by Daisy to some stranger as per her declaration made beforehand. M.K. Naik is of opinion:

The whole point in employing this kind of a strategy of juxtaposing antiquity and contemporaneity is to demonstrate how the basic imperatives of the human condition remain the same, inspite of differences in time, place, milieu and even the place of experience. 54

Probably in the same spirit Narayan takes for granted that the human prodigal ultimately accepts the destiny of home-coming following adequate realisation of errors he has committed owing to sporadic moral lapses on his part. In all ages and in all times an individual is conceived of as being a part of his home or family which he cannot do away with or give up in the long run. Swami, Chandran, Mali or even Raman has to inevitably display a decisive 'come back' though in case of Mali or Raman it has only been hinted at. Narayan, the social philosopher provides sufficient scope for the return of the prodigal, either in settling down as a newly-married complacent news-reporter or taking over as an untrained successor of a seasoned sweet vendor. In The Guide the case is treated differently as it has
greater philosophical dimensions. Raju has to finally 'acknowledge' the rustics and the old shrine respectively as members of his family and a 'home' of his own, following incidental separation from his mother and Rosie. For him Mangala is a metaphysical hamlet: a counterpart of Malgudi which enables him to transcend the limits of the latter. B. S. Goyal explains:

The action of the novel proceeds in two distinct streams, presenting two different aspects of Indian culture. One stream flows in the legendary Malgudi (a miniature India) with its rich tradition of classical dances offered by Rosie-Nalini and the breath-taking cave paintings that embellish Marco's 'The Cultural History of South India'. Another stream flows in the neighbouring town of Mangala where the spiritual dimension of Indian culture is presented through Raju's growth into a celebrated Swami. Raju's presence in both these streams indicates the close affinity between art and spirituality in India. 55

In fact by way of combining both the modes of Indian cultural heritage Raju surpasses the usual frontiers of home-coming as depicted in case of other heroes of Narayan.
Raman, much unlike Raju, is bound to back home. If Raju moves from the stage of a picar to that of a pilgrim, Raman could only present himself as a prodigal returning to an insignificant limit of his Ellaman street-house with none to share his mood of penitent self-realisation. Daisy’s dramatic betrayal of the latter might precisely make him fulfil a prophecy which he himself made earlier looking at the change resistant surroundings of the Municipal township of Malgudi:

\[
\text{a conservative town unused to modern life.} \quad 56
\]

Raman, who had been wondering at the stereotyped physical appearance of his home-town might come to realise how conservative values attached to a social life would prevail ultimately in one’s life thus equating the spirit of the place with one’s life. Malgudi, as Raman observes, has remained unchanged since its inception forty years ago, in a literal sense since the time of publication of *Swami and Friends* to that of *The Painter of Signs*. 
In one of his recent interviews Narayan says:

I am only interested in ordinary people. If I find a character I like, I tell his story, that's all. The larger sociological issues, politics and what not do not interest me.

Yet in the same interview he provides a clue to his own view of man's relation with society. While appreciating the fiction of Vikram Seth, he remarks:

The Vikram Seth type of writer is very rare, one who has no desire to change the world.

Such statement, not merely approximates the author's view of life with that of his north Indian counterpart in the field of Indo-anglian novels, it also confirms to a large extent Lakshmi Holmstrom's similar observation of Narayan's vision of life as discussed earlier. Narayan appears to have introduced the theme of home-coming in major part of his works, which as part of his analysis or observation of contemporary Indian family life, has highlighted the concept of restoration of
order. The theme of home coming is rather a recurrent and dominant cultural aspect which corroborates the author’s interest in projecting a pattern of man’s relation with society from the point of view of the sociological theory of cosmic evolution. Any kind of individual preference for an experience, devoid of a collective interest, is destined to prove irrelevant or incomplete at last. Notwithstanding the author’s lack of interest in sociological issues, as he himself has clearly stated, such issues perhaps automatically come to constitute the spirit of his fictional narratives. The concept of home coming in the context of Indian literature is as old as life in the subcontinent itself. It is mellifluously analysed in ancient scriptures like The Ramayan and The Mahabharata. The author who identifies each observation or experience of life with a certain aspect related to these scriptures, normally presents the theme of home—coming as a universal experience of Indian family life. Beginning with Swami and Friends upto The World of Nagaraj (1988-1989), the episode of home coming coincides with his own assertion of keeping the custom-bound family life totally unchanged in the ultimate part of the novel.

In The World of Nagaraj, following a division of the family, the protagonist Nagaraj occupies the ancestral house of his father located at Kabir street of Malgudi while his elder brother Gopu stays at village occupying the age-old rural household attached to all its landed acres. The two uterian
brothers are temperamentally different from each other. While Gopu, the more assertive, bold and dominating of the two is devoted to his cattle refuse and gobar gas plant, Nagaraj, the ever-fluctuating and ever-docile younger brother resorts to his meticulous job of an accountant at the Boeing centre owned by Coomar in the town. The former has a natural aversion for town life. Though himself educated, he takes a decision to settle at the village with a view to improving his material and environmental lot. Hence his round-the-clock involvement in gobar gas or specialised work as a farmer or grower. As a result of his haughty and indifferent spirit which is also shared by his self-centered wife, he wants his only son Tim to follow his ideals in life. Following the accidental collapse of the 'Pyol School' or other difficulties when Tim's education is totally discontinued Gopu compels the lad to start working in the field and take up farming which the youngster bluntly refuses. On being addressed by Gopu as 'donkey' he leaves home and straight comes away to Malgudi where he is warmly welcomed and received by Nagaraj and his wife Sita. Tim is admitted to Albert Mission Junior College and provided with all care and comfort by the childless and loving uncle and aunty. Thus Tim, who has released himself from the clutches of an aggressive father feels quite at home in the molly-coddled treatment offered by his uncle. Notwithstanding Gopu's direct accusation of Nagaraj whom he takes as primarily responsible for offering shelter to a young fugitive, Tim resolves to stay on at his
uncle's place. Gopu thus takes Nagaraj as the most incompetent guardian and compares him with the sage Narada when all his attempts to take back the boy have been thwarted:

"You should have turned him back on the very first day, instead of that you petted and pampered him, even without asking whether he took my permission before leaving home....... you are a Narada — a mischief maker."

