Like their cultural counterparts sociological changes to a considerable extent operate in variety of economic context in the range of Narayan's fictional works. Both in pre-Independence and post-Independence narratives, one may not possibly fail to find out the awareness of the author in projecting a topography of his fictitious township that is fast coming up under a spell of modernisation or urbanization. The speciality of such urbanisation is that the author has on no occasion probably attempted to over-urbanise or over-industrialise Malgudi, which he calculates ought to maintain its rara avis in being perpetually considered as a semi urban locality. A bird's eye view cast on his works ranging from his early novels _Swami and Friends_ and _The Dark Room_ (1938) to his latest ones _The Tiger for Malgudi, The Talkative Man, The World of Nagaraj, and The Grandmother's Tale_ (1992) might help one to trace out Narayan's attempt to keep his locale free of any excess of
industrialisation or urbanisation unlike Anand's depiction of Bombay or Daulatpur in *The Coolie* (1936) and Bhattacharyya's observation of steel-town in *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966).

An archetypal place symbol in itself, Malgudi is supposed to admit sporadic modes of urbanisation, westernisation and industrialisation which irrespective of a chastened or aggressive orientation do not ultimately come to assert themselves against the congenital ethos or an incessant continuity of tradition flourishing therein. Being topographically far off from the growing industrial complex of north-western India, however it is not completely devoid of wide possibilities of an economic, or industrial expansion; it rather symmetrically attempts to juxtapose the spirit of these possibilities with the realities of an orthodox social set up that are in vogue since time immemorial. That is apparently the paradigm of Narayan's dual sociological structure maintained in the bulk of his works. Not many factories and industries are found out in or around Malgudi, nowhere a mine is supposed to be dug out, hardly there are talks of having any installation of big technological projects yet there have come up a few press, a film studio erected on behalf of Sunrise pictures, a branch office of Englandia Insurance Company and an electronically contrived novel-writing machine imported from abroad which bring in association of an industrial complex which is in the offing!
One may not skip over the coming up of the new cinema hall, as Narayan observes in an environment steadily coming under the spell of urbanisation:

Malgudi in 1935 suddenly came into line with the modern age by building a well equipped theatre— the Palace Talkies— which simply brushed aside the old corrugated sheet-roofed variety hall which from time immemorial had entertained the citizens of Malgudi with tattered silent films, 1

or the growing recognition and importance attached to the central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank located in the heart of the town since long:

One of the proudest buildings in Malgudi was the Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank, which was built in the year 1914 and named after a famous Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Sir—, who had been knighted for his devotion to Co-operation------------- 2

or the continuous beating of cotton for utilising it for the purpose of bed making grotesquely found out at Nandi Cotton Corporation:

Inside you saw nothing at first except bales and bales of cotton, and then a heap in a
corner with some women beating them into fluff for bed making.

Unlike Anand's *Two Leaves And A Bud* (1937) or Malgonkar's *Combat of Shadows* (1962) where the action is confined to the complex tea estates of Assam, in Malgudi novels one may see how the economic or material motives are rather contemplated in a relatively simpler way. The spell of westernisation is obvious in a society which despite its adherence to an indigenous culture seems to imitate and engender an alien culture following long British rule in India. In a sociological sense a spirit of sycophancy or imitation grows up automatically in the collective subconscious of contemporary humanity when technological and mechanical experiments take place apparently and in quick succession. The development of banking system in the country accompanied by the Co-operative movement or introduction of a few commercial and economic modes of expansion like installing of film halls, film studios, printing press, sophisticated hotels, tourist bungalows or clubs have been largely covered in novels like *The Dark Room*, *Mr. Sampath*, *The Financial Expert*, *Talkative Man* and many other fictional narratives attempted to date. All these works of the Indo-Anglian author serve as rapport of an economic context prevalent in contemporary Indian milieu.
Considering from such perspectives, as stated above, one may attempt to find out if a viable compromise is made between an average Indian mind and varied components of a growing economy that surround one from time to time as a result of a steady growth of industrialisation or urbanisation in or around Malgudi, and if such compromise could be analysed and studied as parts of sociological changes that operate therein. Malgudi, despite being away from any over-industrialised zone is viewed by many a critic and reader as miniature India itself. In a more definitive sense this imaginary south Indian township seems to acquire a novel reality of its own which is not entirely untouched by an impact of modernisation in years preceding or succeeding Independence. The economic or political context however might offer less susceptibilities to undergo changes that usually operate more exclusively in the cultural context discussed earlier, yet such context in relation to changes might not be entirely ruled out.

Coming to The Dark Room one may find out how the conjugal relationship between Ramani and Savitri becomes more and more strained in view of urbanisation of the township in progress. The branch of the Englandia Insurance Company subsequently advertising posts exclusively meant for a few women probationers is probably a valid aftermath of such economic expansion. As parts of Women's Liberation Movement that the sub-continent is fast attempting to implement in all spheres of social life, it
is unanimously resolved by the authorities of the company to secure the services of a few female probationers, who might co-operate in finding out some Insurance policies on female lives. The proposal or decision, which is keeping pace with promotion of a civil economy and improvement of the company as an official or commercial institution is supposed to exert sizable influence on the mind and personality of senior officers who as such get exposed to possibilities of having better sources of power and enjoyment for themselves. Ramani, the branch manager of the company gets himself voluptuously drawn towards the coquettish probationer Shanta Bai and Ramani, the husband, as such gets indifferent to his uneducated and submissive wife Savitri. The appointment of Shanta Bai as Chief Woman agent for the branch not only adds to the confidence of the branch manager in maintaining a cold attitude to a humble wife, the latter also could not accommodate herself with the dashing spirit of her husband who craves for a life of sophisticated romance and adventure.

Thus a liaison between Ramani and Shanta Bai sociologically degrades the status of a dedicated housewife. A scrutiny of the two female characters shows how the basis of human relationship in current times has been exclusively determined by the status or position occupied by a person in society. Shanta Bai and Savitri are just like antipodes placed against an environment that spells out economic liberty or acceptance of a job as the
sole criterion of status. Shanta Bai by dint of such status could easily overcome the hackeneyed and dependent life at home which Savitri has been experiencing, lacking in novelty and progression. The polarisation maintained between them both rather owes more to economic factors than social ones. If Ramani gets involved with Shanta Bai in a purely extra-marital partnership it is because she is as such available to him as his official sub-ordinate and she too stays alone occupying a part of the Insurance Company building which she has virtually transformed into an attractive habitat with sheer artistic taste of her own. Her sophisticated, urbane and tricky approaches to life make her discernible in her position as female probationer which could instantly allure the mind of Ramani, himself an extrovert status-seeker on the economic plain.

On the contrary, one may find out the gradual indifference being inflicted upon Savitri, who neither has the urban training nor the expected tact to conveniently accommodate herself with an Insurance officer-cum-bullying husband. She is the sort who lacks an identity of her own beyond the threshold of a household that equates a housewife only with a cook or servant simply because they all have to depend upon the master of the house for sustaining themselves. V. Panduranga Rao observes how Savitri's predicament at home gets worse
by the bitter recognition of the helplessness of her sex in general and her unavoidable dependence on her husband. 4

She has to accept her destiny of an uncommunicative suffering because she lacks the superfluous qualities of socio-economic independence which Shanta Bai has circumstantially come to acquire for herself. Hence her plight as a wife, fugitive or temple servant only successively degrades her position as a woman. In a society infested with material human relationships the departure or return of Savitri has practically no impact upon the running of a household owned by the single-bread-earner philanderer-husband, who could even cleverly enjoy the companionship of a concubine after leaving his children at the cinema hall consecutively for three hours during the wife's absence. A selfish and calculating way of dividing his time between extra-marital romance and household supervision is probably the outcome of crude profiteering motives that Ramani passes through at the wake of rapid economic expansion or urbanisation in contemporary India. For a temporary period it is peculiar to observe how Ramani comes forward to introduce certain economic reforms in affairs of home management thus combining tact with an authoritarian flair:

He also felt that this was his opportunity to introduce certain reforms and economies which he had been suggesting for years to a deaf wife such as abolishing the

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cooking at night, having tea instead of coffee in the afternoons, cutting the milk bill by the half, and so on. 5

Against such gestures of a house-holder who mechanically disposes off a few assignments at home only in order to make time for sharing blissful moments with a concubine, there is a desolate wife who on being rescued by a locksmith while trying to commit suicide in the Sarayu has been sincerely attempting to accept the job of a temple servant following utter humiliation and neglect:

A half measure of rice was more than what she deserved, she felt. She could very well manage with it. 6

One may find out in the above passage not only a parallelism maintained between the husband and wife as agents of opposite circumstances, but the utmost matter-of-fact or mechanical manner in which they both attempt to face such realities. It is probably because contemporary mode of living, under a gradual western influence, has rather come to subhumanise one’s aspirations and feelings in an Indian context. In their respective or isolated spheres husbands, wives or other people just keep on converting themselves to mere economic units only in order to keep the world going without any genuine or
sincere effort to improve the basic human relationship between
them. Ramani, from the point of view of managing his household,
is in fact the only bread-earner on whom all others have to
depend. In a world of give-and-take where human values are
utmost imperilled, he measures the criteria of his own enjoyment
or relaxation in life only in terms of money and position.
Hence his extra-marital connections which, unlike Mr. Sampath's,
he carries on like an adventurer in the true sense of the term.
Woman is thus an object of enjoyment for him, may she be Shanta
Bai, who fills his life with desired sensual pleasure, or
Savitri, who has at least given birth to a galaxy of children
conferring upon him 'a fatherhood'.

Thus considering the vivid perspectivization of a
mechanical conjugal life and equally a little less mechanical
extra-marital affair, persistently coinciding with each other
till the end of the novel, one may observe how the theory of
economic determinism as part of sociological change to a certain
extent gets infused into them. Not exactly in a Marxist sense,
but in a rather literal sense, such deterministic cult to a
large extent operates in the treatment of socio-sexual events as
parts of sociological change depicted in the novel.

The concept of social existence as part of the theory of
economic determinism advocated by Coker may be taken into
consideration while one reviews the relationship patterns
existing among Ramani, Shanta Bai and Savitri. As quoted earlier, Coker suggests that social existence owes its origin to the economic liberty enjoyed by an officer or Insurance probationer. Social existence apart from an economic motive or definition is futile in a society that weighs values or 'modes' of human relationship on the basis of profit and loss. The economic security or job security of a person is enough guarantee for cherishing not only one's own ideals in an agnostic world, it also paves the way for transforming the basic structure of human social relationship to a considerable extent. The liaison between Ramani and Shanta Bai, in a rather paradoxical way, has been sociologically acknowledged by one and all; yet there has never been any positive reaction to it except for a few whisper or gossip that eventually fizzle out. Against such situations fast growing in a semi-urban township, a reticent wife would only waste herself away in a futile 'self enforced' suffering chiefly because her social existence or existence as a housewife passes off unnoticed. As she lacks an economic self-reliance of her own, she is treated even worse than a servant at home or before the temple priest of Sukkur Village. Once when Savitri complains against her husband's most cruel treatment of children, she is not merely reprimanded by him in the presence of the cook and servant, the cook too takes the liberty of passing a few remarks in support of his master, within the range of her hearing:

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"It is no business of a wife's to butt in when the father is dealing with his son. It is a bad habit. Only a battered son will grow into a sound man." 7

The old priest also advises Savitri's rescuer Mari to remain indifferent to her, if she has any appeal to make for herself:

"What do you care for her?'
'I really don't. My wife has taken a liking to her. It is really her doing, and she won't let me rest till I find some work for this woman.'
'If she won't let you rest, thrash her; that is the way to keep women sane. In these days you fellows are mugs, and let your women ride you about." 8

In addition to such degradations she comes across both in and around a male-dominated locale, the highest apathy is being shown by her bullying-husband on the eve of her leaving home. This may also be accountable to her total lack of voice as a wife or lack of economic liberty. Being asked by Ramani to vacate at once she only perhaps once in her life time bursts out:

"Things? I don't possess anything in this world. What possession can a woman call her own except her body? Everything else that she has is her father's, her husband's or her

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son's. So take these too------' she removed her diamond ear rings, the diamond studs on her nose, her necklace, gold bangles and rings, and threw them at him:

'------- take them away. They are also a man's gift.'

While on one hand one witnesses Savitri's determination to assert her position more as a woman than as mother or wife, which she attempts to convey to the readers by way of leaving home on the other her later realisations of her duty as a mother or mistress of household prompt her to come back. In these two apparently contrasting experiences displayed by her the former, being an aftermath of a revolt against the views on economic determinism, is followed by the latter, which is typical projection of a duty-bound middle class Indian woman corresponding to the views of religious determinism. The Dark Room reveals a strategic parallelism and contrast between these two sociological theories of economic and religious determinism of which the former dominates over the latter till the end of the novel. In spite of Savitri's return home with a view to serving the claims or needs of her children or managing the household, Ramani does not display even slightest reaction of any kind. P.S. Sundaram observes:

When Savitri gets back, Ramani is neither surprised nor grateful. He had indeed a grievance, 'Walking out like a servant ?'
Her sense of duty resumed with her usual mode of taciturnity rather fails to have any impact on a bullying materialist-husband. K.R.S. Iyengar is justified in explaining that with the return of Savitri

'normalcy' (which includes the liaison with Shanta) returns. 11

Thus it implies if not as wife, atleast as mother she could come back to the threshold of an Indian home which is her social right or privilege.

The question arises whether such a return to one's own home is associated with restoring of a kind of normalcy in the true sense of the term. Obviously Savitri's return home is a vague proposition unlike Chandran's in The Bachelor or Arts. It does not bring about any reaction in the mind of the philanderer-husband and it only restores to herself and her children a kind of 'negative' normalcy, for in her absence they too have not found much difficulty or felt her absence much that is usually expected of a docile mother. Even a neglected motherhood is a kind of identity by which a woman could assure a protection for herself.

The other justification of her return emanates also from an experience of extreme helplessness, solitude and home-sickness
that she experiences while staying alone in the village temple. Such experience is more or less accountable to an innocent home-bird’s parasitical nature of existence, an introvert kind of living that society has thrust upon countless ‘Savitris’ in Indian households in the bigotry-based contemporary period! Chandran’s return home, like the return of a prodigal, leads to a reasonable and jubilant self-surrender to the acknowledged norms of family life which enables him to honourably settle down in life. But Savitri’s return home is hardly of any significance for Ramani and others in the household, being herself uncalled-for or unwanted in context of a materialistic human relationship that hovers round her throughout. She returns only to keep things going on as they are, a mark of sacrifice which society never takes any cognizance of. Lakshmi Holmstrom concludes that with her return, the situation between Savitri, Shanta Bai and Ramani is finally balanced, never resolved.

Differently the temporary departure of Savitri from home may be approximated with the mythical episode of the most uncomplaining nature of Kuchela’s wife who suffers along with her husband as parts of their devotion for Lord Krishna. Such version of Kuchela’s wife Savitri comes across while visiting a mythological film accompanying her husband in the newly-built
Palace Talkies in the earlier part of the novel. The praise of Kuchela's wife, made ironically by Ramani, might have instigated Savitri to make a complicated moral choice of leaving home, following her incapacity to find out her adjustment-equations with him. The impact of the myth more or less has got a socio-economic strategy which makes her choice quite imperative, though for a temporary period. On the other hand the plight of backward wives in the pre-Independence society finds a meaningful response in Savitri's return home which like the silent suffering of Kuchela's wife helps reality turning into a myth.

II

Mr. Sampath is Narayan's first post-Independence fiction, a kind of prose-epic dealing with sociological checks and balances which people, especially the middle-aged people, go through in an era of national consolidation. The novel presents in a dramatic way one's neurotic craze for affluence, fame and sensuality which ends in a kind of melodramatic self-defeat that is unprecedented in the gamut of Indo-anglian fiction. K.R.
Minogue, who highlights varied phases of evolution of Indian nationalism observes how it also includes a dexterous striving for economic and cultural development. 14

Like Ramani in The Dark Room, Margayya in The Financial Expert, Vasu in The Maneater of Malgudi or Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets, Mr. Sampath is Narayan's creation of 'the economic man' identifying himself with the community of money-grubbers who discloses to a large extent a striving for economic independence for himself. Like his predecessor Ramani he is a confident pursuer of money, but unlike the former, he specialises in the art of maintaining a ready-made interest in other people's affairs matched with a set of colourful lies that make him more complex in context of human social relationships.

Taking in a more literal way one may locate how Mr. Sampath represents the more crucial phases of a commercial civilization which the sub-continent is fast heading into on the eve of Independence or following Second World War. The construction of a new cinema hall, the Palace Talkies or the installation of a branch office of Englandia Insurance Company is the genesis of a new economy which the forces of urbanisation have thrust upon the township. On the contrary one may find out how Ramani only submits himself to these forces that help bringing up either an
extra-marital adventure or a conjugal conflict. Notwithstanding Ramani's indifferent treatment of Savitri he does not fully conceal his selfish outlook on life or motivation of being a philanderer. But in Mr. Sampath, entitled originally as The Printer of Malgudi one witnesses the obvious break of Ramani's bullying-cum-straightforward approach. The melodrama of Sampath's meteoric rise to some position of eminence follows a sociological direction or 'working-out of a scheme' which the protagonist cleverly attempts to contemplate with utmost hospitality as part of his character. The parallelism between both is sociologically as meaningful as the contrast that follows in between them: Ramani is the product of a changing circumstance with which he plans to fetch both influence and affluence. While Ramani is taciturn in his approaches, Sampath is garrulous and persuasive on occasions, most cunningly fitting himself into the expansive network of social relationships. Ramani at least never admits any kind of fraud in his official level to gain an unjust economic advantage, Sampath on the other hand is the champion of fraudulence which he attempts to secure most dramatically under the garb of being a self-appointed well-wisher to his associates that makes him a 'jack of all trades' in the chain of events to follow!