The most reticent and humble younger brother has to swallow up the crude wordings of an ever-dominating elder brother though he himself in no way devised Tim's flight from home. One may come to agree that the boy, who himself was studying at St. Stephens years ago before the family came to be divided, cherished in his memory the affectionate treatment of his uncle. Thus following instant closure of his school education at village and humiliation inflicted upon him by his father, the growing teenager perhaps had no choice but to come away to his uncle. For Tim practically the house at Kabir street takes the shape of a real home, for he was born and brought up here before the joint family came to be divided. Rather, the sweet memories of this house and St. Stephens school contrasted with the torturous experiences of a caning-infested 'Pyol School' instigated him to get closer to his uncle's place more than his father's. Probably this has been the crux of his flight from the rural household.
Tim, unlike Swaminathan or Mali, gets overpetted or over pampered at Nagaraj's place, which to a large extent justifies Gopu's crude remarks on his brother. His whereabouts become more suspicious as he grows up in years. He comes home only to dine or sleep, rest of the hours he is away, either by taking the neighbour Shambu's scooter or his bi-cycle. The ever-docile Nagaraj just cannot take any action, the youngster altogether remains mute and indifferent at home, except very formally exchanging a few words during dinner time and shuts himself in his room if he is found at home. The communication gap which Nagaraj himself shares, as a proxy of Gopu in the matter, makes his relation with Tim ironically more estranged than with Gopu. Soon Nagaraj is aggrieved to discover that the wayward young man has discontinued his studies and has been actively engaged in doing certain part-time work in the newly built Kismet hotel located in New Extensions. It seems he has managed to do every thing purely on taking liberty of his uncle's proverbial meekness that eventually helps the cold-war growing at home. Tim is found to be drunk one evening which he intends to dodge artfully being caught by Nagaraj:

However, one evening, he could not help asking: 'I find some sort of smell when you pass, something, like a spirit stove of a doctor's..............'.

...............Tim explained, 'some chap sprayed eau-de-cologne on me.'
Nagraj knows well that he has already been an alcohol addict, but he has no guts to ask him to stop these habits. The youngster, who had come out first in one examination as clarified by the professor himself has within a few months undergone a catastrophic change. He has been thoroughly spoiled by becoming victim of evil company which is perhaps the biggest malady of city life. The rural-urban tug of war in current times, as discussed earlier, only instigates a youngster to blindly follow the futile glamour of urban life by way of evading a purposeful existence in a village. Some regulated field work suggested by Gopu might have made Tim a full man in future, which the youngster is deprived of as he gradually comes to avail maximum liberty at Kabir Street. One’s freedom in roaming about here and there, mixing with all sorts of people or getting closer to the ‘shady’ underworld activities have been the outcome of not only an over-westernised society, but an aftermath of the guardian’s pampering of a growing teenager.

In an Indian single family set up, incidental arrival or intrusion of a nephew leads to misunderstanding between the two brothers if values maintained by the intruder’s father appear to have been ignored by the intruder himself. In case of Tim, one obviously notices him neither clinging to the values idealised by his father nor that of his uncle who, except for his meekness, is by himself an exemplary householder or brother. Sociologically speaking the relationships that exist between
Gopu and Tim and between Tim and Nagaraj offer a chain of reactions that motivate parallel conflicts and simultaneously parallel competitions among the father, the son and the uncle-cum-guardian: each in his own way attempting to assert his own values of life. The novel offers a good deal of trilogical observation of relationship in family life based on rural, urban and neutral approaches represented by Gopu, Tim and Nagaraj respectively. The peculiarity of Indian family relationship is that on being legally separated from each other, a brother fails to possess desirable control and authority over his nephew or one's uterian brother's son which is usually possible in a joint family system. Even if one detects one's nephew going astray, one cannot easily afford to ask him to rectify his mode of conduct, lest one should be misunderstood by one's own brother or kith and kin, who instead of finding out mistakes with his progeny, is unreasonably sensitive enough to find out the same with his brother—a kind of negative consideration of facts that persists in context of blood relationship.

Thus in a middle class household a brother deliberately remains impervious to the frailties and faults committed by a nephew, and continues to display a 'secular' indifference to the 'intruder'. This as Narayan depicts, has been the biggest psychological setback one happens to come across in a middle class family. On one side one feels helpless apprehending
breach of trust between one self and one's brother if the former takes active steps in exercising authority over a youngster. On the other if a precaution is not taken in time, the non-interfering guardian providing shelter to the fugitive becomes the most 'misunderstood' (or 'Narada?') of the lot. Because the intruder's guardian, though himself incapable enough in tackling the spoiled youngster, lays the entire blame on the brother playing the role of a host. This is probably the highest kind of irony which Nagaraj shares being himself a loser in the game of family life, neither he could convince Gopu nor he could set Tim right. The World of Nagaraj maintains a kind of polarisation between an eccentric idealist father and his fast-going-astray son of which the ineffective uncle becomes the worst intermediary. The enstrangement running in parallel direction between brother and brother, father and son, and uncle and nephew is by and large considered as a documentary narrative of what basically happens in contemporary Indian society. The clash of values resulting in dramatic change of the elders' attitude to the young people—an attitude to impose some kind of changeover or psychological treatment on the youngster's life in form of a marriage or change of place—as a part of compromise between two different generations of family members is supposed to influence the course of the youngster's life, as ironically depicted by the author. A marriage proposal comes for Tim being initiated by Gopu himself. The girl is seen by the party and the wedding takes place as Tim agrees to marry a Delhi-bred
'smart' girl, and last but not the least, the couple also stay at Nagaraj's place occupying the same room that belonged to Tim, or his parents earlier. Gopu and his wife go back to village and as usual the young couple reap the benefit of maximum liberty provided to them by Nagaraj:

but now one's ears were assailed with the incessant chatter and giggling emanating from the room until Tim left for Kismet (or wherever it might be) at his usual hour. 61

Nagaraj finds his peace of mind heinously disturbed. Saroja all the time sings to a blaring of her harmonium and even if she is inside her room, the instrument seems 'to pierce' the doors and walls. The real crisis, which is only partly shared by Gopu towards the last part of the novel, is faced by the perpetual lover of hitherto undisturbed silence, i.e. Nagaraj, who is adequately agitated. Unlike his wife Sita, who counsels him to leave the youngsters as they choose to live in their own way, Nagaraj feels intimidated and embarrassed. He cannot directly ask a niece-in-law to stop singing or playing on the instrument loudly, nor he can attain the tranquillity of mind that he has lost following Tim's marriage.

At this critical hour in the householder's life, he is reminded of Gopu's crude remark on his own incompetence as a
guardian, comparing him with the mythical sage or musician Narada. To get rid of the psychic disruptions at home he decides to compose a book on Narada, visits Kavu Pandit on the advice of the Talkative Man, but the old scholar does not help him in any way as he has developed senile garrulity. He then moves to Bari, 'the loquacious stationer' on the market road, for buying some bound note books to start his work, where incidentally he discovers Bari coming up with a few readymade information about the legendary sage. Thus an arrangement is made, Nagaraj visits the stationer thrice a week taking down notes while Bari explaining or translating passages from 'Narada Purana', his 'family heirloom'.