With the departure of British rulers from India not only the traditional values are being challenged by wide-spread introduction of education, but there comes up an awakening of a
new individual consciousness to modernise oneself, which may be taken as an aftermath of long British rule in India. Glimpses of the same are distinctly traceable in Narayan's treatment of theme and characterisation. H.M. Williams affirms,

"Yet the greater changes are depicted than the departure of the British. Slowly, very slowly the old traditional ways are being challenged in Malgudi."

Most probably it is the new individual consciousness revealed in Ramani, Sampath or Margayya that more or less comes to overpower the traditional ways of life that Malgudi has been cherishing since long.

The attempt to write Mr. Sampath and subsequent novels, stories or travelogue owes its origin to Narayan's incidental involvement with Indian Thought. The author recalls:

"Our meeting-ground now-a-days was a doctor's shop———my friends gathered there every evening and we sat round and discussed life and literature. During one of those sessions I cannot say whose idea it was, but the idea was born that I should start a publication of my own."

Perhaps this publication is called Indian Thought which is a quarterly venture on literature and culture. In collaboration
with a few of his friends Narayan invests the little saving he has got with himself and endeavours to publish the first issue of his journal. His association with Sampath, his printer, to a great extent serves as a prelude to convert the latter into the central character of his next fictional narrative entitled Mr. Sampath. The real Sampath, a forward-looking, over-busy and hospitable personality assures Narayan, the publisher-cum-editor to print his journal despite a little inconvenience. Quite promisingly and sportively he takes up the work. Though he makes inordinate delay in bringing out the first issue he offers his services to the author most eloquently promising him to assist him for good. The remarks of Sampath corresponding to his over-involvement with Narayan’s journal draw the author’s close scrutiny of his nature and temperament:

“"My machines can not remain idle-they are now geared for your job. You have no idea how many jobs I have had to turn down........" 17

The vision, plan and publication of Indian Thought is the result of his frequent association with multifarious people he meets at the doctor’s shop or he meets in his personal or domestic sphere which serves as clue to a more intimate understanding of human nature. The diversities of human interest, embodied in astoundingly comic approaches to establish one’s own motive, shift Narayan’s mind from a concentrated limit of earlier novels to a vast and expansive horizon of later
novels commencing with Mr. Sampath. The young landlord constantly wearing a brown suit, in whose house Narayan and his brothers stay together, drops in with a characteristic profiteering motive of his own. He accepts a rise of ten rupees towards his rent as an alternative for asking them to vacate and even goes to the extent of bargaining with them an occupation of his house for a year or two if only the editor agrees to publish a very substandard or 'insane' story written by him. The editor-author, who feels ultimately guilty of having published his story could not do away with such conditions prescribed by the landlord as he or his brothers have no place of their own at Mysore. He later on is full of remorse for having edited or published that story:

When I read the story in the third number in cold print I felt ashamed of myself as an Editor; I felt I had prostituted my position for a domestic cause and that my readers would be justified in stoning me at sight. 18

His junior uncle, like the landlord, is another example of exploiting opportunities for money grubbing while recruiting all kinds of people as subscribers of Indian Thought, people who seem to have absolutely no interest in going through it even once. As Narayan recollects, being a reputed car dealer at Madras his uncle
might have offered them a drink and forced them each to part with a year's subscription. 19

These recollections of the author thus record how even his own relation or a close-associate comes forward with an opportunist-motivation to exploit the publication or circulation of the journal, which eventually compels the author

to end the career of this journal 20

for-ever. The acquaintance of Narayan with the real Samapath, his printer probably completes the version of the trinity in a strictly sociological sense. The printer appears to have offered a prolific diversity of pre-occupations which one has already noticed in the land-lord or the author's junior uncle, yet the printer supersedes them both by combining realism with a kind of fantasy chalked out by himself throughout:

I found Sampath-------- involved in a score of tasks not always concerning him. He specialised in the theatre-------- rehearsed his actors in his office, while galley-proofs streamed down his desk untouched; he helped people in litigation by introducing them to his brother, an eminent lawyer; he found houses for those who needed that kind of help; he did everything zestfully except the printing job. 21

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The fictional Mr. Sampath, a Jack of all trades and master of none like his real counterpart, offers greater diversities of interest.

Srinivas, a 37-year-old dreamy idealist comes to Malgudi in quest of earning a livelihood by way of editing and publishing a journal of his own. He meets Mr. Sampath, the dynamic printer of Malgudi, in an incredibly dramatic situation at Bombay Anand Bhavan hotel:

He sat in a chair next to the proprietor at the counter and seemed to be receiving special attention seemed to be keeping the whole establishment in excellent humour, including the fat proprietor.

Thus putting on a fur cap and scarf or conversing in Hindi that give him the look of a typical north Indian he sufficiently attracts Srinivas with his infinite sense of hospitality. He offers to print the ‘unborn’ journal at his Truth Printing Works, which he takes as his highest privilege:

“Customers are God’s messengers, in my humble opinion. If I serve them a-right I make some money in this world and also acquire merit for the next.”
His devotion for hard work completely allures the rural-bred editor of 'The Banner' who however cannot distinguish between the charisma of the host-printer and the camouflage of the money-grubber astutely mixed up in Mr. Sampath. Notwithstanding the difficulties confronted by Srinivas in adjusting with an old-miserly-landlord, the tenant-editor creditably edits the journal covering items of multiple interest that suit to the needs of all sections of readers. Yet the whole-hearted dedication of the idealist editor accompanied by the versatile co-operation of the painstaking printer receives a jolt when the latter unexpectedly announces to give up the profession of printing assuring the former that he would definitely resume publishing the journal only when he has made enough money:

"I will see that the journal is set up on a lino machine and printed off a rotary and dispatched in truck loads every week. For this we need a lot of money. Don't you doubt it for a moment. I am going to make a lot of money---------- a friend of mine is starting a film company and I'm joining him---------- we shall be well or our way to the rotary when my first film is completed." 24

One not only discovers a spirit of utmost fellow feeling in the assurances made by Sampath, he too possesses the ability to restore self-confidence in the mind of a fellowman who feels
'lost' in the chaos of life. The growing acquaintances between Sampath and Soma Sundaram, the ex-President of District board pave the way for the new economic project: the construction of a film studio on the other side of the river Sarayu. Soma Sundaram, whom Sampath addresses as Somu, is obliged to the printer in various ways. The latter helps him manufacturing nicely-worded 'Prepared speeches' which cater to his needs if invited to speak on occasions and advising him in many other matters like the first venture of 'Sunrise Pictures' which the former comes to produce shortly. In reply to Srinivas, Somu concludes:

"Well, I am entirely depending upon our friend Sampath to help me through all this business, Sir. I want to serve people in my own humble way."25

He also explains with how much of botheration he has acquired five acres of land for installing a film studio and this he could do only because he held a prize-post for some time.

The concentrated or self-made world of Sampath and Srinivas which they both shared earlier by way of hard labour in the midst of an impoverished set up called Truth Printing Works is given up. In a sociological sense it was a world of evolution: Sampath with his flair for creating an air about himself was rather to some extent dedicated to his profession as a printer.
He atleast never attempted to betray any one deliberately apart from a sporadic projection of colourful lies uttered by him. Even the 'ill-fitting' background of his house that was visited by Srinivas conveyed a note of his struggle for existence in a world of imperilled values. While confidently and smilingly introducing his retinue of children as dancers or singers and himself accompanying them in singing a song, he was maintaining a kind of 'trying' integrity of his own as father, husband or householder. Yet under changing circumstances on becoming an active associate of Somu, the proprietor, he soon comes to lose the human naturalness that he had displayed earlier. Srinivas, who unlike his printer friend remains neutral and detached, also in a precise way involves himself with the fatal consequence which Sampath is supposed to undergo in the events to follow.

The transition of Sampath as such, from the simple position of a garrulous printer to the complex stature of Director of film productions, may be taken as a transition from the level of evolution to the level of progress. As Srinivas, or the author himself observes, the new designation conferred upon Sampath as well as the multiple associates he comes across as his colleagues in the production of the first film, give him entirely a different kind of identity—an identity which to a large extent spells out his craze for money, power or sex. The humanist present to a great extent in the ex-printer is buried
for good in the growing self of a sly Mammon-worshipper. As Director of a film he vociferously comes to justify film industry as

'the fifth largest industry'

of Post-Independence India. Shanti, the heroine of the film whom Sampath himself wishes to make his second wife but whom he refers to as his 'cousin', V.L.G., the 'Shiva' of a thousand movies, Ravi the artist-cum-platonic lover, Sohanlal, the tactful financier of the project, De Mellow, the Hollywood-bred Chief Executive as he calls himself, Somu the producer or proprietor, Sampath, the Director, and Srinivas, the script-writer for the venture, unlike the dramatis personae of any other novel offer the highest kind of diversities that a commercial civilisation could cherish on the plea of progress. The most interesting approach is rather made by Somu, who in the words of P.S.Sundaram being

eager to make quick money by producing cinema films, gives Sampath an opportunity to capitalise on his personality and resources.

But the film, the first production of 'Sunrise Pictures', does not see a sunrise. Despite the over self-confidence of the Chief Executive or Director, the project ends in a fiasco.
Srinivas is dragged to write the script much against his conscience on a purely romantic subject matter obtained from the Indian epics. Himself comparatively the sane and innocent intruder into the mad world of movies.

He at first attempts to write one which deals with the travail of a middle-class youngman trying to eradicate evils of caste system under the spell of Gandhian ideals. But the commercial spirit of Mammon-worshipers is strong enough to tarnish the image of Gandhi at any cost. Somu, De Mellow and Sampath, the mock-epical-trio compel the chastened script writer to shift from projecting a value-based theme of realism to a popular theme of epic-romance, i.e., the burning of Kama, the God of Love. They calculate that such a choice would make the movie a commercial success. Apart from the fantastic depiction of Kama, the God of Love in Indian mythology turned into ashes following the anger of Lord Shiva, the sequences of love making between Shiva and Parvati associated with adventure, dance, music or a few comic scenes might conveniently make it a box-office hit. The shift from realism to romance would also offer chances to the artists to utilise their talents while appearing in multiple roles of Gods or Goddesses thus serving the purpose of the production from all angles, material or artistic. 'The burning of Kama' is ironically chosen as the most befitting plot
for a modern production, the opportunist motivation being to extract maximum profit by way of projecting a very ancient theme of sensuality likely to be admired by a semi-urban audience:

Somu cleared his voice and ventured to mutter within his throat: "you see, we must have romance in the story'.

'Romance!' Srinivas gasped, 'What sort of romance?'

'You see, we are bound to engage a leading lady who will cost us at least two thousand a month, and we have got to give her a suitable role."29

The motive of movie making, in a world of give-and-take is apparently more economic than artistic. The chances offered to an artist to display his or her talent have always been neutralised with the latter's modus operandi of bargaining, which more or less coincide with that of a producer, director or technician thus constituting a vicious circle of agreement or contract maintained between them all. Art is only a means, a visual display, a grand arrangement of details, the end or purpose of it is material or economic as experienced or observed in modern times. Here the scope of art seems to have been mischannelised beyond the desired limits; the commitment to
engage a leading actress for the sake of infusing romance in the story is a prelude to project more vicious designs on the part of the film makers or proprietors on the plea of art.

Srinivas agreeing to write the script which would cater to the requirements of commercial-movie-makers, soon comes to observe how most eccentrically they all treat one another at the studio. The choice of a mythical episode which highlights the defeat of lust or the burning of the God of lust in reality turns out to be a triumph of the God Himself, for in real life Sampath the director and Ravi, the accountant-cum-artist fall headlong in love with Shanti, the heroine of the venture. The laborious arrangements leading to the shooting of the movie very soon come to coincide with the more strategic arrangements of an extra-marital affair that Sampath develops with his ‘supposed’ cousin, following a decision to play the role of Shiva himself when V.L.G. withdraws on commercial grounds. Accepting the roles of Shiva and Parvathi not only enables the extra-marital lovers to get closer to one another, it also offers an opportunity to Ravi, the lustful bachelor, the human proxy of the Deity of lust, to discover a possibility of wooing his sweet-heart Shanti whom he imagines to have seen earlier and subsequently lost sight of. The inclusion of the glamorous lady in the film, who left her husband years ago and decides to join the movies in order to serve the purpose of ‘Art’ like Sampath
or Somu, restores in Ravi a sense of securing his 'long-lost' beloved probably with whom she has got a facial similarity.

In spite of the attempts of Srinivas or Sampath to keep Ravi away from the location of shooting for they both apprehend a kind of erratic outburst of the lunatic-youngster anytime—Sampath and Ravi start imposing checks and balances on one another. The polarisation is complete; the over-confident extra-marital lover caring little for any threat to be created by the neurotic painter in reality and the latter as such preparing himself to lose no chance of wooing his beloved at the earliest opportunity. At the climactic point of the shooting when 'Shiva' and 'Parvathi' make rhythmic advances to embrace each other with a rainbow of lights emanating their brilliance with the Mexican melodies simultaneously played on, Ravi darts forward and most violently carries off Shanti thus bringing in a comic anti-climax to Sampath's secret extra-marital programme. An immense disorder follows, Ravi is arrested on charges of abduction and all subsequent efforts of Sampath to win Shanti or to bring her back end in smoke. The panic-striken Shanti, caught in the web of both the lunatics, Sampath and Ravi, resolves to do away with her profession forever and goes back to Madras. The project miserably fails causing incalculable loss to the financiers and organisers. Sampath, unable to face any of these business associates with whom he has throughout
maintained a relationship of docile duplicity, desperately leaves Malgudi for good on revealing his true self before Srinivas.

As Narayan observes the 'madness' of the kidnapper is aggravated not merely by his platonic obsession for a sweet-heart whom the youngster imagines to have got back after a long gap, but also by the sheer technological application of the lighting arrangement which technical experts most laboriously provide to make the modern movies mass-appealing box-office hits. Just before Ravi displays the platonic neurosis of being a kidnapper, he might have as well viewed the almost-naked appearance of a twentieth century 'Parvathi' which Srinivas himself records in reference to the able craftsmanship of the specialist lightmen:

how cunningly they had managed to make her clothes unnecessary by the No.10 light, which shot up a beam of illumination from behind her at ground level. 'What ingenuity!' he commented to himself. Her body stood out as if x'rayed, her necklace and diadem glittered and shone and seemed to be the only apparel she wore.

Thus the studio or venue of the shooting is depicted as a microcosm of post-independence macroscopic Indian milieu: the strategic technical arrangements corresponding to the
competition, conflict or co-operation between one person and another contemplated in connection with commercial motives, jealousy in romantic love and over-balancing of restraint on some and liberty on others by way of disclosing the true nature of social relationships in contemporary India. Hence moral issues, in terms of sociological changes might as well emanate from or coincide with issues related to ultra-modern cinematographic techniques that largely contribute to the psychological reactions of Ravi who incidentally comes in while the shooting is going on. The melodrama of kidnapping Shanti on his parat is only a brisk wish-fulfilment followed by much hardship or humiliation on the part of every one in his family including the old father or even Srinivas, a self-appointed well-wisher. Yet the sheer workmanship of the lightmen or the miracle of ultra-modern technology assists a young dreamer to go back to a state of completely uninhibited revelation of passion or savagery that probably serves the highest sociological purpose in ultimately setting things in order. The entire arrangement in the studio handled by a galaxy of morally-depraved money-grubbers offers to the readers the zealous network of a neo-economic opportunism.