Here one may trace out a positive approach on Nagaraj's part to gather information about the 'controversial' sage of Indian mythology, which the peace loving householder develops in himself not only in trying to find out a solution to disturbances caused at home, but also in seeking an answer to whether he is responsible for the youngster's moral depravations as alleged by Gopu time and again. Narada, as Gopu observes, is the root of all complications in myths; on the contrary he is the wisest of the 'rishis'. Kavu Pandit says:

He was peace loving. His gossips led to wars, but he was himself peace loving and never had a scratch on him. 62
Above all, as observes Nagaraj, Narada is the Divine Musician who moves from place to place with his Veena and himself singing prayers and hymns. To associate oneself with a person creating complications for others is not the whole aspect of one's personality or approach to life, one however ought to find out or bring to limelight what creative or relevant aspect of that person is lying unexplored before others. In other words Narada is considered to be a great admirer of peace as well as music. How is it that peace goes side by side with a piece of music displayed by the great sage which Nagaraj, his human replica, is rather deprived of combining fruitfully in his day to day life? While sincerely searching for peace is he not getting fed up with a niece-in-law's display of music? Probably to find out the secret of such combination in one's private life Nagaraj has set out on a creative or literary adventure unlike Sita, who never feels disturbed by Saroja's way of singing or accepting it as a part of life.

The use of myth, associated with Nagaraj's self introspection highlights how far a modern man can identify himself with the more refined aspects of a mythical personality in the fitness of the present circumstances. If Narada, in the range of various myths gets himself involved with a good many genuine complications, though by himself unharmed and far from being exposed, Nagaraj with his typical humbleness is genuinely involved with a variety of complications like offering shelter
to Tim or the dramatic departure of the young couple without being directly responsible for any of these complications. Like the shrewd sage, he too intends to keep Gopu and Tim in good humour or attempts to please both the sides at his utmost. In spite of being a lover of peace, which he has always been by temperament, he is misunderstood as being a trouble-maker by Gopu. The myth of Narada, coming up now and then, throws light on the worldly whereabouts of the ochre-wearer or the world of Nagaraj. In a different way, the happenings in Nagaraj’s life are paradoxically related to Sita’s approaches to life for whom life should be accepted as it is. She unlike her husband is free of eccentric metaphysical speculations and adjusts herself, without any grievance, to the blaring of Saroja’s harmonium, which reveals her credible acceptance of reality. Thus Nagaraj and Sita represent a combination of myth and reality respectively that serve the balance of interest throughout.

However, a spirit of determination overtakes the worried searcher of domestic peace. To get rid of the sounds of Saroja’s harsh vocal rendering, he, being advised by Sita, even goes to the extent of wearing ochre clothes and plugs his ears with cotton wool for he has to finish writing his book on Narada on whom he has already got enough materials from Bari. It is a custom in Hindu family that when some one is wearing ochre and making prayer, others practically keep off from him. Hence this may be the most suitable pretext of imposing on Saroja to stop
her music during the time of worship. Thus comfortably when he settles down to scribble a few lines he is disturbed again by 'a blast' of Saroja's noise. Gathering enough courage to ask her to stop, he moves to the open door of her room and instead of showing any sign of disgust he rather gets humbled at the request of the youngster to listen to her songs which he hears for sometime and then practically 'sneaks' himself away from that place. It is because he cannot appreciate the contents of a love-lorn lyric which she is singing without any inhibition at her end, even forgetting that such songs one ought not to sing in presence of elders at home.

Such attitude of the Delhi-bred bride-cum-singer, shown without a sense of reservation and followed by Nagaraj's instant departure from the doorway only deepens the crisis. Tim and Saroja leave home without communicating to either uncle or aunty whither they move. Yet Tim's confrontation with Nagaraj, that the latter offended his wife by not listening to her songs totally, clarifies the cause of departure. Gopu's arrival adds oil to the fire. He holds Nagaraj responsible again for such dramatic exit of the couple. The two brothers set out in quest of Tim, find him out carrying a shopping bag and walking in some direction ahead, and completely ignoring them both when asked by father and uncle to come back home. Finally when Gopu alone locates him at Kismet, he sits down cross-legged right in the middle of the entrance demanding to take back his son.
Undoubtedly, as witnessed and narrated by the Talkative Man, Gopu is convinced that his son has taken some accommodation nearby and he overhears people telling how his wife plays the harmonium and sings at Kismet every evening. After a good deal of confrontation between Gopu and the hotel authorities in which Gopu seems to have shown his invincible haughtiness, it is reported that Tim refuses to come and see him. At this Gopu rises to his feet, straight moves to the bus stand and leaves for village without even caring to take leave of Nagaraj. There is a dramatic silence at home lasting for a week or more. Nagaraj takes it an opportunity to resume his work which is disrupted due to adverse circumstantial factors following the departure of youngsters. Nagaraj himself concludes:

Any way......... it was all for the best.
The house was now normal and quiet. No speculations about Tim. No need to watch Tim's movements. No need to glorify and find excuses for the Eau de cologne smell. No need to hunt for ear plugs.

He attempts to go through the notes he had taken at Bari's and writes down something, but his mind has gone hopelessly vacant. He feels helpless. Except for Sita's presence or advice probably he would have used these bunch of notes as fuel. Her sensible advice instils in him the urge to write and he psychologically settles down to resume his work next morning.
Ironically enough the next morning while Nagaraj is about to stretch his limbs and get up, Tim and Saroja arrive in a van with their luggages including a ‘leg harmonium’. The dumbfounded uncle and aunty only watch how easily a nephew and niece-in-law rush into the house behaving most jovially as if nothing had happened beforehand. While Saroja talks to Sita ceaselessly in the kitchen, Nagaraj cannot help maintaining a reserve on himself on witnessing Tim’s home coming:

"but I missed you. I am glad to see you."

In the same way Sita seems to have been

particularly happy that Tim was back.
She seemed to feel: 'Now, our home is back to normal.'

As the prodigal is back in the same manner as he had left, there is absolutely no need of an explanation or discussion. The puzzled Nagaraj gets an answer from Sita that night who says on the basis of Saroj’s information, that both Tim and Saroja are back home forever. They do not venture to go back to Kismet again following a severe confrontation between Tim and the Secretary of the Club. The trouble started when the Secretary came and asked Saroja to operate her harmonium in a side room as the members playing cards were disturbed. At this Tim got
flared up and slapped the Secretary accusing him to have insulated his wife: hence the home coming. Nagaraj in a mock-heroic way swallows up Sita's first-hand information she has gathered from Saroja and concludes that again he would put on ochre robe from next day which would compel him to remain silent so that children would find no chance of feeling up-set and quitting once more.

In other words the uncle and the nephew have never been in talking terms with each other for years together except on rare occasions when they exchange only a few formal words. Just as Jagan and Mali share a kind of communication failure, both before and after Mali's trip to America and the cousin or even Grace serving as a medium of communication, here Sita too has to make up for the gap. Communication failure of this kind, as a part of the generation gap, is not only in vogue in modern society, it probably springs out of a lack of spirit of adjustment on the part of both the elders and youngsters who take views of life differently from each other. The cause of such failure is purely psychological. Yet at the time of a festive occasion or ceremony held at home and specially during a family crisis they come forward to each other's rescue and are generally found to be talking to each other. In The Financial Expert (1952), the two brothers being neighbours, are not in talking terms, yet they come forward to share each other's joys or sorrows during family get-togethers
or moments of bereavements. This is the most peculiar cultural factor which usually dictates the pros and cons of joint family or family relationships in India.

The gyre has completed the round. Tim and Saroja come back home which they had left in a rage for the sake of finding out a better identification of an ego-centric existence. Their acquaintance with ultramodern situations in life, which they had taken as better sources for projecting such kind of identification appear to prove futile in the long run. In a sociological sense they both attach unusual importance to their individual liberty, which although is expected to accommodate or merge itself with social liberty embodied in the club life of Kismet, does not serve the purpose. One has a personal liberty to treat one's kith and kin any way he likes at home, the way Tim or Saroja gets offended and leaves home in a feat of self-humiliation is an emotional experience with each youngster in a custom-bound family life. But such kind of display of one's raw emotion however one cannot assimilate or justify in a social institution or club where one has to adjust with notions of majority of people. A social institution or club is only an agency for exchanging acknowledged formal relations unlike a household which Tim fails to cope up being unreasonably ego-centric or conscious of his personal liberty. Hence the come back.
Besides the departure of a spoiled youngster is compatible with the view of progress which sociologically speaking is the result of a perverted urban outlook. The homecoming of the prodigal spells out how ultimately society is unable to save the destiny of wrong-doer who can only choose to come back home—home being the panacea for all evils or confusions, the end of the beginning or the beginning of the end as part of the sociological theory of evolution. Tim is probably not repentant enough for his rowdy behaviour at Kismet, neither he communicates his feelings frankly to any one. Yet his abuse of personal liberty, as a version of the concept of progress, deprives him of the security or safety which no club life can ensure him. He comes back rather in a shrewd manner, without explaining any cause of his return to his uncle. Probably he realises that for a person like himself passing through a self-created trouble, home is the only refuge, the only guarantor of security and self-renovation. His return is thus a kind of nemesis which Kismet (or Destiny?) inflicts upon him in order to crush any excess in operating personal liberty. It rather gives him a chance to review how he has behaved in the past or how he is going to renew his approaches to family and social relationship again.

Analysing from a sociological point of view one may find out how changes in interpersonal relations, initially between Gopu and Tim and subsequently between Nagaraj and Tim, more or
less emerge in the shape of functional roles that members of a small joint family come to play specially on the eve of the youngster's departure. The 'supposed' indifference of Nagaraj to Saroja's vocal music or the most uncommunicative nature of Tim who has never been in talking terms with Gopu or Nagaraj except on very rare occasions, appear as functional realities which lead to the instant exit of Tim and Saroja. In Narayan's observation such exit may be taken as a result of sheer environmental influence - the influence of club life at Kismet which Tim thinks would assure a kind of occupation to his wife as singer thereby fetching both income and independent status for them both. There is a hint, given by the author, of Tim's deviation from the small joint family set up and of his starting a nuclear family set up which sums up the contemporary breaking up of joint family into small nuclear families. Thus Tim's departure brings about a structural change in the entire joint family set up though it does not last long. Saroja's capacity to offer public musical recitals probably is the instant cause of the temporary exit. Raghuvir Sinha observes:

Employment in the towns and cities or in the industrial centres has moved the family from the village to the urban and industrial areas thus necessitating a structural change.
The temporary departure, whether it is going to be repeated or not is rather adequate indication of how the traditional joint Hindu family is being steadily converted into the modern nuclear or small joint family.

In The Vendor of Sweets the communication gap maintained between Mali and Jagan in the same way could be taken as functional roles played by the son and father since the youngster lost his mother in childhood. Each probably considers in his own way that he would manage conveying something to the other either through the cousin or through Grace, which are again functional realities being disrupted following incidents like the old man’s discovery of both Mali and Grace ‘not married to each other’ and the aggressive way the youngster demands him to advance 51,000 dollars for starting the computerised story-writing project. These two incidents, as the climax of preceding functional realities passed between them both, provide adequate indication of a father-and-son separation or breaking up of the small joint family of the vegetarian-Gandhite-Sweet Vendor who rather himself initiates the arrangement of separation on admitting a structural change of the family set up. He cannot easily accept such patterns of modernization as displayed by his son in terms of craze for sex and money. He dismisses such patterns or plea for social mobility in a religious spirit of resignation. But for Mali asking for money for starting a new kind of project is not irrelevant. He finds
Jagan as the most affluent by-stander for providing a concrete shape to his plan. Being a representative of half-westernised ultra-modern youth in current times he probably tries to succeed by way of manipulation and not merit of his own. In this context one may come to agree with D. Lerner, who says that the modern people come to see their personal prospects in terms of achievement rather than heritage.67

On the other hand the actions and reactions of the two brothers may also be viewed in context of Tim’s growth of personality. His excessive fear or apathy for the authoritarian father is unexpectedly followed by absolutely no control of uncle over him. Like Mali in The Vendor of Sweets he neither learns to take up any responsibility or hardship under contradictory guardianship of Gopu and Nataraj, nor he gets any chance to realise or experience what family life really is. Gopu’s reactions to Tim’s suspicious nocturnal errands and getting wayward day by day—except during preparation and arrangement for Tim’s marriage with Saroja—lack a kind of psychological insight into things or a compassionate attitude to a growing son. Such rigidity of the gobar-gas specialist is contrasted to Nagaraj’s most ineffectively silent and docile nature which from a strictly sociological perspective never helps building up a youngster’s personality. His peculiar way of trying to compose a new version of Narada is incompatible with the strong voice of a guardian or uncle which he has been
lacking in reality. His indifference to Saroja's blaring of harmonium or her song may also be taken as an extreme attitude of mind which he should not have developed as a kind of inner rage leading to the departure of Tim and Saroja.