As the shooting of the movie keeps going on, contrary to the tactless lunacy of the young dreamer, the middle-aged dye-hard realists keep on manipulating or tactfully arranging a dance-act or something which could ensure greater financial
benefit to them all. Sohanlal keeps himself busy in arranging the dance-act most neatly because the success of it would help him buy the entire movie for himself. He only aims at making it a grand commercial success. Sampath possessing a Ben Jonsonian flair for playing many roles in real life too restlessly calculates how, on obtaining a heavy amount from Sohanlal as "the first-half of the agreed amount," he may soon start making a movie of his own. While the down-to-earth financier and the shrewd director-actor hover round each other trying their utmost to complete the colourful dance sequence, Somu, the proprietor also expects a few handsome payments. An ex-bureaucrat having amassed a lot of money during his official career, he has no other alternative than to invest a lump sum on the production of the first movie of Sunrise Pictures. Thus he cherishes parallel prospects for securing some payments like his two other counterparts which highlights how profit-hunting or means-end-calculation probably comes to be accepted as the only criterion of living in current times. The author or Srinivas observes,

Somu went round and round these two, hoping for the completion of the dance-act, when he, too, hoped to get various payments made to him. It was on the whole, a very intricate mechanism of human relationships.
The world of business depicted within the limits of the film studio is rather a microscopic version of a cold war that is already afoot while the shooting of the sequences has started. From a sociological perspective such competitive nature of money-grubbing on the part of organisers or financiers could only be identified with the concept of progress in a world of economic determinism where only a material motive comes to form the basis of all kinds of human relationship. Except Ravi, the platonic sufferer in romantic love, Srinivas observes how everyone of his associates madly hankers after earning money or fame— even without hesitating to adopt most unlawful methods. The business of living appears to have been closely linked up with the art of profiteering which one observes in the give-and-take relationship between Sampath and the old landlord. Sampath does not hesitate to borrow from the miserly landlord of Srinivas whom he assures to repay with an interest of twelve-and-half percent when the film is completed. In exchange of the old man’s services he makes Ravi his paying stake, that is, he assures the landlord to negotiate his grand-daughter’s marriage with Ravi if only he agrees to lend him money. The highest sort of money grubbing is displayed by Mr. Sampath himself. He borrows his desired amount from the old man, never takes any interest in the aforesaid matrimonial negotiation and ironically enough attempts his best to keep Ravi off the place of shooting as he apprehends some breach of discipline from the youngster’s side. Such strategy maintained by Sampath makes him
a greater trickster than either Somu, Sohanlal or De Mellow and one is baffled to witness the sheer artful capacity of Sampath with which he succeeds in negotiating an agreement between the tenants of the dead landlord and his warring-sons vying with one another to assert their rights over a disputable paternal property.

On the other hand the relationship between Sampath and Ravi offers the highest kind of double-standard observed in the dealings of the extramarital lover which probably no one else is capable of rendering to the readers except Sampath himself. Such duality or double standard enacted by Sampath converts the novel to an allegory of economic determinism by itself, the checks and balances imposed by Sampath and Ravi on each other in terms of wooing Shanti or the checks and balances imposed by Sohanlal, Sampath and Somu on each other in terms of bargaining or profiteering motivations — and in both, Sampath is the common character — have been inter-related phenomena underlying the concept of progress which, as Narayan observes, could not as such persist in a flat, uninterrupted way. Parallel motives or self-interest at one climactic (or anti-climactic?) point are destined to dissect each other which Narayan, the far-sighted social philosopher has most dramatically conceived of with the rushing in of Ravi, for apart from an exception like Srinivas, in the entire group of middle-aged opportunists Ravi could not adequately balance himself between a craze for sex and an
economic stability which he had secured with much difficulty. Most unlike his sensualist counterpart Sampath who maintains the balance even by way of justifying a social necessity of maintaining two wives of his own, Ravi the immatured ephemeral bachelor comes forward to kidnap the heroine which is possibly the highest saga of disorder he has created at his own cost, yet sociologically considering which most logically helps Mr. Sampath, himself and all others to again come back to the long lost tracks of evolution or order. If Ravi’s madness is apparent, Sampath and others are also equally mad who are simultaneously obsessed with a material or carnal pleasure.

If the shift from evolution to progress is offered by Sampath who represents the ultra—modernisation of post-Independence India, the shift from progress to evolution is what Ravi exactly displays by dint of a savage act that might, in a form of poetic justice or nemesis of its kind, puts an end to such excesses of ultra-modernisation. The opportunist motivation of the money grubbers may also be studied as part of the political game which contemporary seekers of power have been manipulating to secure as means to a material gain or as criteria of progress. Such opportunist motivation, in vogue among contemporary sophisticated circles, comes to manifest itself in the form of Sampath’s liaisoning with Shanti. He even
justifies bigamy as a suitable antidote to his busy professional life as a movie director which, he calculates, would keep his social position intact:

"Some people say that every sane man needs two wives — a perfect one for the house and a perfect one outside for social life——
I have the one, why not the other? ————
I have married according to Vedic rites : let me have one according to civil marriage law ————.

The social philosopher who even accepts such forces of manipulation as being incidental, concludes how in the long run these forces only appear as futile. In spite of the tremendous success of Mammon-worshipers in the garb of politicians, bureaucrats or businessmen, as evident in the social history of post-Independence India for the past four decades and a half, the author as social philosopher does not allow his die-hard materialists to accomplish an ultimate triumph for themselves. As a tradition-bound optimist 'unscathed' like his protagonist Srinivas, the author creates an ideational world of possibilities wherein such forces of self-interest or materialism are supposed to vanish for the sake of the common good. The awestruck Srinivas, being a mouth-piece of the sociologist-philosopher, resumes his normalcy of life on becoming the editor of 'The Banner' once again which implies that order is restored in the long run. While consoling Ravi's
mother who accompanies her neurotic son to the temple at Sailam with
the belief of a supernatural cure, Srinivas concludes:

"He is bound to get well again. Even
madness passes. Only existence asserts
itself."

The aforesaid observation made by Srinivas perhaps could be taken
as typical observation of the social philosopher–novelist himself: an
artistic infusion of the theory of Deterioration into the structure
of the growing fictional narrative. The restless pursuit of
affluence or material gain experienced by Sampath and his business
associates is the genesis of a shift from order to disorder that
serves as part of the sociological change in context of the said
theory. The dedicated printer, in spite of himself being a bundle of
ready made promises, may be taken as a representative of order. Yet
the moment he takes decision to associate himself with the business
of movie-making, the normal process of deterioration starts by way of
fully annihilating his dreams or visions of earning profusely. Being
the nerve-centre of a purely vicious circle of materialist
opportunists he paves the way for a complete moral and material loss
for each and everyone thereby disclosing himself as the sole
architect of disorder or deluge. The shift from the humble position
of a printer to the over-confident strategy of an extra-marital
lover–cum–film director coincides not only with the concept of
progress in context of economic determinism as stated earlier, it
also corresponds to the concept of evolution in context of the theory
of deterioration. Hence ‘madness’ as stated by Srinivas might refer
to the aberrations of Ravi and Sampath in connection with their
sensualist–materialist designs and in the same manner ‘existence’ may
imply how order is supposed to be restored in a world that for the
time being has unfixed itself under the spell of such aberrations.
Besides the inverted economic motives that keep the vicious circle of the film makers close to one another probably could not rule out the possibility of the intrusion of opposite sociological forces—the intrusion of complete disorder or deluge as a prelude to the restoration of order. Unlike any other novel attempted by Narayan Mr. Sampath exposes the theory of Deterioration in a more paradoxical way. The unnatural quest for accomplishing the identity of the economic man has eventually been counter-balanced by the definite prevalence of a moral or natural order that as such imposes limits over excesses of such quest. The pursuit of money or power, that has turned the modern people into a body of eccentrics, may itself be taken as a kind of madness manifested in collective form against which the neurosis of the platonic lover has been deliberately juxtaposed with a view to drawing parallelism in madness. The economic man remains infallible in his artificial sphere so long an outburst of passion does not materialise. Hence the rushing in of the ephemeral lover is a natural justice imposed upon the body of eccentrics. It is probably an absolute and negative form of religious determinism which the socialist philosopher attempts to introduce as a part of the theory of Deterioration. From sociological point of view Ravi probably occupies the most significant position in the novel. His spontaneous gesture of rashness appears to have imparted a strong moral lesson to everyone in general and Sampath in particular, whatever personal damage he might have brought to himself and his family. Such a
gesture which directs the economic man to soon accommodate with the fatal consequences of life may be taken as a part of religious determinism which as the author believes ultimately overtakes the motives of economic determinism, in other words evolution which overtakes the limits of progress in a world where 'existence asserts itself'.

Unlike The Dark Room in Mr. Sampath one may ultimately find out that the situation between Mr. Sampath, Ravi and Shanti is resolved which perhaps is a decisive aftermath of what happens precisely in case of Ramani, Shanta Bai and Savitri. One may conclude in a strictly sociological sense that the narrative of Mr. Sampath begins where that of The Dark Room ends. The triumph of economic determinism over religious determinism that only balances the relation between Ramani, Shanta Bai and Savitri is necessarily replaced by the triumph of religious determinism over the economic one by way of resolving the relation that exists between the two over-confident lovers and the actress. The resolution, under the characteristic spell of evolution chalks out an inevitable fallibility of both Sampath and Ravi as lovers who have in the long run been circumstantially alienated from Shanti. If The Dark Room portrays the documentary realism of a disrupted conjugal life wherein the wife alone is the victim of injustice or pity in every form, Mr. Sampath offers a more idealistic connotation of universal social order wherein the moral criminals or
Mammon-worshipers have to pay heavily for the lapses they have committed. The 'return' of Savitri has got least reaction in the mind of Ramani who confidently continues his liaisoning with Shanta Bai. Such an attitude of mind sociologically spells out the position of a humiliated wife in a male-dominated society for whom humiliation may be taken as the only alternative for existence—precisely the option for inhibiting a duty bound self-tortured life is synonymous with accepting a negative trend of social existence in the cycle of evolution. It implies that on the part of a humble middle-class Indian housewife, a humiliated life could assure more security than life in the secluded temple that she has experienced earlier. Hence her humble 'come back' corresponds to a kind of realism which coincides with the negative trend of evolution. She as such has only to accept the cold facts of life as parts of reality or parts of one's mere physical existence.

In Mr. Sampath, however, the author is more of a sociological visionary than a realist. By way of delineating the incidents connected with the shooting of the film the author not merely makes an attempt to let Sampath undergo the miseries of highest isolation or alienation, he also attempts his utmost to justify how the over-ambitious 'economic man' has to inevitably meet his downfall in an age-old conservative Indian society that has time and again adhered itself to a positive or metaphysical trend of social existence in the cycle of
evolution. Thus except Srinivas, the conscience-keeper of the narrator-author, each character in Mr. Sampath falls a victim to the definitive or positive mechanism of order that the sociologist visionary allows to operate in the ultimate events of the narrative. The theory of Deterioration appears therefore to have been most philosophically assimilated into the theory of evolution as Narayan keeps on depicting the sociological changes in the fictional narrative. One may as such come to identify the author with Srinivas whose philosophical observation provides one with a definitive view of adjustments brought about in human relationships existing in an ideational Indian society since time immemorial. In custom-bound Indian milieu time and again there have been rash actions initiated by men which have been characteristically overpowered by the restraining forces of the milieu. Thus the author observes the mind of Srinivas:

His mind perceived a balance of power in human relationships. He marvelled at the inevitable forces of the universe which maintained this subtle balance in all matters: it was so perfect that it seemed unnecessary for anybody to do anything. For a moment it seemed to him a futile and presumptuous occupation to analyse, criticise and attempt to set things right anywhere if only one could get a comprehensive view of all humanity, one would get a correct view of the world, things being neither particularly wrong nor right, but just balancing themselves.
The speculations offered by the chastened-editor also imply how society, by way of balancing the diverse kinds of human relationships, comes to play the most crucial role in restoring order in the long run. While flourishing a final farewell to an alienated Sampath, the restrained Srinivas feels that he ought not to involve himself anymore with the hoary whereabouts of the doomed printer, for his involvement with multiple patterns of human social relationship has left him with enough self-knowledge at the cost of untold psychological strain. Thus he withdraws with a spirit of absolute self-detachment which he has experienced on resuming the profession of an editor which again is a kind of experience bestowed upon him circumstantially by society itself that accepts him as an instrument of keeping up its values intact. On the contrary, society, that persists as a cosmic entity comprising the aggregate of values keeps 'the odd man' or Sampath 'out' from its limits of operating such values by means of a few incidents devised as parts of the law of cosmic evolution. Hence Srinivas (or the author?) totally submits himself to the sociological phenomena of changes that probably accept him and eliminate the odd man for good. Referring to Srinivas' quiet withdrawal from the enigmatic world of Sampath, P.S. Sundaram observes that the book ends on a note of disciplined detachment.
Narayan, the moral analyst, probably bears in mind that in an economically impoverished country like India any attempt made by one to acquire plenty of money or power is ultimately thwarted by the ideational forces prevailing in Indian society. Though such proposition holds no relevance in context of the current bureaucrats or politicians who are largely responsible for the economic maladies like inflation or unemployment in post-Independence era, yet like a visionary, the author contemplates that the manifold tricks or caprices played by them are shortly going to be crushed by the balancing forces of an ideal social order which the subcontinent has passed through time and again. To sum up, one may believe how society remains as an unquestionable quintessential force which instead of remaining as a merely passive background of the human drama, appears to have been consistently at work from the beginning to the end of the novel. It does not stay put, rather it seems to be a perpetually guiding force that regulates ushering in of various incidents or circumstances leading to multiple human social relationships. Malgudi as a manifestation of semi-urban Indian society, offers itself as a mosaic of varied yet proportionate portrayal of such relationships that builds up the basis of the author’s view of life in society. P.S. Sundaram explains how from Mr. Sampath onwards Narayan seems to depend more on invention; and it would seem that the starting point is not a plot but a
character, in every sense of that latter term. 37

The explanation offered by Sundaram might imply how a character, and specially a major character discloses an infiniteness of life that he inhabits in the growing post-Independence society. Sampath, like Margayya in The Financial Expert or even Vasu in The Maneater of Malgudi adequately discloses such infiniteness of life which shows Narayan's acquaintances with diversities of social living preceding or following political freedom that India achieves in 1947. Yet mere political freedom is not enough, social and economic freedom is highly desirable for the impoverished humanity of the vast sub-continent. Hence the restless attempt to make oneself economically self-supporting, whether Margayya deciding to pick up the business of being a financial adviser or Vasu trying to get affluent by encouraging export of rare animal skins. Sampath in the same way is an archetypical agent of economic re-orientation of Indian society. On the plea of improving the lot of Truth Printing works for the benefit of customers or on the excuse of becoming the Director of Films in Sunrise Pictures he only rears high ambitions to make himself economically stable. In a society where mostly people starve or perish owing to their illiteracy, ignorance or poverty, a few among the elite take it as an opportunity to exploit their sources of public contact or knowledgeable experiences for
achieving economic self-sufficiency which constitutes the central theme of Mr. Sampath and The Financial Expert.

III

The Financial Expert portrays the meteoric rise and fall of another 'economic' man with a difference. Here in a dramatic way the author attempts to take the readers back to the saga of Second World War or early forties in pre-Independence India, inspite of the novel being actually published five years after Independence, i.e. 1952. Contrary to Mr. Sampath and literally resembling the other pre-Independence works of the author like The Dark Room or The English Teacher (1945) the present novel offers the concentrated study of a domestic subject of its own. Against a diffused agrarian economy that could not keep pace with the drastic evolution of Co-operative movement in India as part of the Nationalist movement, one could trace the rise and fall of a lower middle-class householder Margayya who appears as a personified embodiment of values at war with each other in the contemporary era. While Sampath is trying to build up the career of an economic man, his characteristic extrovert nature or genuine inclination towards maintaining a duplicity perhaps, does not give any cognition to the values of conjugal life or
ideal fatherhood. He however could conveniently ignore the role of an honest householder for the sake of an extra-marital romance which he practically tries to master over as parts of his experience while playing the role of an economic mediator for his fellowmen. His unusually wide contact with diverse sections of business-men or capacity to rear a casual attitude to life as such gets itself bereft of any ethical or ideal principle. The movie director-actor attempts to exploit multiple sources of income by way of tactfully spreading out a net of social relationship that ironically alienates him totally from a home front, wife and children.

Yet in case of Margayya one finds out the householder’s unflinching faith in certain fixed ideals of domestic life. A perpetual tussle between such ideals of domestic life and forces of economic manipulation or exploitation of one’s sheer self-interest builds up the destiny of the financial expert. Ironically speaking he himself falls a victim to such forces or designs of economic manipulation that he has devised for the sake of not exactly a personal gain but the gain of his only son whom he intends to bestow affluence and comfort which he himself has tactfully acquired. His genuine devotion for maintaining a ritual-oriented sacred family life may be viewed as a constituent of his introvertism that coincides with ageold belief in superstitions. Yet he appears to be a contradiction by himself unlike Sampath or Ramani: while sticking to the
ideals of a religious culture at home front he adheres to the highest tact of acquiring money that only widens the gap between the house holder and the financier. Margayya, the most successful minter of money as such could not exceed the desirable limits of playing the roles of a dutiful father, husband or even a younger brother in a custom-bound Hindu home that is perhaps the tragic flaw of his career as an economic man leading to his ultimate defeat in life. Yet the catastrophic fall of his career as financial expert that degrades him to the level of complete insolvency, never probably fails to project his deep faith in the conservative ideals of domestic life.