One should also allow other members of the household to have or enjoy some kind of individual liberty because a family, like society, comprises members having variety of tastes or interests in life. If Gopu's reactions culminate in a mock-heroic display of authoritarianism while physically challenging the strongman in Kismet thus leading to more estrangement between him and Tim, Nagaraj's over-preoccupation or anxiety at the intrusion of Saroja's vocal and instrumental performance in music too makes him deal with the situation in an eccentric manner. He shows entirely a lack of self adjustment as guardian of a household. Jayaraj, the photobinder, replies on finding the former looking worried over the issue:

"How can you say so? After all she has learnt from a master in Delhi, and knows what she is doing-------- how can you say it cannot be music? You have no ear for music that's the trouble. After all this is no family problem: the real problem in a family is different."
Against the two extremely opposite attitudes to life displayed by the two brothers, there emanates Sita, who seems to have exhibited the characteristic spirit of balance or resilience typical of middle-class women. Like her counterparts in other novels — Raju's mother or Raman's aunt — she possesses a kind of confidence which Gopu and Nagaraj lack in themselves. Referring to Narayan's fiction William Walsh says that whenever a crisis arises in a family or joint household,

the women rather than the old represent 'custom and reason' and know what is and what is not proper. 69

Hence Sita is the specimen of exemplary flatness embodied in Indian middle class womanhood, who to a large extent contributes to the growth of evolution as depicted by the author as social philosopher. Like Raju's mother she maintains the clarity and integrity of her vision and version though unlike the former, she shares the experience of a jubilant family reunion in the long run. In fact her awareness of duty as a wife or aunty is the source of her clarity of vision which the author tries to show as parts of an ideal culture partly prevalent in contemporary India.

To conclude Nagaraj remains the most confused or 'to be or not to be' specimen of a contemporary social set up where values have been in clash with each other following steady exchange of
forces of culture. Probably one who sticks to a purely indigenous rural culture without having sentimental attachment for one's kith and kin can survive in the midst of disintegrating forces like Gopu. Yet in case of Nagaraj, the impractical house-holder and guardian, one notices how the latter is dwindling between adjustment problems on one hand and theoretical speculations on the other, that make him a kind of vacillating personality—the prototype of semi-urbanised gentry—who in fact fail to co-ordinate values of different orders in vogue. Like The Guide and The Vendor of Sweets, The World of Nagaraj is a cultural encyclopaedia of Indian life in post-Independence era comprising multiple patterns of choices, experiences and ideas which people have been passing through as parts of a changing milieu. During the war period, when Narayan starts editing a paper of his own entitled Indian Thought, which he dedicates to the cause of 'literature, philosophy and culture,' he composes a manifesto as a mark of inception of the journal. He recalls his first experience of being an editor:

I packed into the manifesto all my ambition: to phrase our culture properly; to utilise the English language as a medium for presenting our cultural heritage—Indian classics and philosophy from Sanskrit and a score of other regional languages, modern writing included, and to encourage original English writing of the highest quality.
The author regrets to inform that though he had originally planned to bring out a cultural encyclopaedia instead of a journal he could not undertake it owing to numerous difficulties. As Ranga Rao observes:

The journal failed after a brief career, but not Narayan's goal.  

However the attitude to phrase or present the cultural heritage of his country, that has been the manifesto of the author since early forties eventually takes shape in form of his fictional narratives attempted during his sixty-years of creative achievement as an author. Analysing diversities of Indian, especially the South Indian culture, Narayan perhaps is able to provide his readers with the unity of an oriental vision which one as such finds out in the major works of Raja Rao.

VI

A few short stories attempted by the author may also be viewed in terms of specific cultural context highlighted by the author himself as follows:
The material available to a short story writer in India is limitless. Within a broad climate of inherited culture there are endless variations: every individual differs from every other individual, not only economically, but in outlook, habits and day to day philosophy. It is stimulating to live in a society that is not standardised or mechanised, and is free from monotony. Under such conditions the writer has only to look out of the window to pick up a character (and there by a story)——— I discover a story when a personality passes through a crisis of spirit or circumstances. 72

God and the Cobbler (1983) is probably an attempt to provide the readers with an authentic version of native-alien ambivalence that constitutes major part of contemporary Indian cultural heritage. Narayan affirms how, a short story of any kind

may prove to be nothing more than a special or significant moment in some one's life or a pattern of existence brought to view. 73

such a perspective offered by Narayan has probably been infused into the present story that builds up the central theme of the story: a rare combination of the momentary and the eternal one may trace out with assurance of the aforesaid perspectives.
A hippie meets a cobbler near the outer wall of a temple and the casual exchange of words between both builds up the crux of the theme. The cobbler mistakes the hippie as a mystic incarnation of God with his 'matted locks' covering his nape; on the other hand the hippie takes the cobbler as a graphic embodiment of contentment which perhaps the latter alone seems to have possessed in himself in a care-worn world. The road near the temple where they meet appears as a cultural rendezvous for the curious western mind and the calm eastern mind, each representing doubt and faith in a manner of its own. The cobbler, endowed with a characteristic Indian spirit of innocent hospitality, spreads out a sheet of paper that he had torn off the wall behind him asking the wayfarer to keep his holy feet over it while the leather sandals are being mended. Though he remains incessantly busy in the manual labour, which is totally an aftermath of a strange yet contented self-absorption, he seems to offer a kind of inexplicable joy derived from within the process of his manual labour to the alien onlooker. The hippie, who perhaps never received such kind of hospitality anywhere during his pilgrimage takes it as a unique metaphysical experience: a mute cobbler offering a sheet of paper to stand upon or even to sit down!

The unintentional display of such magnanimity as revealed by the cobbler seems to impress the hippie as much as the many miraculous or amazing tricks performed by Yogis or Saints in
multiple holy places of the sub-continent. However the conversation that sets in between them both, provides a more convincing clue to the awestruck white intruder to understand the cobbler's attitude to life and God better. He says, like many a riff-raff in society, he needs money, and not flowers for his survival. Like his counterparts he is too oblivious to have been noticed by God, and concludes how he has been patiently waiting for a chance to communicate with God, the occasion he might be sharing now, which he is totally unaware of. The simple and straightforward manner of the cobbler's talk exposes before the bewildered hippie a novel secret of the oriental mind. Even a cobbler is trained not merely to accept the hard facts of life with such degree of wise passiveness, but also he is qualified enough to transform a myth into reality. Finally each discloses before the other how each had committed crimes or blunders and the travails of the present life—either slicing of leather with an awl or aimlessly wandering like a waif—have been the desirable nemesis or an aftermath.

The honest way of self-revelation on the cobbler's part perhaps prompts the hippie to speak out a little truth about himself though with reserve. The climax of the cobbler's doubt whether the hippie had stolen the silver image of Durga that he holds out as a gift to the former is as significant as his innate faith in the Indian mother Goddess who, he assures, would protect the hippie for good. One may observe here how a needy
person shows his utmost faith in God and instead of accepting the silver image offered to him he could give it away to the other as a panacea for crimes committed knowingly or unknowingly by the hippie or any body in the world. Hence one may observe how unlike the vagrant traveller who intends to find out a meaning of life, or whose mind is engrossed with enquiries about situations and human intentions he comes across on the way, the cobbler is able to give an impression of worldly contentment that he has inherited as a result of his experiences gathered in a confined lot — experiences of crimes followed by a passive acceptance of nemesis that spells out the cobbler’s sense of practical divinity. Probably Narayan comes forward to suggest that the East is represented by the oblivious shoe-mender before the restless queries of the aimless westerners represented by the more socially well-known figurehead, the hippie.