Hence Sampath and Margayya represent the two completely alienated spheres of Mammonism—if Sampath attempts to grub money being over confident of his success as an adventurer, Margayya takes up the career of a self-styled banker whose sole concern is the material upliftment of his progeny. Sampath accepts money as an end in itself. For Margayya it is only a means to impose complete domestic discipline and paternal love upon his only son Balu, who like his successor Mali in The Vendor of Sweets only misuses the hard-earned amount stored by a
hard-working father. Yet ironically speaking a quest for domestic harmony constitutes the end of Margayya's material pursuits. In other words Sampath caters to the needs of a growing extrovert community of middle class adventurers absorbed in the art of money making who as such cannot fix any limit to a plan or estimate in making the same. Margayya, on the other hand, representing a concentrated introvert community of householders or guardians, almost digs his own grave owing to excessive concern for a wayward son. Margayya's rise to the topmost summit of glory as a Mammonist, despite being a shortlived experience, is an extraordinary limit which Sampath could not reach inspite of his robust optimism as a money grubber. Even Ramani, the bullying bureaucrat gets himself eclipsed while compared to the economically enviable status of Margayya, the financial wizard of wartime Malgudi. Such parallelism and contrast maintained between them both give adequate scope for studying the sociological changes operating in economic context in the advancing forties.

Graham Greenea observes in his Introduction to *The Financial Expert*:

Margayya - the sad ambitious absurd financial expert is perhaps the most engaging of all Mr. Narayan's characters. In his ambitions for his boy, his huge dreams, his unintended villainies and his small vanities,
his domestic tenderness, he has the hidden poetry and the unrecognised pathos we so often find in Tcheckov’s characters who on the last page vanish into life. 38

Margayya, whose original name was Krishna but has been widely acknowledged by everyone as Margayya offers a derivative proper noun of himself, 'Marga' meaning the way and 'Ayya' referring to one who shows the way. At the outset of the novel he seems to have ironically found out his own way in life, a quality name that he bears to the knowledge of others, adding sociological importance when one views his approach to profession. Carrying a knobby tin trunk that contains a bottle of ink, a pen, a few blank application forms and a small register comprising a list of names or figures, the 42-year-old self-appointed financial adviser occupies a shady retreat under an ancient banyan tree, located exactly before one of the proudest buildings wherein operates the Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank of the town. His ready-made counsel to innumerable customers coming to the bank for transacting their business proves to be the most useful experience for them all. He keeps on issuing forms to them, which he has most tactfully managed to secure from the bank and advises them as to how they could properly apply for a loan or obtain money from the bank while himself filling up the forms for an inexperienced peasant or ignorant customer. As a self-styled monetary adviser he instructs the share holders of the bank to borrow money at a small interest, four and half
percent, and lend it to the needy at a higher interest that is, seven and half percent. In the process devised by him he earns a little amount for himself. The author observes:

Margayya kept himself as the centre of all the complex transaction, and made all the parties concerned pay for him for his services, the bank opposite him being involved with it willy-nilly. It was as strenuous a job as any other in the town and felt that he deserved the difficult income he ground out of a couple of hundred rupees in his box, sitting there morning till evening.

The protagonist is not merely a man of strong determination realising that money alone is the yardstick for achieving a desirable social status in a world of give and take, also he believes that the moral purpose of existence could alone be channelised through material gains that one ought to obtain by means of a perennial hardship. He therefore behaves with his customers in entirely a novel manner. As financial counsellor he encourages each customer to draw unlimited loans from the Co-operative bank. As a down-to-earth diligent Mammonist he does not favour the ideology of thrift under any circumstance. He tactfully concludes how

his living depended upon helping people to take loans from the bank opposite and from each other.
Yet no sooner he succeeds in building up the career of a financial adviser than he is compelled by the Secretary of the bank to stop issuing forms to the customers. The real complication of the sociological drama has its genesis in the open confrontation between the Secretary of the Co-operative bank and the adhoc-monetary counsellor. The latter infact feels humiliated following the former's authoritarian command to leave the place at once; on the contrary his genuine indefatigable spirit of determination does not allow him to surrender. He concludes instantly that it is money that assures authoritarianism which one should cultivate in his routine mannerisms of life as a necessary prelude to maintain oneself at par with the Secretary or other men of affluence and power. Unlike Sampath he devises a characteristic taciturnity of his own, starts tiding up himself in both his dress and address and picks up completely different kinds of mannerisms in order to ascertain others of his capacity to keep up the air of a Mammonist though in reality he has just been starting the career of one! As he justifies the conduct of the Secretary in context of money, authority or the looks he possesses as parts of his official position, he bursts out in presence of his wife strongly in favour of money:

"It's money which gives people all this. Money alone is important in this world. Everything else will come to us naturally if we have money in our purse."41
The abandonment of the job of a financial adviser is complete following the loss of the register comprising necessary records, the loss being ironically interlinked with the pranks displayed by the notorious son versus the taciturnity of the serious father. The confidence of Margayya is imperilled as he is unable to find out a foothold of security for himself. Here Narayan leaves him to pick up an altogether separate method of Mammonism that very soon restores to him a definite way to success. He incidentally meets an astrologer who advises him to worship Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity continuously for forty days in utmost sanctity. The rituals associated with the worship are prescribed and quite meticulously Margayya performs the same. The emphasis laid by the temple astrologer-priest on the most useful result of Lakshmi worship and the utmost secrecy or sanctity with which the reticent financier undertakes the prayer in a sociological sense spell out the inevitability of observing a religious ceremony which a Hindu householder is supposed to perform as a prelude to his material prosperity. The ritual taken up by Margayya is not merely approximated with a deviation on his part from a state of diffident economic determinism to a state of confident religious determinism, to a large extent it establishes his innate faith in inhabiting a life of full austerity and penance though it lasts for forty days only. He
performs his rites on having collected ashes from a red lotus as well as ghee obtained from the milk of a purely smoke-coloured cow. H.M. Williams is of opinion that

"India is a system of metaphysics rather than a country like any other."\(^{42}\)

The sum and substance of such observation may be assimilated into the rites performed by a chastened yet determined careerist who believes that a metaphysical or abstract quest for fulfilment in life is rather more real and more natural than aimlessly hovering round one's environment that lead to only futile results of one's endeavour. The reference made by the priest to the myth of Markandeya, who attains immortality or victory over the God of Death only by means of performing a proper form of worship probably encourages the temporarily doomed financier to neatly perform the same. The spiritual method thus expedites the way to material gain in case of the determined Mammonist. The context of myth or an honest adherence to rites highlights how inspite of technological developments witnessed in modern times, the middle class elite stick to their unflinching faith in maintaining a few rewarding conservative practices as parts of the theory of religious determinism. Unlike Sampath or or Vasu in The Maneater of Malgudi here the protagonist could not essentially part with the spirit of religious determinism which forms the crux of the
narrative. Not only money or status, even an austere way of worship provides the ability to satisfy his ego or maintain an authoritarian spirit. A proper form of worship is socio-culturally believed to endow one with fulfilment of any kind which may be taken rather as a scientific mechanism for achieving any success in life.

Besides in tradition-bound middleclass Hindu families observance of any ritual or ceremonial practice is usually taken as a vital source for strengthening one’s position in social life. Margayya, during the process of such observance commands an isolated yet respectable position of his own. His mode of detachment accompanied by extremely occasional communication with his wife whom he mostly orders to make necessary provisions for the puja at home, is an acknowledged identity of his status both in household as well as in society. From a sociological perspective he accepts Hinduism not merely as a source of various rituals that might bring him good luck if observed properly, he too identifies Hinduism as a way of life: something that might exceed the limits of religious determinism. A complete dedication to reticent confinement while observing the Puja for forty days ironically leads to a strategic public appearance of the financier in the subsequent parts of the novel. However such adherence to maintain a kind of confinement or detachment which a modern householder tries to keep up as parts of his status or identity as a householder, is a typical
middle-class attitude of mind. One may also find out a similar method of confinement adopted by Nagaraj, the baffled uncle in Narayan's later novel The World of Nagaraj, probably both Margayya and Nagaraj take up such ritual-oriented confinements only in order to make their subsequent social revelations more bold and positive.

The quest for the priest, following his austerities at home is rather a part of the completion of Lakshmi worship which a chastened householder cannot easily do away with. The penance, he believes, shall remain incomplete if the priest is not finally consulted. The priest, having left for the Himalayas, is not to be traced out. Instead he meets Dr. Pal, the self-acclaimed sociologist whom he had met earlier while ceaselessly trying to find out a red lotus for the puja. Dr. Pal, with his characteristic enigmatic hospitality, not merely announces to start a sociology clinic or a harmony home very shortly at Malgudi, he however affirms that the first step towards implementing such an alluring scheme is the publication of a manuscript written by him on 'Bed life or the Science of Marital Happiness', which he is ready to sell away to Margayya in lieu of receiving whatever amount the latter has got with him at the moment. He assures that the book dealing with pornography, art of kissing or embracing is definitely going to solve the multiple difficulties or problems of the married people by dint of being sold like hot-cakes in the overpopulated Indian
sub-continent. It will fetch instant public response or abundant money if published in a country where people are basically devoid of a training in sex life. While making an enigmatic bargain with Margayya — that he is offering to sell the manuscript to Margayya in exchange of whatever cash he possesses at the moment he defines his own views on modern sociology as he has experienced as 'journalist, correspondent and author'. Dr. Pal concludes by way of summarising his scheme:

"For instance, if I wrote a book or say, poems or philosophy, no body would touch it but a book like 'Bed Life' is a thing that everyone would like to read. Do you know, people like to be told facts, people like to be guided in such matters. Ultimately, as I told you, I shall open a clinic. I want to serve mankind with my knowledge."43

The definition of sociology, as offered by the cold and down-to-earth author and journalist, shows how during the war period multiple hoarders and money grubbers come to the extent of monopolizing academic terms as media of a crude profiteering motive. The eccentric correspondent, who even could not convincingly explain under what circumstances did his wife leave him, spells out his own scheme of sociology thus ironically approximating it with the science of marital happiness. His strange offer to sell away the manuscript might partly come to
satisfy the supernatural or miraculous expectations of a fatigued impoverished Hindu worshipper, yet more than that his radical offer establishes the calculating motive of a typical commercial expert, who by way of selling his manuscript to a financial expert, expects to have profuse monetary gain as owner of a sociological clinic. Being a seasoned observer of human nature he studies the financier's mind and suggests how a perfect businessman could attempt to earn money by astutely highlighting the theory and practice of sex in a society where people are only interested in money and sex:

"There are only two things that occupy men's minds. I am a psychologist and I know Money and Sex. You need not look so shocked. It is the truth. Down with your sham and hypocritical self-deception. Tell me truthfully, is there any moment of the day, when you don't think of one or the other?" \(^4\)

The bargain thus settled up between Margayya and Dr. Pal is an ultra-modern myth in itself, a myth that combines one's unflinching faith in religious determinism with another's strategy of economic determinism. Of course the latter comes to outweigh the former in the balance of realities which the author-cum-social philosopher has assiduously displayed in the relationship patterns growing between the two. Dr. Pal seems to have emerged as a shrewd and polished money

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grubber-cum-sensualist, who may be compared with Sir Abalabandhu in Bhattacharyya's *So many hungers* (1978) a documentary episode on the Bengal famine of 1943. He as such is more cunning than Mr. Sampath or Vasu, though he very much anticipates these two counterparts of himself being reared in the pre-Independence Indian milieu. The ingenuity revealed in his talks and actions is something which Narayan has probably never attempted to depict in any character of his novels. Considering from an artistic point of view the rise and fall of the Malgudi mincer of money has been entirely the outcome of Dr. Pal's amazing economic planning. It commences with his dramatic bargain in selling away his manuscript, his equally dramatic manner of re-entering into the chastened domestic life of Margayya by way of thoroughly spoiling his half-wayward son and ends by drawing a readymade sympathy of the people following physical assaults he receives incidentally from Margayya, the shocked father of a completely demoralised son.

Margayya's rise to the level of a financial wizard is symbolic handiwork of a clever economic planner, who remains invincible in the art of making or unmaking things. Like Mr. Sampath who plays his pranks upon the submissive Srinivas by making grand promises or Vasu who each time attempts to make Nataraj a fool of himself by exhibiting the strength of a gymnast, Dr. Pal remains the sole architect of Margayya's destiny or a veritable and most colourful champion of crude
opportunist-motivation that grows rampant in the war-torn Indian society thus causing untold damage to thousands of aspirant-ignorant-people. Hence from a sociological point of view the manuscript serves as an antidote to Margayya’s unquestioned faith in Dr. Pal’s astounding suggestions:

"Go to a printer and he will print it. You tell the public the book is ready and they will come and buy it. Infact you will hardly be able to meet the demand."45

Margayya blindly accepts the bargain, moves to Madan Lal, a renowned publisher in the town and urges him to go through the manuscript. The elated publisher agrees to print and publish it on purely a partnership basis. Exhaustive discussion follows. Finally Margayya succeeds in convincing the publisher that he intends to be a fifty-fifty partner 'without any investment on his part'. The book entitled 'Domestic Harmony' soon comes to limelight thus fetching the fifty-percent partner infinite amount of money. The Goddess of Affluence blesses him. Soon he gets himself endowed with not merely an enviable social status, but is able to provide the best possible education to his only son or diamond ornaments to his wife. The book that is published year after year, following a good number of editions adds to his bank balance which eventually enables him to brood over a fundamental question as a monetary wizard:
"Every rupee, Margayya felt, contained in it seed of another rupee and that seed in it another seed and so on and on to infinity—— It gave him the feeling of being part of an infinite existence." 46

He soon comes to contemplate whether he ought to continue as a partner in Lal’s book business with all its stereotyped arrangements made in Gorden Printery or ought to switch over to a more dynamic profiteering occupation that might enable him to mint more cash in the years to come? He also realises that the future sales of ‘Domestic Harmony’ may not be as cash-fetching as these have been till now. Hence he sells away his partnership to Lal in exchange of an alluring payment, which he calculates would provide him with chances of minting more money in future. M. Sivaram Krishna observes how such planning of Margayya converts the novel into an archetypal fable of financial ambition. 47

The financial ambition however undergoes a miraculous fulfilment with the intrusion of Dr. Pal once more. The latter promptly assists him in finding out a suitable rented house at 10 market road where the confident monetary wizard lays the foundation stone of his financial empire. He decides to start the Deposit Scheme. While talking to the Bank Manager on the eve of opening an account for himself or while explaining the
purpose of starting his banking business to the owner of the building, a part of which he comes to acquire for the said purpose, Margayya sounds like the representative of war-time money grubbbers or an agent of the enigmatic Pal himself whose practical wisdom in matters of money making probably he has come to inherit with more novelty and precision:

"Money is the greatest factor in life and the most ill-used. People don't know how to tend it, how to manure it, how to water it, how to make it grow, and when to pluck its flowers and when to pluck its fruits."^{48}

Narayan's analysis of the financier's mind and motivation responds to the true spirit of the times. If Dr. Pal and Margayya both stand as agents of war-time economy, the former provides only with ideas or gimmicks which the latter converts into a kind of novel personal experience. Dr. Pal with his vast acquaintances or wide range of contact with people of all types starting from some hoarder rice merchant to the tricky contractor, who could get all his bills passed by way of bribing the Engineer, acquires a position which is far above the limits of the average man trying to live the life of desirable moral standard. Sociologically speaking Dr. Pal is a person of the flat type, who with his astute capacity for calculation or foresight could come to do or undo things as he pleases. Margayya on the contrary comes to play the role of a
'sophisticated' hoarder or a 'sensible' money grabber who, by way of putting Pal's ideas into actions, eventually gets himself identified with a typically round character. He is committed to undergo the ups and downs of life in their highest order as he genuinely maintains a duality between an ambitious financier and an equally ambitious father which his counterpart initially lacks. Thus Margayya, as his name justifies his conduct as 'a way shower' presents a more convincing trend of sociological change than Pal. Inspite of his miserable condition of declaring financial insolvency in the long run, he never hesitates to assault Pal for having spoiled Balu or his normal relationship with an aspirant father himself. The polarisation being completed in a way, Mephistophilis seems to represent more of a changing sociological phenomenon than of a mere financier, house holder or guardian of a custom-bound family.

Taking such attitude into consideration the social philosopher-author probably does his utmost to revive the traditional code of conduct which a father or guardian ought to observe while supervising the affairs of his young successor or inheritor. Though Ironically he wants to become affluent, considering money as the only yardstick of one's social status, that converts him to a round character by himself, yet ultimately it is the inherent middleclass culture that comes to take over any materialistic caprice that has been haunting him since long. If he has blindly hankered after opulence or
affluence, he discovers finally that this has ruined his only son, which inspite of his earlier apprehension he could not probably find time to sort out in a more constructive way. Hence his failure as a financial wizard. In part III, IV and V of the narrative, a reader comes to find out the tussle between a money maker and a guardian. Here Narayan presents the affluent part of Margayya only as a masque, the man or the father within is pained to find his growing son gradually getting spoiled, ironically speaking a pursuit of Mammonism completely spoils the youngster.

Margayya carries on his Deposit scheme with great success, the customers or depositors being arranged by Dr. Pal himself—the Mephistophiles to whom the Malgudian Faustus has fully sold away his soul! He accepts deposits with dramatic promises of paying them back with twenty percent interest. He contemplates and calculates,

"That if he could atleast filter twenty out of that number for his own purposes, he would be more than well off. In about a year he could pass on to the grade of people who were wealthy and not merely rich." 49

This kind of obsession for money does not, in any way deprive him of taking interest in educating his son. The moral analyst suggests here how superficially trying to educate one's
child or keep a private tutor is only an index of maintaining one's social status. Margayya, who already has got Balu admitted to the Town Elementary school by performing a costly schooling ceremony transfers the lad into a high school and appoints a tutor at home, thus providing the teenager with highest kind of educational facilities. Like Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets he feels puffed up while referring to somebody that his son is studying in a high school. But the calculation of the financier about shaping the destiny of his lad fails to comethrough - Balu proves to be incorrigible in his studies. The optimistic father tries his utmost to make him appear in the S.S.L.C. examination once again, but he secures only single digit mark and openly bursts out with an aversion to take any examination or continue his studies. The confrontation reaches climax when Balu repeats his earlier trick, throws the school leaving certificate book into the gutter and vanishes from home at once.

Here one may enquire whether the financier-father is directly responsible for the youngster's lack of interest in studies. Despite a few slangs he himself uses at the science attender of the school, he chooses the strict disciplinarian teacher Murti as his son's home tutor. But in a money-based society where the slightest influence of a financier-cum-school Secretary Margayya might even unfix the basic existence of a needy school teacher, Murti could not remain a hard task master
as home tutor. He only too cleverly manages to award him inflated marks that finally bring him to Fourth Form beyond which the misguided boy has absolutely no chance of passing any examination in life. Hence Murti only represents a class of sycophant opportunists who could try their utmost to make both ends meet. He finally ruins the career of Balu as a student which the cunning financier has no chance to comprehend. He can not come to a point of solution as he has 'sealed all doors for the 'odd man' to keep himself 'out!' This is a strategically trilogical sociological order in which a teenager falls a victim to the competition astutely carried on between a status seeker guardian and an opportunist timid caretaker—teacher: the teacher being afraid of excesses committed on the part of the financier if he fails to satisfy the latter. Narayan presents here the sociological mode of competition and conflict under the garb of co-operation, a co-operation that as such exists between a powerful school Secretary and his humble sub-ordinate employee. One here is out to exploit the other's services only as a means of economic exploitation or a give-and-take phenomenon that the war-time economy provides to them both—hence the 'odd man' is in! For some time Margayya, the enraged guardian remains apathetic to his departed son. He ought to maintain a kind of apathy as part of his responsible guardianship. Despite a sullen mood of his wife who painfully discovers him clinging more to the world of cold calculations of interest than having any warmth of seriousness for tracing out a
lost child, Margayya keeps on maintaining a typical aloofness generally found out in a financier. He is heard telling his wife:

"He is not my son--------- A boy who has utter disregard for his father's feelings is no son." 50

Such theatrical gesture of indifference to his absconded son however remains a temporary phase. A few days later a message from Madras comes saying that Balu is dead. Overcome with excessive grief he moves to Madras, incidentally comes in contact with a plain-clothed police Inspector who informs him that Balu is alive and helps him to find him out. The wrong message was however communicated by an ochre-clad wealthy owner of a theatre with whom the young fugitive had come in contact a few days ago. Margayya's joy knows no bounds when he finds Balu alive although the latter is in rags, and they both return home. The penitent father assures the prodigal teenager a comfortable stay at home least bothering about his studies or things of that kind. He virtually pampers him with words of a guardian who perhaps had once done some grave injustice to him:

"You eat, rest and grow fat that is all you are expected to do, and take as much money as you like." 51

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Here Margayya sounds theatrical once again. By persuading him to live like an over pampered prince he himself chalks out the ultimate waywardness that soon befalls Balu, thereby ruining his own career as a monetary wizard. The balance that was earlier hanging positively with more weight on building up an economic career and much less on maintaining the position of a father, now reveals the direction of a temporary shift - the weight of an economic man reaches the utmost level at the bottom and that of the dreaming father gets lifted up on the other side as a prelude to let the youngster do whatever pleases him.

Here one may anticipate the attitude of mollycoddling maintained by Jagan towards his only son Mali in *The Vendor of Sweets* or that being disclosed by Nagaraj to his nephew Tim in *The World of Nagaraj*. Yet there are obvious differences existing between the financier and each of the other two. Jagan’s obsession for leading a miserly life or earning profusely as a Sweet-Vendor does not cross the desirable limits of a Gandhian camouflage or that of a recognised freedom-fighter. He however never openly encourages his son to take as much money as he likes to take, though he has reared his only motherless son with unusual care of a father-cum-mother. In case of Nagaraj, too one finds out how the docile uncle fails to communicate any thing to the fast-going astray young nephew despite the fact the latter has managed to slip off his control. Yet Nagaraj bluntly never feeds him with words of unreasonable flattery. They both
apprehend that if they advance a bit more in imposing themselves over the youngsters they might lose grip over them for good, which ironically enough they come to experience in the fitness of things to follow. Infact they remain firm in their ideal or in maintaining a reserve. Margayya is however an exemplary molly-coddler, a pamperer who does not use his minimum foresight or wisdom at the turn of events resulting in the prodigal son’s return. The social analyst offers adequate indication as to how a person under the spell or nausea of minting money every moment in his life has rather accepted the departure and ‘recovery’ of his son in distinct moods corresponding to his nature as an economic man. His initial indifference followed by a compelling circumstance to trace out the lost son, or an ultimate and open encouragement to the latter for complete misuse of his liberty make Margayya a champion (or victim?) of such spell. During his search for Balu in Madras one may come across the obsession for business which he has circumstantially lost track of while brooding over it again and again:

"It’s three days since I went to my office., God knows what is happening to my business, Probably, this is the beginning of the end--------' He reflected ruefully. 52

The money gruber in a short while out-weighs the blindly loving father again. Just as he had tried his utmost to educate his son by engaging a private tutor, send him school by
arranging a ceremonial procession, in the same manner he gradually decides to get the idle youngster married and 'settled' in life. These are the gimmicks usually maintained by an able financier. Though outwardly he never maintains any show of luxury in routine matters of life and openly declares his abhorrence for status:

"Status! ------- I don't believe in it, Shastri-------it's not right to talk of status and such things in these days. You know I'm a man who has had to work hard to make money and keep it ------- even the smallest child in the road is my equal in status."  

Yet the psychology of an established Mammonist is hard to comprehend. His humble and taciturn ways quite cleverly pave the way for crowning himself with supreme standard of identification. Notwithstanding he being a descendant of corpse bearing Brahmins, whose status has always been seen humiliatingly inferior in society, he manages to select for Balu a girl of a higher caste, daughter of an affluent owner of certain tea-estate. When a local astrologer says that the horoscopes do not match another astrologer is almost made to match one with the other being persuaded by Dr. Pal on payment of a handsome amount and the marriage takes place. Here one may sum up, in the words of P.S.Sundaram, that even
"Money can dictate to the very stars in their courses."

Whether one belongs to an inferior caste or finds barriers on the way of settling up disputes to accomplish a personal gain, affluence alone can come to his rescue and restore a desirable identity one needs in life. Yet things get complicated when the shrewd householder-cum-father discovers the frequent visits made by Dr. Pal to his newly built house at Lawley Extension where Balu and Brinda have gone to stay on his own request. Contrary to Margayya's plan that the newly-wedded irresponsible youngsters should try to settle down as responsible ones in the new lot, the constant association of Dr. Pal with them becomes the most harrowing experience for the old man. Trying his utmost to keep 'the odd man' away from Balu, rather in a contradictory manner he comes forward to take his help by way of attracting deposits from businessmen of various kinds whom he cleverly assures to pay an interest of 20%.

Ironically enough here again he commits the same mistake: he could not get at the clue for an ouster. The wizard and the sociologist thus maintain a perfectly commercial relationship now. Sociologically speaking they maintain only a garb of co-operation behind which a cold war of nerves or a competition to balance each other has started. The journalist-sociologist being benefitted by the new Deposit
Scheme is able to buy a second-hand Baby Austin with which probably he is trying to give shape to his ideas of tourism, his newly picked up subject; Margayya on the other hand acquires the reputation of a movie-celebrity barricading himself always at home and in his office to avoid access of the people.

Such checks and balances imposed on one another by Margayya and Dr. Pal are supposed to come to an end like that of the movie makers in Mr. Sampath. Ravi’s place here seems to have been taken by the over molly-coddled Balu who just one day rushes in and announces that he has come to claim a share of his paternal property. His unexpected arrival in Margayya’s office is like a bolt from the blue. He demands a half-share of Margayya’s property right at the moment without explaining any reason there of. Hot words are exchanged between the father and son and finally Margayya pushes him aside and goes away. But he cannot have sound sleep at home. Around midnight he goes out in the direction of Lawley Extension and to his dismay discovers his daughter-in-law alone at home with the kid. No sooner her narration of Balu’s nocturnal errands is completed than Margayya finds the Baby Austin halting in front of the house and Balu getting down from it bidding goodnight to ‘some insiders’. The angry Margayya pulls Dr. Pal out of the vehicle and beats him with his sandal while the awe-struck Balu or the two women of the town are not spared from his wrath. The injured Dr. Pal with a bandaged face informs everyone about how he was assaulted
last night by the wizard himself, wisely telling each one how
the latter has of late developed insanity. The whispers of the
doctor-psychologist have a readymade effect, people throng round
Margayya’s house to take back their capital deposits and inspite
of it a good many of them cannot get their money back. At last
with the help of his brother he files an insolvency petition—
without his brother’s instant intervention probably Margayya
would have been totally wiped out. The narrative ends when Balu
and his wife return home following an untoward incident, the
property of the insolvent Margayya or his house at Lawely
Extension being attached by the court. The ancestral home is
safe only because it is inalienable property shared by both the
brothers. As Sundaram observes,

There was in the 1940’s a financial expert
in Bangalore who like Margayya took huge
deposits paying interest at high rates. Even a
man like Sir C.V. Raman was stung when there was
a run on the money-lender and he filed an
insolvency petition. Narayan must of course be
knowing this real life-story. 55

Like the original Mr. Sampath inspiring the author to
create an equally fictitious counterpart in Mr. Sampath here
also the author might have adopted a similar technique of
changing an archetype to a prototype. The mock-heroic
transition from the level of a money minter to that of a
petitioner of insolvency suggests how the social philosopher
aims to channelise the theme of rise and fall of a financial empire identifying it with the morally depraved society of the forties. One may find out how the economically maladjusted society during pre-war period of late thirties or war period of early forties has got in itself the elements of a cyclic theory of evolution in a strictly sociological sense. Almost synonymous with Bhattacharyya’s vision of the nightmarish famine as depicted in So Many Hungers, the particular stage of society in the pre-war period depicted by Narayan might be compared with a particular age or epoch: an age of total moral decadence in all spheres of life in which a few hoarders, black marketeers or financiers only flourish by way of black mailing the impoverished ones.

As a chronicler of contemporary events he more or less tries to depict an India of the early forties wasting itself away in the ultimate saga of extinction. The episodic rise and fall of a financial expert, who atleast has awareness for reforming a progeny, is the necessary outcome of such a morally-depraved society. Yet ironically speaking there is a persistent prevalence of background schemers like Dr. Pal who use ambitious innocents like Margayya as instruments for securing a personal gain. The genesis of moral perversion is in fact present in people like Dr. Pal occupying a secure place in a green-room sort of existence without getting themselves exposed or humiliated on the stage that happens in case of
Margayya. Under the influence of westernisation a few opportunists like the author of 'Bed life' involve themselves in various projects and mislead people for a craze for money or sensuality. Contrary to the astute business deals as shown by the 'flat sociologist' one may find out the evolution of a 'round money grubber' that forms a part of the cyclic theory. Margayya's successive attempts to make himself a financial wizard may keep pace with a pre-determined cycle of existence. It is almost like a rotation of birth, growth, maturity and decline: the initiative to make himself a money-lender, the ritual performed to enhance a fortune followed by the purchase of the manuscript, the seasoned way of minting money by way of attracting deposits and lastly an excessive self-confidence in trying to keep the odd man out of his own sphere of domestic harmony, may be respectively compared with the four successive stages of the aforesaid rotation. Finally the cycle is complete when Margayya is still hopeful of chalking out a career for himself again:

"I hope the tree is still there——— I am going on with it, as soon as I am able to leave this bed." 56

It means the same story of an intricate battle for existence might come off again, if Margayya resumes his work as a money-lender. The central character in relation to rotation in a cyclic order is necessarily a type and not an individual, for
the type only represents successive stages of conception and extinction experienced by people in a decadent society, and with the completion of a spiral of extinction he may come back to the point of conception once again.

Besides, the material downfall of an ambitious financier coincides with the resurrection of the moralist father or householder in Margayya. It shows how a morally-bankrupt society has wider possibilities of coming back to a point of order following a deluge or disorder. The humble house-holder is only the reality, not the rash custodian of money inhabiting temporarily in a world of fantasy - the conversion from fantasy to reality discloses, how the cyclic theory has been the most suitable alternative through which a sociological change takes place with meaningful possibilities. To conclude, the duality between a financier and a father has perhaps been more explicitly conveyed while studied in context of the cyclic theory of sociological change. In no other novels or stories the author has delineated the rise and fall of a man in context of socio-economic interactions more convincingly or neatly in the *The Financial Expert*.

The first three works as discussed in the economic context of sociological changes chiefly constitute the making or unmaking of the 'economic man'. Ramani, Mr. Sampath or Margayya have all been Mammonists of different order. While the first
two are philanderers in addition to having a craze for status or money, a morally honest Margayya keeps on specialising only on the art of money grubbing. Yet he is the most human of the trio. The first two completely overlook the interest of a happy home or conjugal harmony while Margayya's chronic craze for money is only a means to an end, that is to keep his progeny in comfort. Inspite of a consistently preoccupied time schedule which does not enable him to look after the moral well-being of a complicated-child-turned out an irresponsible son, he however has a sub-conscious desire to reform him. In the ultimate part of the novel the father overtakes the financial wizard while he keeps on beating Dr. Pal in his sandal.

Such a gesture unlike that of Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets, is more positive and bold in trying to reform a wicked intruder or even a wayward youngster. Hence he might have been superficially abandoned by a morally depraved society but he is atleast able to restore his domestic harmony which is his highest achievement as a guardian. His image as a householder or father is restored with assertiveness in his family. Precisely speaking, he realises that a family must be set in order, prior to any idea of reforming society that arises in one's mind. Unlike Jagan's escapade here one notices a self-assuring confrontation with life which only a person having faith in reality can provide. Unlike The Guide where the circumstantial acceptance of a universal brotherhood made by
Raju implies the cult of one universal human family which may be
taken as more of a myth than reality, the end of The Financial
Expert is the beginning of one’s attempt to realise how one’s
own family is the base of setting everything in order, which is
a genuinely real or natural experience one comes across in a
half-agrarian Indian locale. A shift from society to family
thus forms an equally meaningful aspect of the cyclic theory of
sociological change in The Financial Expert that one quite
misses in the portrayal of the economic men in The Dark Room or
Mr. Sampath.

IV

In one of his latest works like Talkative Man (1986), the
author takes more interest in presenting a new kind of
personality, an artful womanizer surreptitiously devising ways
and means to have an extra-marital romance at the cost of
incalculable travails of a dedicated wife. The book that
follows The Painter of Signs or A Tiger For Malgudi brings to
limelight the most harrowing account of conjugal rifts that one
discovers in recent times. Here of course the novelist is not
attempting to draw the sketch of an economic man that he has
time and again brought before his readers and critics, yet the
design of the cleverest philanderer as well as the methods
adopted by him to execute such evil design make him appear no less than an economic man in spirit by identifying him with the hero of any twentieth century crime-thriller.

The quest for inhabiting a life of strategic sensuality builds up the theme of the narrative, a higher form of moral corruption that appears to have spread out to all corners of the globe following immeasurable commercial and economic expansions in recent times. Tallative Man is a kind of warning offered to the readers by Narayan identifying probably himself with the tallative man, a typically flat onlooker or narrator of events in many of his short stories like The Tiger's claw, A Night of cyclone (1956) or The World of Nagaraj—for genuinely resisting or withdrawing them from a cancerous spread out of such artful moral perversion that may ruin the fabric of culture and civilisation. The book may be regarded as an episode of mis-adventures undertaken by modern men on the plea of progress or under the garb of intellect, which they however come to manipulate or achieve for themselves as a result of dynamic development in the fields of transport and communication systems—systems however devised by science and technology in order to promote the growth of economic expansion. Hence one does not see the making of an economic man in the accepted sense, it is still worse counterpart of an economic man who is habitually attempting to enlarge his world of bestial or carnal enjoyment that is mostly assured to him by a growing world of
tourism, propaganda or advertisements and a good many research projects, that may be taken as vital issue of the current period of growing economy. Unlike Margayya who is trying to make himself an expert in hoarding money, here one may see how the protagonist is trying to make himself a commercial expert in the art of international tourism, a steady response to start a project somewhere on the globe or even an occasional escape to some peripheral area on the plea of a research work, all of which may be said to have been a pretext for fulfilling fabulous ambition for sex.

Before one comes to the central theme of the novel one is overwhelmed to find out the casual introduction of talkative man himself, perhaps a self introduction of the social-philosopher-author whose impulse to share an experience with others is something what he cannot resist:

"They call me Talkative Man. Some affectionately shorten it to T.M.: I have earned this title, I suppose, because I cannot contain myself. My impulse to share an experience with others is irresistible, even if they sneer me at the back, I don't care. I'd choke if I didn't talk----------."57

The first person singular used here might comply with the author’s own eagerness to either go through an experience of
another person or narrate the same before an equally eager listener.