From a purely sociological point of view the story offers a quite ambivalent display of both religious determinism and economic determinism as parts of theories of sociological changes. The hippie not merely accepts the self-complacent spirit of the cobbler or the Indian common man as an aftermath of an ageold religious order, he also could share the rice sweetened with jaggery offered to him free of cost by the temple priest, or a sound sleep at the portal where none comes forward to charge anything for occupying it which may be taken as unique economic privilege provided to him as parts of the religious
order. Despite the universal picture of poverty present in India the hippie observes how almost everything is available to the cobbler for carrying on his business:

The hippie wished he could be composed and self contained like the cobbler. 74

The hippie probably finds out the true self of India while coming in contact with the cobbler. Poor economy and poverty are not the short-comings that in any way thwart the cobbler's innate faith in God who, he takes as the only Dispenser of justice. He observes how a tiring quest for earning one's livelihood is matched with a deep faith in God in the routine where-about's of Indian life. The narration of the cobbler pertaining to how he gathers sandals thrown away by the careless youngsters or he keeps himself engaged in slicing or sizing them up show how he is struggling hard in the battle for survival. Yet despite such a battle he has taken up the ends with a complacent out burst:

"Whatever price I can get is good enough."75

Such conclusions include his ultimate faith in the Divine Accountant or God, who he thinks is maintaining all accounts in heaven. Hence the idea of economic determinism is purely kept
at the disposal of religious determinism that concludes, telepathically considering, the cobbler’s views on the hippie or vice versa. The story may also be identified as a synonym for the ideas of evolution as suggested earlier. It implies that even if the West meets the East on a road near an Indian temple the meeting is not meant to change the face of the world of ideas but to keep it intact. The hippie and the wayside cobbler come to a point of agreement that the abstract is in fact the real, each wishing to get rid of the evils done in the past and each wishing to rejuvenate himself. Hence it is evident that each is eager to establish a world of order or oneness which is the basic component underlying the theory of evolution as parts of a sociological change.

If 'God and the Cobbler' symbolically juxtaposes before us the two diametrically opposite sociological phenomena shaped in human forms, one trying to accept life as it is and the other merely watching it under the garb of an escapist, the story presents to us a more coherent combination of two different patterns of existence. At least it offers to the readers a clue or a possibility of a richer sociological evolution wherein a certain communication of ideas might take place between the two. But in the White Flower (1956) a significant moment in one’s life is depicted that pertains to the author’s own definition of a shortstory as cited earlier. The most tense moment in a young lover’s life is the key-note of The White Flower, yet it might
offer some more impersonal aspects to which the lover's state of mind might adequately succumb.

Krishna who has fallen in love with a girl almost visually, intends to wed her. Since it is not feasible on the part of the Indian Romeo and Juliet to propose one another directly against an orthodox social back drop, the proposal is given to her father by a friend. As is customary in a tradition-bound milieu, the girl's father visits Krishna's place one day and hands over his daughter's horoscope to Krishna's father offering his daughter's hand to the boy. While the more dynamic boy's father says they could go on without matching of horoscopes, the girl's father seems to have stuck to the ancient custom. A tug of war ensues between them both. An expert astrologer is consulted by the boy's father who virtually refers to the gradual importance acquired by a certain planet in the boy's horoscope that initially threatens the girl's survival following a marriage. On the otherhand the astrologer on the girl's side even counsels her father not to keep the two horoscopes together in the same envelope. The girl's father being awestruck at such astrological premonitions which he believes to be genuinely true or inevitable in one's destiny,

'Could cite any number of cases where such a flaw had been overlooked and the wife
had died immediately after the marriage, and he did not propose to risk his daughter's life now. 76

The more catastrophic effect one could find out in Krishna himself. His desires to marry the girl but fails miserably. He feels embarrassed and concludes as if heavens and superstitions have all been out to ruin him forever! Yet his optimistic father, the more progressive of the two, makes a point at such a critical juncture. He suggests such encounters might end if everything is left to God's decision. On Friday, relations or near and dears of both the parties assemble in the inner sanctuary of Hanuman temple and make elaborate arrangements for God giving His decision. A child is asked by the priest to pick up one of the flowers between a white and a red one placed on the doorstep. The child on playing a little innocent prank picks up the white one which stands for the Approval of God. The highest moment of psychological strain thus passes off as the little one picks up the desired flower, desired more by the tense youngman than others which converts a serious drama of tug-of-war into that of a happy union. Before the child picks up the flower, Krishna closes his eyes. As Narayan writes,

Krishna fervently prayed to God to give the decision in his favour to make Mars as impotent as a piece of straw, and to put enough sense in people's heads to make them see that it was impotent. 77
One not only observes an uncanny perfection in depicting the eager youngster's genuine feelings of love or emotional attachment to a sweet-heart, but more than that one may notice how patiently the youngster tries to accommodate himself to the decree of Destiny or God despite an inner rage. The idea of matching of horoscopes or ultimate surrender to God's Decision has been a persistent phenomenon in the code of conduct prescribed by the seers of Hinduism in India. One cannot simply dismiss the complaint made by the girl's father for whom untoward events associated with matching of horoscopes have been a reality in the cultural context of Indian middle class life, neither one can ignore the more modest or agreeable method of resolution made by the boy's father who proposes to leave it all to the Decision of the Divine. When humans fail to find out a solution to a certain crisis a few sparks flying from the wick of the lamp or a flower chosen by a kid may be considered as the most viable alternative to any sort of controversy, either ethical or sociological.

The White Flower, unlike any other narrative handled by the author, is an answer to the inquisitive minds who keep on asking if any change is traceable in fundamental components of Indian social life. Here the story-teller is out to tell them that the answer is negative. The agrarian culture of semi-urban population in Malgudi is in fact a microcosm that radically
withstands any kind of sociological change, either that of evolution or of progress and establishes, what observers like P.S. Sundaram remark that the value of Narayan's book is more than merely sociological. 78

The progressive outlook of Krishna's father is certainly approximated with the idea of environmental change but it soon fizzles out against the growing faith of the people in making elaborate arrangements in seeking God's answer. Hence unlike God and the Cobbler that implies possibilities of an extra territorial communication of ideas under the garb of evolution, The White Flower only presents the unanimous faith of the people in some kind of excommunication that takes place in the shape of Silent Response of God or in the ultimate prevalence of religious determinism despite an individualistic opinion shared by the father and son. The story is an exhaustive depiction of the social philosopher's own faith in the doctrine of religious determinism. One is made to accept that not doubts alone but a total absence of doubt may restore one's faith in one's ingenuity of action. The ordinary limits of sociological changes are therefore made to be superseded only in order to suggest that a revival of order or a revival of faith in God is probably the highest kind of sociological change. Change however need not imply the upsurge of an individual motivation or a self-interest, it ought to make some kind of provision.
wherein the individual choice receives the universal, social or authoritarian sanction. The White Flower is thus a microcosm of the essential doctrine of Indian sociology which is deep-rooted in its inherent culture of religious determinism since time immemorial.

The Axe (1947) is a more convincing picture of one’s growing faith in one’s own lot or occupation, a pamphlet of one’s gratefulness to a loving master who has endowed one with a kind of transformation or identity in life. Velan, an irresponsible rustic youngster leaves home following a displeasure of his father and incidentally comes in contact with an old man at Malgudi who assures him of a menial job. Within a few days of hardwork he converts a massive weed-covered land into a clean one, parts of which are marked off for an extensive garden. The young man of eighteen thus gets transformed. Persistent labour and attachment to the land in course of growing various plants or trees completely change him to a responsible gardener.

No sooner the plants grow up, than the construction of a huge palatial building starts on the same plot of land. One may observe with what eagerness the agile gardener keeps on growing multiple flora of his choice simultaneously competing with the steady coming up of the walls, balconies or roof of the house. While remaining grateful to the old man who made him work here
or the most genial master of the house who gave him shelter and identity in life, Velan accepts the job of a gardener with unusual pride and a self-imposed authoritarianism typical of Narayan's rural characters. He not merely chooses to stay on in his new lot without caring to go back home, he dedicates himself to become a part and parcel of a differently growing world, a world where he has to prepare himself and his 'plant children' to keep competing or fighting with the bricks that so fast raise up a building. He observes that a loving and careful guardianship imposed on the growing saplings might make the garden richer in dimension or the plants taller in height than the most attractive mansion. He is heard addressing the tiny plants:

"Now look sharp, young fellows. The building is going up and up everyday. If it is ready and we aren't, we shall be the laughingstock of the town-------- grow up, little one, grow up. Grow fast-------- otherwise I will pull you out."

Time and tide wait for none. Velan gets old with the passage of time, but he never parts with his lot. The benevolent old master of the house dies leaving the house as a bone of contention among the guarrelling sons who decide to give it on rent and stay elsewhere. All servants go away except Velan who virtually stays as a mute watchman of the worn-out building.
that is occupied by the tenants before long. His misery is redoubled when he finds the tenants walking upon flower beds or plucking unripe fruits without having slightest regard or care for the garden. Circumstance makes him too weak to ask any of them to rectify such mode of conduct. Life becomes unbearable, yet he cannot think of going back home, he cannot stay away from the family of plants he himself has reared all through with utmost care, protection and love! Incidentally when these indifferent tenants leave the place he feels relieved.

For good many years the dilapidated house is locked up and considered as a 'haunted' one in the neighbourhood. The old gardener tries his best to take care of the trees but extreme old age does not enable him to clear the weeds. At last when the house is sold to a company one of the sons of the dead master comes and formally asks Velan to go back to his village. The most shocking part of the information is that the company men are going to reconstruct the house without leaving space 'even for a blade of grass' as they do not need to keep any. The catastrophic moment comes when being unable to bear the sound of an axe used for hacking the trunk of the old margosa tree he pathetically prays the tree-cutters to stop their work atleast till his departure:
"This is my child. I planned it. I saw it grow. I loved it. Don't cut it down---- Give me a little time. I will bundle up my clothes and go away. After I am gone do what you like------- please wait till I am gone further."^2

The story not only discloses a symbolic tug of war between ideals of an ageold rural culture and that of an up-and-coming urban culture or between the consistent dedication of a person to preserve the properties of nature or environment and the utmost irresponsible mannerisms of the town-bred to destroy them for good, but also throws a challenge to the sophisticated modern people who have been rashly out to destroy these properties of nature on the pretext of economic or commercial expansion. The plants or orchards depicted by the author stand for the growth of a natural life against which the 'axe' is out to represent the selfish motivation of an industrial or materialistic civilisation. The sons of the rich old man quarrel and divide, not the idyllic care-worn gardener whose attachment to the old master's house is deep and human. The self-centered brothers could sell away the ancestral home, yet Velan cannot even part with his plant-children till the last moment as he has in fact been more attached to them than his own family or children at village. The axe which is a replica of senseless devastation of nature as depicted in the narrative might be identified with the ushering in of the most unnatural
and violent form of self-interest that has recently come to take over the avaricious ultramodern minds, a threatening menace to twentieth century civilisation. The portrayal of Velan as a self-appointed steward or guardian of the growing plants provides a clue to understand the necessity of studying environment by way of exclusively protecting it which is perhaps the most vital issue before experts in natural sciences, nations and Governments today. Hence the myth of Velan fondling the saplings or plants may be viewed as a kind of possibility which people are trying to succumb in recent times. Apart from its moral stand-point the story is an account of the author's concern in maintaining the flora and fauna, glimpses of which one is sure to find out in his other works like The Maneater of Malgudi and Annamalai. A careful upbringing of plants is the most primitive and natural need of mankind which finds relevant coverage in the narratives of the social philosopher.

Besides, from the perspective of sociological changes, The axe refers to interesting aspects. The wayward youngster struggling hard to settle down as a devoted gardner may be termed as a product of evolution, not progress. He evolves a more human approach to his surroundings or environment in himself. This may be the result of a genuine rusticity or simplicity present in him which may be taken as a natural cause of the idea of evolution. On the otherhand the sons making
dispute over parental property or the tenants showing peculiar indifference to the neatly growing plants are, in a negative sense, taken as messengers of progress which is only a mistaken identity for extinction. They probably fail to comprehend with how much of moral erosion or extinction of natural properties they take a plea for the reconstruction work. The contradictory propositions of evolution and change as juxtaposed in course of the narrative suggest wider implications of sociological changes that are in vogue today.

Lastly, Fruition at Forty (1947) appears to have a different cultural context altogether - the episode of a lower middle-class man whose expectations to provide a little more pleasure to his family fizzling out in the face of bitter reality! Here of course one may come across a more viable glimpse of the evolution of life, a glimpse that summarises the transition of man from the stage of a monkey to the present stage. The treatment of the story is like a part of some one's autobiography depicted in an utmost tragic tone of self-pity. The question that finally arises is that whether the needy ones in anyway are better than their monkey predecessors in their approaches to the crisis of life?