In a country like India, and more so in a half-urban half-rural milieu, an average man is genuinely interested to hear a story. Talkative man, the sole observer and narrator of many an event, comes forward to catch such a psychology present in majority of men in the sub-continent who have been still peasants in spirit, if not all of them are so in real life. India which stands for an agricultural civilisation with its overtones of age-old agrarian economy has probably been the fittest place for providing a story to a spell-bound audience who time and again comeforward to hear either recitation of passages from epics like *The Ramayan* and *The Mahabharata* or narration of some interesting story or incident made by a qualified orator. In *The Guide* one finds an artistic juxtaposition of double narratives that highlight the beauty of the novel, either Narayan narrating the story of the guide or Raju narrating his own story before Velan. In any case there have been patient listeners. Velan is supposed to be the most patient listener so far created by the author, and the readers might be identified with millions of rural listeners of any episode narrated by Narayan or any Indian story-teller. That is why the author considers himself as purely a story teller in one of the interviews made by the correspondent of *India Today* mentioned earlier.
The talkative man who is attempting to establish himself as a journalist as such, exposes himself to all sorts of situations and characters because they provide him with the opportunities of coming in direct contact with a crisis in one's life or surrounding which is in fact a part of the journalist's life. Reminiscences of Narayan's own attempt to become a journalist when he was editing a journal entitled Indian Thought in Mysore or the eventual portrayals of a set of journalists like Mr. Sampath and Srinivas in Mr. Sampath or Nataraj in The Man eater of Melgud: have in fact been a kind of pretext for the author in losing no chance to come in contact with a crisis emerging in some one's life or milieu. Mr. Sampath of the novel is an off-shoot of the real Mr. Sampath the author himself did come across in his venture to edit the periodical.

Thus the revelation of TM or Talkative Man as a journalist possesses sociocultural relevance in a growing milieu of post-Independence India where the necessity of comprehending the ethos of one's life is a factor of prime importance and this a journalist alone could do better than any of his other professional counterparts. His mode of narration seems to be quite absorbing or to have created a purely fictitious effect despite revealing a truth of life. Yet would not one agree with the universal approval of the proposition: truth is stranger than fiction?
Taking such accounts into consideration, one may come to conclude that the talkative man is treated more as a symbol of interactions taking place in day to day life in society than a mere human phenomenon. He assumes a characteristic flatness of both, an intellectual observer of characters and incidents and an occasional partaker of various incidents that hem him in. Probably for this reason the social-analyst author feels that there is no need of giving his name since he is as such reputed as an outstanding talker or a friend to Malgudian population than anybody having a proper noun for his identity. Besides the necessity of calling him TM or talkative man receives a universal recognition for the fact that the ethos of the man seems to have assumed more significance than the man himself, unlike of course Auden´s version of the Unknown citizen as depicted by the poet. Unlike the latter who lives or dies unknown in a totalitarian complex devoid of any individual freedom, the talkative man is the most sociable and well-known personality in Malgudi who sincerely tries to sort out any difficulty that befalls a person. He is infact the representative of an inner sanctity that is lacking in a materialistic world in modern times. In Talkative Man he stands for restoring order in a world of disorder, a balancing factor that singularly moves to foil any attempt made by the pluralised forces of material or sensual intrusions that keep on annihilating the basic foundation of a sacred social life.
Coming to the novel one witnesses how the talkative man is preparing as usual to narrate an interesting incident before Verma, his friend and owner of the Boardless hotel, another flat character like TM himself or Velan in *The Guide*. Once while entering into the Town hall library the talkative man is introduced by the old librarian to Dr. Rann who has just dropped in. The intruder dressed in a blue suit, tie or shining shoes, does not quite impress him. The attire or look of the stranger creates a kind of resentment in the mind of the busy journalist. His blonde hair or greenish blue eyes assert a negative aspect of his personality. He is not a foreigner though he seems to be so outwardly. Perhaps he is of a quite doubtful origin, might have been a bastard child of some British or French soldier camping in the past in a southernmost village or unlawfully mixing with the native people. As discovered by TM he might have changed his name from Rangan to Dr. Rann, a camouflage that has time and again enabled him to have an identity of his own in roaming about here and there around the world. He says he has just come from Timbuctoo, a promising urban complex on the African West coast to the quiet Indian town of Malgudi, which he takes as an ideal spot for completing a report on the data he has collected on a United Nation’s Project. He is also busy in writing a book on his project that he intends to finish in Malgudi itself which he says is the ideal venue for doing any written or dissertation work. But his instant problem is that of a suitable accommodation for
setting up in his task, which an unhygienic Railway waiting room cannot provide him where he has spent already three days! On being enquired by TM about how long he might stay, the imposing intruder says he might stay till his work, a part of the project, is completed,

"I have to make a field study, collate and organise my material and write. I have found some rare reference volumes in the stockroom of the Town Hall Library - Some early 19th Century Planters’ experiences and their problems which give me priceless data for my study-----".

The narrator probably would have treated the intrusion of Rann differently had the station master himself tackled the situation. But the threatening made by the man in blue suit that he is going to complain against the pitiable conditions of the waiting room before the authorities has cowed down the old man. He most pathetically appeals to TM to come to his rescue on finding out some accommodation for the intruder somewhere in the town and as usual the eversociable TM cannot remain indifferent to such an appeal. He himself arranges an auto-rickshaw, takes Rann to various places which the latter flatly rejects as most unsuitable ones for his accommodation and finally he has no choice left other than adjusting him in his own house at Kabir street. TM who by nature involves himself with all kinds of men and their affairs in life infact is
dragged by the station master to take charge of the man. Nevertheless he has got a chance to give an impression of the Timbuctoo scholar that finds ample coverage in some journal of all-India circulation. TM sums up in his agreeable observation of the man,

He has come on a vital project on behalf of the U. N. and it's an honour for Malgudi that he should choose to work here. 60

The term 'project' like other terms and words used by the author, such as 'three piece suit', 'wardrobe trunk' or 'olive-green shorts' might have been used in the novel in an economic context. Against an inordinate display of economic motive on the part of various organisations in national or international spheres people with a little drive for taking up a work or a project have necessarily got in their minds the desire to achieve a material end—be it an academic pursuit as initiated by Rann or an assignment of any other type.

On hearing from Dr. Rann that he drops in at Malgudi in course of a United Nations Project mission, the reaction of the talkative man is that of a negative response:

Project itself is a self contained phrase and may or may not be capable of elaboration. I come across the phrase in
The very utterance that he has come on a project quite mystifies the nature of the intruder. TM comes to conclude that better his quest should remain as it is, no more query should be made about him beyond the self-introduction made by the latter as being a research scholar. Yet another problem now comes up. TM is requested by the editor of the same journal to send a copy of the Timbuctoo man’s photograph and he just could not get one from him. The introvert and reticent guest, almost confined to his room whenever he is at home, cleverly avoids to give any of his photographs on the plea of academic preoccupations. Thus TM talks to Jayaraj, the photographer, to exploit a chance of taking Rann’s snap without the latter’s knowledge while standing in front of a handicraft shop and they both succeed in getting it taken at the right moment. The sudden invitation or visit to a handicraft shop the imposing sort of scholar just cannot avoid, for he himself has hinted at his profound interest in things of that sort—a trap which ironically catches him with his duplicity that keeps him mystified till date.

The clouds of confusion or duplicity maintained by him almost fizzle out when Lady Commandant Sarasa arrives from Delhi informing the journalist that she has come to take Rann, her husband, back home. A large and dark complexioned woman in

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jeans and T-shirt occupying the same Railway waiting room, she narrates how she came across the snap of her husband in newspaper that enabled her to land here. She is infact eager to know where he is and wishes to meet him. She says that she is infact his wife,

Perhaps the only one wedded to him in front of the holy fire at a temple. 62

Her consistent references to Rann as a reckless philanderer make TM quite stunned. On the otherhand he also does not disclose where at present Rann has been putting up, except that he had met him in the Library for a few minutes that had prompted him to identify him as a scholar. No other information about him he infact carries with himself. The TM is undoubtedly a versatile planner of his present or future way of actions, a person of strong common sense with which he might successfully get rid of a confrontation with any one. Cleverly adjusting with a situation with the desirable alertness of a secret agent in any crime thriller he just withdraws from her, backs home and informs Rann of her arrival.

An unexpected reversal of situation follows. Rann who at once gets restless on hearing the news attempts to manage the situation with all his shrewdness just pretending to dismiss her from his mind. The TM maintains a dramatic equilibrium in action
while trying to manage the situation. He neither drops any hint before Rann about his knowledge of the identity of Commandant Sarasa or the purpose of her visit, nor he discloses any information to her about the existence or presence of her husband at Malgudi, thereby making his own spheres of a 'human' investigation free of any doubt. He is stable in making enquiries about the truth of the matter yet never leaves any scope for the two ends meeting one another.

This in fact sounds as part of a thrilling experience depicted in a detective novel but from the point of view of a sociological change this is significant. A person who tries to analyse the crux of the two contrary situations—the eagerness for tracing out an absconded husband, and the possible confrontation with a wife—is supposed to remain patient and far sighted, otherwise he may not be able to arrive at a proper conclusion. The TM seems to emerge as a speculator in the sociological sense of the term. A speculator alone, in this context, can take up a 'human' investigation, not others. In current times when the ultramodern or permissive societies tend to encourage the philanderer husbands to roam about in carrying out their evil designs, they constitute by themselves a category of rentiers for whom, sociologically speaking, lady killing or womanising becomes an accepted pattern of existence. The curiosity of TM to know the secrets of Rann's life and the clever way the latter contrives to carry on his womanization
campaign, move in parallel direction with each other for sometime: it is just like the speculator waiting for the right moment to foil any kind of manipulation made by a self-styled rentier.

On hearing from TM that the strange woman might go away by train any time, Rann definitely feels relieved and resumes his normal outings. Yet one day when incidentally he is away, she arrives at TM's place and unfolds the episode of her association with Rann till they come to be separated. As a prelude to her narration she remarks with a tone of self-pity how husband-hunting is a fatiguing business....

She narrates how she met him during her college days when he was coming to her father's place as an errand boy busy in delivering or collecting magazines. The friendship that grew between them was converted to love, the attachment became almost a novel experience when in the Museum he used to describe a certain object in a charming voice. She being a college-goer got attracted to him and finally they planned to marry. Inspite of the strict surveillance of her parents they eloped to a temple on the outskirt of the city, got married through expected Vedic rites performed by a priest, settled down as husband and wife somewhere in an out-house, while each working to earn a livelihood. Yet there were complications, Rann was arrested on the charge of abduction, she was brought home, was compelled
to give him up, legal steps taken from time to time to invalidate such a marriage as she was not yet eighteen at that time, and as such much humiliations ensued.

But the cunning Rann was able to prove that she was eighteen years three hours old at the time of their wedding and a major who could decide her own life partner. The court declared them both as married and she went to stay with him again. But he had strangely undergone a change of personality, looking quite serious and indifferent in all matters. In course of their settled conjugal life came his most surreptitious departure, all efforts of the lady to trace him out ended in vain and at present she apprehends the same story might be repeated, she might go back home empty-handed! As she concludes:

"God only knows what he called himself now. I seemed to have lost him forever." 64

Probably to trace out her absconded husband, for whom she at least has little soft-corner, she joined the Home Guards and became a Commandant: a prerogative to take charge of any situation that might help her to find him or finally to track him down. However the narration of the woman prior to her departure might have sounded fabulous to TM or any sensible listener with whom there is no instant clue left to confirm the
same. The academic discussion made by the scholar about the possible spreading out of a venomous weed does not give any chance to the journalist to know anything more, yet the occasion comes off before-long that reveals the man behind the masque. The meeting between Rann and Girija, the grand daughter of the old Librarian, who carries food for her grandfather every afternoon, begins a more interesting serial. The meeting is soon followed by an intense emotional attachment between both, the veteran calculating philanderer and the curious innocent teen-ager. While explaining something to her on the topography of Timbuctoo, as TM observes, however

\[\text{the girl was relishing the smell of the after shave lotion and hair cream, which I suspected, made him irresistible to women.}\]

The subsequent reports given by Gundu Rao, the horticulturist, Nataraj, the Manager of Royal theatre, or Jayaraj, the photographer rather confirm the worst suspicion of TM. All agree unanimously that the wanderer-trickster has already cast his spell on the girl. They meet not only in secret faraway spots but the girl returns home late in the evening from college. The probing mind of the host-journalist tries to find out more evidence to justify a query and it eventually succeeds. One day while feeling uneasy over the matter he takes the liberty of rushing into Rann’s chamber and discovers a handful of letters of which
only two were addressed to Rann, the others were an assortment of names—Ashok, Naren, D'Cruz, John, Adam, Shankar, Sridhar, Singh and Iqbal and what not there was a common feature in every letter— the cry of desertion.

There remains no doubt in TM's mind that the narration of Sarasa is an authentic version of Rann's duplicity. Like the venomous weed mentioned at an academic discussion, the symbolic human specimen himself is attempting to regenerate seeds of a total degeneration that might crush the basis of human civilisation in no time! 'On the plea of carrying on his project he only makes a projection of his hidden self somewhere in a journal written from time to time:

"My project is all important to me. I am prepared to abandon everything and runaway if it is interrupted. Again and again I seem to fall into the same trap like a brainless rat."  

The piece of composition in the journal, like its composer himself, possesses the trend of an unsuspected duplicity where in the means is only mentioned not the end—probably his scholarly whereabouts concentrate only on one motivation that is lady killing. This way he seems to appear as a worse counterpart of Ramani, Sampath or Mali. Ramani flirts with one which to some extent is a psychological necessity to make up for
what he exactly misses in Savitri, Sampath justifies having two 
wives, one at home and another in the sphere of profession more 
or less for the same reason his predecessor is hinting at, and 
Mali develops a spirit of womanisation or alcohol addiction 
with whom Grace has no option but to ‘pass for’ as his wife.

Yet in case of Rann, it is a return to savagery. He might 
have deserted a number of women on using them merely as tools of 
sensual pleasures or might have fathered a good many orphans, 
and at present his insatiable lust for exploiting the virginity 
of the teenager Malgudi girl, who is practically of his 
daughter’s age, is on the brink of finding out a strategic 
out-let! the highest kind of perversion is so placidly sealed 
under an academic pretentiousness that ordinary people may not 
easily find out an antidote for it. Evidences of what the 
horticulturist and others say soon come to limelight. Rann not 
only makes casual remarks in support of Girija’s ability to 
undergo some educational training programme away from ‘a 
back-wood’ area-like Malgudi, but the references made to the 
international scholar as being a very simple man by the grand 
parents of Girija are enough for TM to comprehend as to what 
extent ‘the Blighter’ or ‘the Demon Grass’ has’ spread out its 
root! The essence of Rann’s research work on ‘Futurology’ as he 
calls it, is not a series of data he has collected from books 
alone,’it is in fact an excuse for how strategically he is 
planning to escape with Girija.

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In the final phase of his narration the talkative man comes to assume the role of a savior or speculator. He swears to protect the girl and get the philanderer trapped. A meeting is organised by the Lotus Club where Rann is invited along with other dignitaries to speak on Futurology, a brand new topic that might enlighten the gathering. The most sensational account of how the scholar has finalised to abscond with his fiancee provided by Gaffur, the taxi driver, is perhaps the most auspicious moment prior to which the plan of TM is wonderfully carried out. A telegram to this effect is sent to Sarasa to reach the venue of the meeting and wait outside. The meeting which lasts for unexpectedly longer time is followed by pandemonium created by a half-educated audience who get bored with contents of an academic lecture—even a few of them get scared to learn that 'the Giant Weed' might destroy the world including their children soon and ironically speaking it ends in utter confusion and chaos. Rann is virtually dragged into the vehicle waiting outside and is off for good from Malgudi. The philanderer is not merely caught by Sarasa who takes him back to Delhi, the teen-ager is brought back home from the shady Town Hall corridor, where she was waiting to elope with her most elusive aged partner—all this being worked out by TM, the savior of Malgudi who atleast could protect one prey from the clutches of the Blighter womaniser.
As in the other novels and narratives of the author peace comes back ultimately to his imaginary home-town. Here also a meaningful sociological possibility is chalked out by him in the midst of perverted realities. Like an uneasy silence following the death of Vasu, the maneater of Malgudi or calm descending over the place with the sweet-vendor's decision to leave home forever, there emanates a chastened quietness following a complete uprooting of the 'dreadful vegetation' that had almost threatened to outgrow the placid surface of Malgudi.