Rama Rao, a clerk in an office, suddenly remembers that the next day is his fortieth birthday. He seeks the permission of his boss to avail leave for the next day and sets out. His mind
is preoccupied with the thought of surprising everyone at home while carrying varieties of gifts for them all on the eve of his birthday:

Crossing the fortieth milestone seemed to be an extremely significant affair which deserved to be marked down with feasting and holiday. 81

However his utmost struggle to get into a heavily crowded bus circumstantially proves fatal to him. Being pushed out or squeezed by the copassengers he painfully manages to sustain himself before he gets down at Moore Market. His mind is ready to accept any situation now at the cost of a mock-heroic battle for existence. Rama Rao concludes:

"Good thing we were monkeys once........... otherwise how could we perform our clinging, our hanging down; exactly the operations of a monkey, the only difference being that thay get on smoothly in a herd while we________."82

And his reflections could not prolong any more as some one trying to trample on his toes makes him totally helpless. His misery gets redoubled when he discovers at the Market place his money purse stolen and gone! He has every reason to believe that some pick-pocket did the mischief inside the over-crowded
bus. His sweet dream of a surprise purchase or a surprise gift simply fizzes out in the face of sterile realities of life. While brooding over the incident (or accident?) he feels awfully depressed. He feels angry with his perverse fate. While meditating over his failures of life he takes himself as an object of self-pity, a replica of futile efforts that he has put in both in his office and at home throughout. If forty is the measuring-rod of one’s success or failures in life or the most viable criterion for defining one’s relationships with men and milieu, what Rama Rao has infact achieved in the restless battle for survival? If a man is found to be a fool or physician at forty, very likely he belongs to the former category. The fresh disaster inside the bus perhaps adds to the series of misgivings and failures already experienced in life.

Soon he comes to contemplate, how being only a head of his section in office, which one attains automatically in course of a service career, he has not done anything positive in life. With the advent of the fatal fortieth year he locates himself at the epicenter of number of liabilities: four children whose marriages or careers have to be settled by himself alone. He recalls his twentieth birthday when he was like a free bird resolving not to marry or not to accept a job that did not fetch him three hundred rupees a month. It was the moment of utmost liberty for any one and he was no exception. But he discovered most painfully on his thirtieth birthday how he dad already
become father of three, bundle of liabilities himself! the thirtieth year had brought him panic and he found he was too timid to face life boldly. Yet he had a vague hope that at forty he would be able to get up and set things right.

But sitting silently on a park bench Rama rao enquires himself, has he changed during the last decade? Has he become upright or proved himself better in any way? The answer is almost negative. Timidity as such has overtaken him since his childhood, has made him more docile or uncomplaining type as years have passed on and has become a symbolic accomplice of a needy man like himself:

The being who felt the home-tutor’s malicious grip now felt the same emotion when the officer called him up in a bad temper——— He suddenly felt that he had not been growing and changing.

He comes to a point of conclusion that there is no use of celebrating a birthday or telling anyone at home about it since he has not changed for the better in anyway. The immeasurable needs in a lower middle-class man’s life have practically no end and therefore Rama Rao feels he has the right to deprive not only himself but also others of his family of any pleasure that
they wish to have occasionally. He backs home as usual and next day goes to his office making an excuse before his boss that his birthday is already over at an earlier date.

The pick pocket episode is infused into the narrative by the social philosopher-author at a point where the realist for the time being is lost in imagination. It restores in him a shocking yet practical return to reality which forms the keynote of the story. Rama Rao with his graying hairs at forty, sitting in seclusion or meditating over his failures in life, appears to be only an aimless competitor in the senseless battle for survival. His hopes, dreams or ambitions right from his twentieth birthday to date have all been mock-heroically thwarted in the most enigmatic race of life where human animals with their poverty and incalculable wants cannot run or thrive properly. One may conclude in a negative sense that such needy householders are in no way better placed than their monkey predecessors who atleast pulled on smoothly in a herd. While the monkey enjoys a characteristic trend of security or mutual dependence in a herd-life, their human successors have been targets of each other's acts of indifference, insubordination or pick-pockets. There in an entirely negative direction the theory of evolution comes to operate itself in the narrative. Probably Rama Rao represents the human species who not only prove themselves as psychologically defunct ones unable to cling to each other correctly, but have been the last of the
disappearing or extinct human prototypes who see no existence of self-respect or recognition.

Considering from above perspective Fruition at Forty ironically implies one's failure at forty, an access to a world of sterility or barrenness where there is no possibility of any success or joy. Hence there is a clear reversal of situation sociologically presented in Fruition at Forty. May be whatever fruition of hope is atleast there at the approach of the fortieth year will soon fizzle out and the same story of monotony, frustration or degradation will come off in worse manner when Rama Rao is fifty or sixty years old. The whole experience of a momentary excitement followed by a mishap forms a part of the evolutionary theory in cultural context of sociological changes, an evolution of man from the stage of a monkey to the present stage of mock-heroic self-humiliation and intimidation to which a human successor like Rama Rao has succumbed. In this regard he may be taken as a type, and not an individual. The tragi-comic irony that befalls the optimistic householder spells out a kind of antithesis of the accepted Darwinian theory of biological evolution. The ethnic similarities between monkey and man depicted with an immediate contrast between the two
however make the study of the negative or reverted way of evolution typical of its kind.

To conclude, in one of his interviews with Ved Mehta Narayan affirms,

To be a good writer anywhere, you must have roots—both in religion and in family. 84

One may reasonably come to conclude that almost all narratives of the author discussed in this chapter are more or less associated with the crises that men and women face in their approaches to the ideals of religion or to the institution of family—the crises which the author himself has experienced in the surroundings of age-old religion or domestic set up. They both have been taken as each other's counterpart in the cultural context of Indian life, be it social or domestic. The various sociological changes that occur in cultural context of such novels and stories however make one thing evident: evolution and not progress is the basis of middle-class Indian life. The intrusion of a westernised style of living or duality brought in by an alien force of progress does not last long in a custom-ridden Indian society where the individual is finally insubordinated to the ageold ethical values upheld by both religion and family.
Thus the author attempts to highlight Indian sociology in the body of his works in a manner typical of his own, a manner in which the individual seems to have been an incomplete entity versus religion and society that are complete, permanent and real.
NOTES


2. Ibid, p.61.


11. Ibid., p.37.


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16. Ibid, p.73.


23. Ibid, p. 100.


27. The Vendor of Sweets (1967, rpt; Mysore, Indian Thought, 1988) p.57.


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31. Ibid. p.146.

32. Ibid. p.147.


50. Ibid, p. 27.

51. Ibid. p.12.

52. Ibid. p.173.


58. Ibid.


62. Ibid. April 1 - April 14, 1989.
65. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
75. Ibid, p.220.
77. Ibid, p.93.

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80. Ibid, p.192


82. Ibid.

83. Ibid, p. 214