Yet order is not restored in Delhi. The aggressive twentieth-century 'Savitri' who so assiduously had taken back her 'Satyavan' from a public meeting place by dint of much hardship or strain, appears after a gap of six months again in Malgudi only to confirm that her Satyavan has disappeared once more. As per her narration they both inhabited a quite normal and happy life till the drama of separation was re-enacted, as ill-luck would have it, taking advantage of her official tour to Jaipur. He took a flight to Rome or somewhere with a woman, a missing nurse from Matilda's with whom he had again developed an extra marital adventure as part of his project without Sarasa's knowledge. Even if, as the lady commandant concludes, such frauds might land him in some prison one day, she is sure that she misses him from her life forever:
"God alone knows under how many names he goes about and how many passports he has manufactured. An expert, really, in his own field. Pray to God that someday he might be caught, at least for his passport frauds, and made to spend the rest of his life in some hellish prison. I've no hope of seeing him again." 68

The novel or the narration of TM ends with the catastrophic betrayal that befalls an ultra-modern Savitri possibly representing a cosmic cry of desertion. Here again the speculator fails in tracking the absconder down with his net, which implies that though at least partially he succeeds in eliminating the blighter grass growing upon the soil of Malgudi, he cannot wipe it out on a global scale. The macrocosm of the spread of evil is still threatening to outlive the campus of human civilisation and culture that indicates how the modern mankind have at present been on the brink of a catastrophic level of extinction! In a purely negative sense the flash backs adopted by commandant Sarasa refer to the genesis of a lady-killer who passes through a rotation of birth, growth, maturity and decline, respectively following a love-making between both sharing pleasures in each other's company, an elopement followed by a secret marriage or effort to settle down elsewhere, a complete change of personality owing to trial and punishment imposed by appropriate authorities and ultimately a duplicate role of a philanderer played by means of varied
mistaken identities, which more or less sum up a stage by stage evolution of the cyclic theory of sociological change. Every part of the wanderer's mono-action may be taken as a viable response to each decadent stage of a Westernised society the impact of which one seems to experience even in the peripheral corners of the Eastern world. The stage of decline is perhaps most articulately defined or demonstrated by the catalyst-author-cum-Talkative Man who probably is optimistic about a possible change that might descend upon a morally debased community of whom Rann is only an agent.

As an observer of Malgudi R.S.singh concludes,

that it is not yet ready to be as permissive as America is. Malgudi is a place symbol for the entire country, hence the whole world. 69

It obviously suggests how Narayan's Malgudi constitutes a society which is supposed to appear as more sacred than secular in sociological sense of the term. Notwithstanding an intrusion made by an introvert-yet-dynamic philosopher who attempts to convert it to a change-ready or a secular one, the society ultimately appears as a change resistant or a sacred one which is an antidote prescribed by Narayan himself. Thus Malgudi guarantees a world of possibility or a promise to come back to the level of conception following the highest kind of extinction
as experienced by people time and again, particularly in modern times. The rescue of Girija may only be made possible in a place like Malgudi, which is antithetical to the practices of permissiveness, and anticipates to a large extent that a collective initiative in the matter may be taken by a morally conscious population at present and also in future. Thus the interpretation of cyclic theory made in a rather negative manner is artistically infused into the probable come-back to a change resistant society that adds a meaningful orientation to the sociological changes as depicted in the novel. To conclude, the narrator and the actor are taken as one inalienable entity, the Talkative Man is Malgudi itself, forever associating himself with all sorts of men and their crises ultimately succeeding in keeping the intruder or the odd-man out.

A few shortstories may be discussed in economic context of sociological changes which of course may appear contrary to the self-introduction of the author as an entertainer. Yet literature aims to provide not merely a departure from the hard facts of existence, at the same time it lends to the readers’ mind how inseparable is one from the other. Narayan’s preoccupation is not always with the middle or even the lower
middle class society, one may witness a decisive departure to
the common man whose struggle for existence overtakes any other
occupation or interest in life, a struggle which perhaps is
non-economic. His common man as such cannot be grouped under
the category of the 'economic men' as quoted earlier but a
specimen through whom the author gives a more vivid picture of
the down-trodden Indians for whom economic security holds as
much of importance as their individual social existence.

Unlike Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharyya, who
meticulously provide a semi-Marxist analysis of a poverty-ridden
Indian society Narayan only tries to expose it as it is—poverty
of a farmer, a cart-driver, a lock-smith, a knife-sharpener, a
cobbler or even a junior accountant in some office forms only
the background wherein each of them carries on a routine
existence without very much brooding over an economic
inadequacy. This is probably the speciality of his works. The
attempt to have an economic security never puts a barricade
before one's quest for an identity of his own, which is inherent
in Narayan, the story-teller. Like the characters of Dickens or
Checkov his common men ultimately come to accept the cold facts
of life with a lingering warmth that perhaps keep them human.
Glimpses of such an ethos one may observe in _The Dark Room_ where
Mari the burglar-cum-locksmith and his wife Ponni take care of
Savitri on rescuing her from an attempt to commit suicide: no
where the couple are found to be brooding over an economic
backwardness whereupon they have reared themselves. They rather feed her, protect her, arrange to give her a menial job or help her come back home at last. The cart-man in Waiting for the Mahatma (1955) by way of providing a casual reply to Sriram says that he has always been twenty years old although at present he is a father of five sons and a grand son. As P.S. Sundaram observes, the cartman's reply

is not a caricature. 70

This is in fact the index of the age-old Indian riff-raff, who are true to life.

Mar i or the cartman may be taken as flat prototype of a milieu that has hardly changed in the economic context. Yet the inner joy or spirit of compromise which each of them maintains in their attitude to life, environs or a struggle for existence make them lovable and interesting to the readers. Velan of The Guide or Velan of The Axe, the home-tutor of Balu in The Financial Expert and others communicate a similar spirit of compromise with circumstance although they all belong to the class of commoners. Velan, the farmer, virtually confers upon Raju the title of Swami or a spiritual Guide. Velan, the gardener, transforms himself into an honest or devoted custodian of a family of plants reared by himself till the end, or the home-tutor provides all possible concessions though in a negative sense to Balu, the wayward son of his benefactor Margayya, the all powerful Secretary of the school.
All of them however, do not mind their humble socio-economic position and make a steady reconciliation with surroundings. They essentially lack in themselves the Marxist conception of an aggressive economic reform or a desire to release themselves from the clutches of class war, divisions of caste and untouchability, which constitute the spirit of the fiction of Anand and Bhattacharyya. Bakha, the untouchable in Anand’s story, or Kalo, the low-caste blacksmith in Bhattacharyya’s narrative, strive to confirm their identity in a malevolent socio-economic set up. On the contrary, the humble and the down-trodden in Narayan are in no way involved with such gimmicks, they naturally remain a part of the socio-economic set up as such thrust upon them through which they try to establish a kind of attachment to the environment. While the common men in the former prefer to analyse before they come to a point of decision, in Narayan they only opt for an acceptance, which offer to the readers a totally different aspect of sociological change in an economic context.

A horse and two goats (1970) may be considered as a representative document of a rural society in which, as discussed earlier, a simpleton maintaining an ever-dwindling flock of sheep and goats is the main character. His existence in a world of give-and-take is as oblivious as Kritam, his most insignificant hamlet in south India. Yet Muni, the poorest of the flock owners, living in rural set-up, is an agent of
complacence in his own lot. With the advance of years a flock
of forty sheep and goats is now reduced to a stock of only two
goats, all skin and bones, whom he drives to the high way two
miles away, early morning. He even does not fully remember how
his days of prosperity had disappeared with the passage of time:

Some pestilence afflicted his cattle (he
could of course guess who had laid his animals
under a curse), and even the friendly butcher
would not touch one at half the price---------
and now here he was left with the two scraggy
creatures .

Thus he may probably carry on his routine existence if some one
took away these goats. His wife's taunting remarks that she
would not be able to prepare any food for him unless he got the
necessary stuff, drags him to a local shopman who often spares
to part with a few stuff on credit depending upon his mood or
situation.

Perhaps it leaves no mark of protest or humiliation in him-
a dominating second wife or an aggressive shopman is what a
peasant has learnt to tolerate as parts of his routine
existence. He is resonably optimistic in his exercise of utmost
patience, for he knows the lady herself would find out some
means to prepare the specific item asked for if only he remained
mute, and the shopman would not entirely send him back empty

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handed. Muni, who does not know what exactly is his age and assures his creditor to pay him back as soon as his married daughter sends him money, is an unchanging phenomenon by himself, without showing the least reaction or botheration in a moment of crisis. His poverty is wellknown, the best thing in such situation is to follow a kind of silence so that he could blissfully withdraw into a world of contemplation of his own on the highway near which the two goats might keep on grazing till sunset.

As usual he occupies the pedestal upon which the clay statue of a horse with a warrior near it is grandly set up: he could not merely protect himself from the scorching rays of the sun here, but could also get a chance of seeing the vehicles passing on the highway. The pedestal makes him forget his lot by way of temporarily providing him with a sense of belongingness to some other world, reminiscent of Velan’s association with the garden in The Axe. Muni, who had married his wife when they both were children or who could not have a progeny to live by, concludes that reasonably he is deprived of prosperity in his life as he has no issue to call his own.

The personal reflections of the old man come to a point of total disruption when a red-faced foreigner gets down from a yellow vehicle and enquires if a gas-station is there at hand. On finding out the statue of the horse he simply gets
overwhelmed with joy, walks around it and most courteously greets the lonely occupant of the pedestal almost mistaking him as its owner.

The conversation that ensues between Muni and the New york man is interesting. It is a series of dialogues between an English speaking intruder and a Tamil speaking rustic, the one who is unable to understand the other and vice-versa successively leading to an enigmatic communication gap which is the sociological paradox conveyed by the author. The greetings suggested by the red-faced man make the oldman conclude that probably the former wants a self-introduction of Mum and as such he gives a concise introduction of himself, his two goats and the villagers who are mostly gossip-mongers. Next when the new-comer hands over a card mentioning that he comes from New York the rustic takes him as a policeman who might have come to arrest him on charges of murder and swearing his deep faith in God he pleads complete ignorance on his part of some murder committed recently near his hamlet. Finally when the foreigner sets his eye upon the statue of the horse once again and enquires to know when it was exactly made Muni feels he is finally caught by one who has come to take him away being misled by the native gossip-mongers.

The communication that passes between them ends merely as a communication failure which is in fact what the author ironically
attempts to project in the story. Such a failure or discrepancy in mutual understanding seems to focuss the diversities of sociological interests provided by them both. The formal courtesies shown by the foreigner accompanied by a foreign language is only a means to an end. He has initiated a plan to take away the beautiful status on payment of some cash to its 'supposed' architect or owner. On the contrary, the native simpleton tries to divert the intruder's mind by means of providing an unnecessary account of his childhood association with an uncle or a priest who could detect a thief by supernatural means. The Westerner whose sole concern is a kind of instant commercial agreement that might help him detach or take away the statue, tries his utmost to keep Muni in good humour, for he apprehends the communication- gap instils an unreasonable fear in the old man.

On being repeatedly asked if he is willing to sell away the statue, Muni atleast realises that the intruder is enquiring something connected with it and goes on describing how it has been there since time immemorial and so on and so forth. He is relieved to find that the subject of the talk is the statue, not anything like murder or arrest. The two separate planes of human experience, one that devises a talk for extracting an ultimate material benefit and the other that presents a monologue or a kind of excuse mentioning as such his ignorance in the matter connected with the mishap, respectively provide
the readers with the real and the ideational stages of sociological changes implied in the narrative. A review of the eloquent encounter might disclose before the readers how the enquirer belongs to a real world of economic transactions. He has stopped here not without a motive, as he explains, and as such he is genuinely interested to take away the statue. The ignorant flock-owner whose English vocabulary does not exceed only two monosyllables 'yes' or 'no', and which he has repeatedly used without knowing where and how to use them explains his own lot in an irrelevant manner either combining fear with awe or justifying his rustic innocence which creates a parallel world of ideational values. The juxtaposition of the real and ideational is the basis of a sociological change that tends to operate here purely on a give-and-take-economic context.

Besides one may witness how each is fast becoming a monologist before the other: the self-interest or self-introduction is explained in the form of an unimpeded eloquence typical of its own. On the otherhand when speech or eloquence fails to convince the simpleton, the shrewd foreigner makes use of gestures, probably realising that gestures are better substitutes for speeches that might express the give-and-take method more articulately than its counterpart. The shift from speech to gesture on the part of the red-faced man is symbolic of the economic motive with which the western
commercial experts virtually pounce upon their eastern Counterparts. The foreigner, unable to convince Muni by dint of his words,

seized his shoulder and said desperately, 'Is there no one, absolutely no one here, to translate for me?'---- the stranger almost pinioned Muni's back to the statue and asked 'Is this statue yours? Why don't you sell it to me?' 

The gesture not merely paves the way for expediting the foreigner's action-bound programme, it also could restore a sense of relief in Muni's mind, which speech had failed to do. The ideational onlooker goes on narrating how at the end of Kali Yuga Almighty God will arrive in the shape of a horse called 'Kalki' - might be, the horse installed here is Kalki himself- and will destroy the wicked and save the noble ones. And while he goes on narrating the ten Incarnations of Lord Vishnu, simultaneously a more relaxed and quite-at-home foreigner keeps on assuring the other how he will preserve the rare statue as a prize possession at his American residence despite a mild protest from his betterhalf. It is not alone the West is confronting the East here which one notices in God and the Cobbler or The Vendor of Sweets discussed earlier, it is two self-complete human agents belonging to altogether two different environs of life that come in contact with one
another. The tone gradually gets softened. While Muni catches a philosophical glimpse of the Ramayan or the Mahabharata in his flow of talk which seems to have a natural charm of its own, the intruder feels he is emotionally entertained by the talk:

"The Tamil that Muni spoke was stimulating even as a pure sound, and the foreigner listened with fascination". 73

He not merely admires the eloquence of the rustic made in Tamil, to make himself more intimate with the situation created by Muni he listens to him for sometime without understanding a single syllable of his mother tongue. He perhaps lends his ear to him as an awe-stuck listener with a view to preparing himself for transacting his business at any moment, which on his part is a kind of compromise with the sound and not the sense conveyed in Muni's flow of talk. Nevertheless he keeps on telling him how he has got a station wagon wherein with Muni's assistance he could push the back seat and keep the statue. The language of business appears to have been more precise and easy than the syllables conveyed in English or Tamil language. Even if each fails to understand the other by dint of a language, a definite interaction has followed between both of them, an interaction which is in fact reciprocal since the foreigner tactfully drew him closer to the statue with an eye of enquiry. The misunderstanding created in a literal sense by a flow of talk perhaps ironically finds a response or understanding on the
part of the business or both while making a final attempt to detach the statue from its place:

"when the tenth avatar comes, do you know where you and I will be?" asked the oldman.

'Lend me a hand and I can lift off the horse from its pedestal after picking out the cement at the joints. We can do anything if, we have a basis of understanding'

At this stage the mutual mystification was complete, and there was no need even to carry on a guessing game at the meaning of words.

The parallel references to the myth of Kalki avatar and the instant reality of a business transaction form the climax of the story: a level of total enstrangement is reached thus leading to a kind of understanding never accorded earlier! The foreigner hands over a hundred-rupee-note to the bewildered rustic who first of all concludes that the former is asking for changing the currency-note which is beyond his limits. However in the subsequent stage the old man concludes that the former is straightaway offering him the currency-note in exchange of the two goats whom he patted a few minutes ago as a part of his offer or wants to take away in his vehicle. Thus happily by accepting the money he goes off in a hurry wishing probably how a life-long dream is going to be fulfilled!
The foreigner, assuming that the rustic has left temporarily to ask somebody to come and help him detaching the statue waits for sometime and finally with the help of others gets the work done and drives away. The scraggy ones are found to be grazing still without being least perturbed by the mysterious business transactions that followed between their master and the stranger. Finally the ignoramus receives a jolt at home from his wife accusing him as a thief for she could not comprehend who could give him so much of cash in exchange of two miserable goats. The confusion of the half-wit rustic is worse confounded while he discovers the mute animals coming back to his door again thus mystifying the give-and-take relationship more and more!

A horse and two goats discloses a finishing touch where the ignoramus in a negative sense is virtually put to the debit side in a world of inverted economic motives, not the red-faced trickster who manages to carry the statue off with himself being on the credit side. Muni is not supposed to receive anything in terms of cash, for he is neither the architect nor the owner of the statue and if he is made to receive the same it is almost a natural experience in a world of most unnatural or uncalled-for transactions. Whether he is going to face any police action, which is the apprehension of his wife only, is immaterial to mention on the part of the social philosopher-author who strongly believes that the uncommon innocence or goodness of the
peasant would ultimately get over the limit of a possible punishment, for Muni possesses in himself the inherent honesty or integrity typical of the Indian rustic. Hence the latter may not lose anything morally and materially in the long run. The story that keeps at par with references to habitual burglary of rare images or statues attempted by anonymous intruders in the Indian temples in recent times, chalks out to what level crude economic motive could manifest itself. Like diamond, gold or drugs even the splendours of architecture made in past or preserved in the Oriental temples are smuggled out abroad and ironically enough the burglars of international level manage to slip away uncaught with their targets unlike the innocent peasant.

The next story that highlights another disillusioned experience in a world of give-and-take is The Edge (1983). Like the burglary-placidly committed by the foreigner whose evil impact cannot be so easily felt by an ignoramus till the horse statue is carried off in reality and the two goats return home again— the present narrative unfolds another tug-of-war between modern and traditional values in connection with the so-called population-control project. As a result of the popular expansion of mass media, which is a part of economic drive encouraged by Governments and authorities of various kinds, a lot of propaganda is being made for accepting devices for instant control of birthrates in recent times. The Edge may be
considered as a typical oriental response to the methods hurriedly applied by the authorities who have in fact been more eager to secure a publicity for themselves than trying to reasonably convince or treat the illiterates of the sub-continent.

Like Muni here also one notices a common man finding himself trapped by the tricky agents of the project. Ranga, a wheel-grinder or knives-and-scissors-sharpener as one might call him, moves from place to place for earning a livelihood. A commoner who even does not know his exact age Ranga takes pride in telling a customer how in the past he could even sharpen the sword of a Maharaja or how he has been engaged in this job since his teens. Yet his is the most patient or persuasive kind of profession and never does he miss a chance of trying to overcome the lethargy or indifference of his customers, mostly barbers and tailors while passing on the street. Often by way of comparing his skill with that of a competitor who holds a hand-grinder he does not spare to make a bantering remark,

"You must not think that any one and every one could handle steel. Most of these fellows don't know the difference between a knife head and a hammerhead". 75

At the same time also he cleverly adjusts with a situation he comes across. If some one points out a deficiency in
executing a piece of work, he avoids to argue or makes an instant reference to the poor quality of the metal he was working with. By way of managing to arrange his food in exchange of one rupee only from some restaurant he goes back to a corner of an abandoned building where he rests for the night. Yet the busy schedule of Ranga in the town far off from his village home does not deprive him of the association of a pleasant life at home and often he recalls his growing intelligent daughter who, despite her mother's protest, is studying well. He recalls too in his spare hours how he had become a toddy-addict in his village under the spell of the local blacksmith who had made him so out of envy. The result was that he was beaten by his wife, gave up his association with the blacksmith with whom he was working, moved from door to door as a peripatetic sharpener which of course did not improve his lot. Hence his decision to come away to Malgudi to try his luck the moments of which he could not forget:

"Oh, what a place, it is like the world of God Indra that our pundits describe, You find everything there------- countless numbers of peeling and slicing knives and other instruments in every home, enough work there for two hundred grinders like me; and the wages are liberal, they are noble and generous who live there, unlike the petty ones we have around us here".76
Yet he could not convince his wife of shifting his family to a town on locking up the village home. The forces of an economic expansion or urbanisation that had a radical effect on Ranga's mind did not have the least impact on his wife's. She all the time preferred to stay at home sparing herself to do even menial jobs in the Big house of the village. Thus he has adjusted in staying apart from home for the sake of earning a little more money that may keep him and his family in a little more comfort or atleast help him educating his daughter which is infact the sole aim of the struggling father. In course of time on the advice of her school master he not merely sends her to a better school, her zeal in studies draws him closer to herself during Ranga's visit to his village home once a month.

In a world of give and take a common man's dream of sending a little more cash home by way of earning something away from home is perhaps the story of any Tom, Dick or Harry. Yet at times a dream becomes a little more excessive which normally a wife tries her utmost to restrain by way of reminding him to become more alert or more practical in life save which it may end in fiasco. Like A horse and two goats where the peasant's wife seems to have been more realistic and down-to-earth in her estimate of a routine existence than the peasant, here also Ranga's wife takes the upper hand in matters of home management. Despite her strong dislike for her daughter being so much encouraged to have a higher education, a part of her own
orthodox up-bringing typical of economically back-ward Indian women, she virtually does not allow Ranga to stay more than a couple of days at home. She bursts out in a rage if her husband is seen ruminating over some thought of the future,

"What are you muttering to yourself?" She asked pugnaciously. 'Say it aloud'.

'There is wisdom in what you say, you think ahead', he replied, and she felt pleased at the compliment.

Yet her mood is often violent, her temper uncertain. She would not permit him to over-stay at home lest that should abruptly end an income for the householder. Hence the wheel grinder comes back to his venue of work. As Narayan observes in most of his narratives the woman remains not only a shock-absorber, but at the same time a source of maintaining an equilibrium at economic matters raised in a household. She becomes aggressive or even difficult to cope with as Ranga refers to his wife, but it is she who keeps the things going with her spirit of adjustment or resilience.

Raman's aunt in The Painter of Signs, Sita in The World of Nagaraj or Raju's mother in The Guide are instances of exemplary Indian womanhood who with a characteristic philosophical flatness of their own even never hesitate to manage the
household on the face of an economic crisis. In them all a strong sense of religious determinism is always present which usually gets over the limits of an economic determinism. Raman's aunt tidies up everything in storeroom before leaving for Kashi for she knows the inexperienced nephew cannot look after himself properly. Sita, the wife of Nagaraj, not only looks after the needs of her husband's eccentric elder brother whenever he comes to town on work, most urgrudgingly and reticently she supervises the economic or domestic comfort of a newly-married couple without expecting any cooperation from either of them. Raju's mother in the same way takes instant charge of the economic management following her husband's untimely death. In all of them a sense of dutifulness in fact prevails upon one's desire to observe economy in affairs of home management. In Narayans's short stories the readers are sure to get the same portrayal of a prototype female who happens to assert her position no less than her husband.

Yet the male in a back-ward Indian household is often exposing himself to a world of elusiveness or extrovertism that he comes across as parts of his social or professional life. Ranga, Like Muni, falls a victim to a certain malevolent hand whom he follows blindly till the crucial moment of a self-realisation comes. During one of his return journeys to town, he does not get a bus following a long and impatient wait. Suddenly a stranger arriving in a car, readily gives him a lift.
to town or promises to provide him with thirty rupees straight along with good food and shelter for a day if only the rustic agrees to stay in a camp only for a night. The stranger seems to be unusually hospitable in his assurances made in first person plural, the colloquial manoeuvring of which Ranga cannot easily get through. He even promises that 'they' will give him a transistor radio if he only stays on. His words of placid surreptitiousness make the innocent knife-sharpener awe-stuck and he takes the man as a benign God that has probably descended upon earth as his rescuer! He mumbles to himself at such supernatural prospect of receiving so much of cash straight:

He seemed God like. Thirty rupees! Wages for ten days' hard work. He could give the money to his daughter to keep or spend as she liked, without any interference from her mother. He could also give her the radio.

The innocent and duty bound ignoramus like his counterpart in A horse and two goats even does not forget to ask him what for 'they' are going to give him thirty rupees! He has after all not brought his machine with himself! a sense of awe that he rears in himself since he got a lift or a supernatural offer gets redoubled when he comes to be interviewed by some respectable officer in another part of the camp. He mentions his name or an imaginary age prior to his narration of marrying twice in life. He says how, after the death of his first wife

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he married again but lost all six children before each of them was a year old. The seventh one only is alive, which is a daughter and she owes her survival only to the Grace of the Goddess on the hill. The girl is intelligent but her mother does not like her to continue her studies.

The narration although self-analytic and charged with deep feelings, holds up an ideational interest in the sociological sense, placed side by side with the habitual and indifferent enquiries made by the officer whose lieutenant has practically trapped him for a compulsory birth control surgery he is still unaware of—the ideational coming in clash with the real in widening the gyre of human relationship once again. The most commonplace ideational approach of the wheel-grinder has allalong been displayed since he was caught by the stranger on the highway for whom the receipt of thirty rupees is also a part of the ideational world of miracles which the Indian common folk as such anticipate to obtain from a supernatural source sometime in life. Such an ideational pre-occupation certainly goes against the calculus of the officer or the economic man’s choice of playing the game for personal gain, itself a part of sociological change in its true economic context. The mystic dual between mind and money, a fixed belief and an intrusion serves the background of the narrative which unlike A horse and two goats presents a more decisive turn of events in its immediate socio-cultural or economic context.
On lecturing the victim on a would-be operation, about how the Government desire a person should have only two children that alone could assure population control, the officer takes his thumb impression and makes all necessary preparations for sending him to an operation chamber. The ignoramus does not make any protest till he is made to lie down in the presence of a doctor and other assistants. At one stage his clothes are taken off and he is covered only with a white sheet of cloth:

He felt ashamed to be stripped thus, but bore it as perhaps an inevitable stage in his progress towards affluence. 79

Yet at the most submissive moment he suddenly remembers how his butcher-friend once used to tell him that Government was opening number of camps in the country where men and women were operated so that they would not have children any more. The instant realisation of a similar situation gets him scared, almost driven by a desperate force he violently gets up, gives a cry of utter helplessness and runs away. The ideational overtakes the real at last, any intention to trap a simpleton for the sake of securing publicity or recognition of a certain programme is most dramatically ruled out. Sociologically speaking the idea of implementing a universal level of population control by means of a hurried method of surgical operation being applied to the illiterate commonmen of India only implies how the specialists or experts
themselves are interested to improve their material lot. The population control programme, chalked out in the recent Five-year-plans, have added only superfluous dimensions to the objectives of birth-control mission in India where infact a proper training or education is more necessary to be imparted to the orthodox rural parents or couples than inflicting a force upon them to get compulsorily operated which has almost spread out like a disease among the body of planners, specialists or similar government men, who have been most astutely going on exploiting the under-privileged ones. The Edge is a meaningful summing up of the game of exploitation which is now going on in all spheres of an economically impoverished society. The gap between the ideational and the real is only getting itself widened in economic context of an environmental change.

Fortyfive a month (1964) is another instance of how the underprivileged class in contemporary society have to ultimately surrender before the affluent who have the power or authority to make the former dance as per their tune. Venkat Rao, a junior clerk has assured his daughter before coming to office that he would definitely take her to a film in the first show and accordingly he has not merely asked her to get ready by five in the evening, but he also mentally prepares himself to leave his desk sharp at five, come whatever may! He contemplates how much he has been neglecting home being over-busy now-a-days: after all what he has done for his wife and daughter till now? He has
not been able to spare any time for either of them, particularly the growing one, who is in fact to visit different places of interest for the sake of her own information and pleasure which unlike herself other children of her age might be availing under care and protection of their parents! He cannot provide even a single item of luxury to Shanta, a toy, dress or outing and it is because he is round-the-clock engaged in his office work! He feels furious with his office without a second thought:

For forty rupees a month they seemed to have purchased him outright.

He comes to his place of work, disposes of the usual stream of papers in time with an occasional insult from the boss if he is found to be incorrect in his scrutiny, which is the usual routine experience in an office. While leaving the desk at five or asking for the manager’s formal permission, he gets a treatment shockingly contrary to his normal expectation. Despite his appeal to the cold and calculating manager that he has an urgent piece of work he does not see a possibility of being spared: the most insecure moment in a clerk's life when his individual liberty is crushed under the wheel of bureaucratic bossism! The contemporary society of the sixties—when the story is written discloses how the so-called Indian bureaucrats never look to a personal difficulty of their subordinates who as such become victims of a senseless exercise
of authority. Venkat feels cowed down. The resolution to go home or take the child to an evening show still preoccupies his mind. His pitiable gestures offering an assurance that tomorrow he would surely rectify all two-hundred vouchers fall flat before the heartless manager and most miserably he comes back to his seat.

The clock sounds five-thirty. He resolves to back home at any cost. He prefers to die of starvation than serve here as a slave. Taking a sheet of paper he writes how he is prepared to tender his resignation right at the moment, for neither he has got any benefit mentally or materially though he has put in continuous labour in all these years. But the composition instantly fails to catch the manager’s notice who just mechanically keeps it on his pad and informs that he has recommended an increase of Venkat Rao’s monthly salary already, an increment of five rupees though the order is not yet passed. The piece of information appears like an oasis in a desert, the needy Venkat Rao takes his letter back making a plea that he was just applying for a casual leave tomorrow. The manager who cannot catch the plea says it is impossible to spare him for atleast the coming fortnight and almost sheepishly he comes back to his chair for a scrutiny of the vouchers. Around nine O’clock he returns home only to find that his child, tired of waiting for him, has fallen asleep at last.
The girl, who had finished her lessons at school before time and appealed to her teacher to allow her back home returned much earlier to dress herself up for accompanying her father. The enthusiastic little one had almost gone out of the house and waited hopelessly somewhere on a road and was finally brought back home by a neighbour's servant thus making an abrupt end to a helpless mission! The story ends with a sense of mock-heroic self-pity while Venkat Rao defines his utter insecurity as a care-taker of his progeny:

"I don't know if it is going to be possible for me to take her out at all—you see they are giving me an increment—' he wailed.

Of course one may observe how the protagonist who utterly failed to keep up a parental promise before an innocent kid, has adequately calmed down or intimidated himself before the manager of his office who promptly assures an increment of five rupees that the former is going to receive shortly. The socio-economically impoverished junior clerk prefers to accept the monotonous office-work at the cost of sacrificing a pleasure-trip with his child just because his struggle for survival in a complex world of give-and-take has thoroughly dissipated his moral strength as a house-holder or a father.
One might observe how a consistent tug of war between the moral and material interests in life in current Indian society has eventually wiped out what is in fact a true consciousness on the part of a person struggling for existence. Burdens or liabilities in lower middle-class families only transform human beings into mere dehumanised economic units who have absolutely no choice in life other than blindly accepting whatever way the authorities direct them to go through. Venkat Rao is exactly a prototype of these categories of people still flourishing in society in an intimate level of moral extinction even after four and half decades of Independence. In this connection he sharply differs from both Muni and Ranga. Muni being a simpleton at least feels triumphant that the foreigner is appreciating his narration of Indian epics which his wife does not, and Ranga being a rustic displays an act of intuition in making the most dramatic escape. But Venkat Rao does not have any scope for exercising an individual freedom or intuition because he is a town-bred and educated species constantly bound to an intellectual or moral slavery. When Muni and Ranga possess an ideational approach to values which ultimately might come to overcome the realities of economic maladjustment, in Venkat Rao's case one may find how the latter is coming to surrender his conscience or a sense of filial bondage for the sake of a mere increment, that may be identified as the triumph of realities over the ideational values in economic context of sociological change. To conclude, a lower middle-class employee
is one who could be purchased for the welfare of bureaucratic redtapism that is fast spreading in India since Independence. Venkat Rao remains a flat character purely in a negative sense for he is totally obliterated against an authoritarian set up of its kind without any chance of re-awakening unlike the commonmen in Narayan’s narratives.

Despite being a moral analyst who attempts to project the inertia of a tradition-bound society in all his novels and stories, Narayan has never failed to expose or illustrate the impact of a growing economy upon a sensitive middle-class population whose reactions are skillfully recorded in some of his works discussed in this chapter. The multiple national and international events like the two World Wars, freedom movement, famine in Bengal, Independence, partition or formation of a Government at the centre with a federal structure maintained between centre and the states followed by the tragic assassination of the Mahatma literally coincide with cultural or cross-cultural forces operating in an orthodox society, like breaking up of joint family system, introduction of love marriage or inter-caste marriage against a conservatively social, religious or family background, generation gaps, a steady emancipation of women as part of the nationalist struggle, attempts to remove untouchability or caste system. Such coincidence more or less get intensified with an ultra-modern way of exploitation or adoption of economic forces.
like westernisation, industrialisation and urbanisation of the age-old Indian society.

On the other hand the economic upsurge of a custom ridden society manifested in multiple installations as depicted in the body of his works like Englandia Insurance Company, Sunrise pictures or Zeny film industry, Truth printing press, The banner, Deposit scheme, co-operative societies, population control clinics, U.N. Projects on Futurology, Taxidermy, Novel writing computers and others keep on creating many a ripple over the placid surface of a contented Indian milieu. Yet such ripples fizzle out against a vast set of events that finally overcome the limits of a material self-interest. The ultimate triumph of the ideational over the real or the abstract over the concrete is precisely what the non-committed sociologist—author attempts to present before the readers in relation to economic context of a sociological change. Thus the empire of an economic man like Mr. Sampath or Margayya comes to an ultimate point of collapse, not the hovel of Muni the uneconomic counterpart. Muni may be poor, but he still has

vestiges of dignity and self-respect. 83

And this is possible, probably alone in India which Narayan seems to have accepted as a macrocosm of changing economy versus unchanging morals.
NOTES


6. Ibid, p 111.

7. Ibid, p.36.


9. Ibid, pp.75-76.


13. Ibid, p.43.


18. Ibid, p.159.


21. Ibid.


23. Ibid, p.68.

24. Ibid, p.89.


32. Ibid.
33. Ibid, p.179.
34. Ibid, p.209.
35. Ibid p.63.
37. Ibid, p.63.
40. Ibid, p.2.
41. Ibid, p.17.
44. Ibid, p.68.
45. Ibid, p.72.
46. Ibid, p.94.
49. Ibid, p.110.
50. Ibid, p.121.
51. Ibid, p.143.

52. Ibid, p.140.


55. Ibid, p.78.


59. Talkative Man (Mysore, Indian Thought, 1986) p.22.

60. Ibid, p.37.

61. Ibid, P.12.


63. Ibid, p.69.

64. Ibid, p.86.

65. Ibid, p.95.

66. Ibid, pp.102-103


68. Ibid, pp.143-144.


72. Ibid, p.17.

73. Ibid, p.18.

74. Ibid, p.23.


76. Ibid, p.208.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid, p.211.

79. Ibid, p.213.


81. Ibid, p.147.

82. Ibid.


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