CHAPTER III

R.K. NARAYAN

R.K. Narayan who forms one of the triads of Indo-English fiction along with Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand, is unlike Raja Rao, a prolific writer and unlike Anand an uncommitted writer in the sense that he is not deeply engrossed in the problems – social and political. Being a writer of the middle class and for the middle class as often complained, his fictional output does give lot of material in the study of the problem set out. He has come in for a lot of critical praise from Western critics like William Walsh and Graham Greene. A finesse characterises everything that he writes. "He has a deep feeling for the deprived, a grasp of the structure of the society and an extraordinary fluency of communication." While Raja Rao is a philosopher and Mulk Raj Anand a social reformer, R.K. Narayan is described as a novelist and a pure artist. This description almost sounds that he is neutral and gives the impression that he wrote novels for the sake of writing novels. The life that he describes is of the middle class, which at once suggests the pangs that this class is heir to. It is not a class where people can afford to be
unworried about money. At the same time, the lack of it contributes to the brutalisation of their lives. This exclusive concern for the middle class at the expense of the poor and the peasantry, has often attracted the attacks of the leftists. It is pointed out that when Mulk Raj Anand, a contemporary, is busy attacking social evils, Narayan retreats into his Malgudi— a small town where nothing extraordinary or sensational happens. Momentous issues are not debated and hair rising incidents do not take place. He probably knows the middle class best and so he writes about the trials and tribulations of the people of that class. But this is not to exonerate him. A truly sensitive artist can de class himself and widen his horizons. But he seems to have exploited one or two advantages that a picture of the middle class offers— the people are psychologically more active, their consciousness more vivid and harrowing. Hence the feeling that his novels are set in narrow or lower key and that they lack the largeness of canvas of life. Then, if one is to judge Narayan on what he has written, one often finds a comic surface existing above deeply serious depths. What distinguishes his fiction is a limpid style with a marvellous comic talent that looks out for human querness. He normally operate within the frame work of a family. His Malgudi is not shuttered in that it offers the writer enough material on the scale he wishes to write. It is as if he believes in doing small things brightly—with wit, charm and vision. His craftsmanship and versatality are acknowledged on all sides.
Rajeev Taranath says "Narayan's achievement could be described as the creative use of the ordinary." He even admits that such a criticism could mean one of the crippling limitations of a writer, but adds that the pictures drawn by Narayan are authentic. Nevertheless, satire which is his chosen medium and his comic vision of life, it is often felt, do not do justice to his genius. But, he is no hobby horse and hence, no purveyor of problems social, economic or political.

In spite of being exposed to English education, Narayan seems to hold that some of the beliefs which are dismissed today as superstition, do exist and it is not often that they are reinforced by personal experience. His extra-sensory experience seems to strengthen the belief that, there is, on the whole, a balance which ultimately asserts itself, no matter what the temporary disturbance to its equilibrium. Thus he seems to hold that human effort does not count for much, which to many, would sound pessimistic and hence untenable. Such a stance is admirably cloaked by the comic and ironical treatment that pervades his fiction.

span a literary career of about fifty years. I have selected *The Dark Room*, *The Painter of Signs* and *The Guide* for detailed study as they have a greater bearing on the problem of Man-Woman relationships.

(a) *The Dark Room* (1936) is one of the earliest works of Narayan. In one word, *The Dark Room* is the representative room to which women and wives are confined to, in the Indian society. The man-woman relationships interplay in the conventional frame of man being the arbiter of issues. Ramani and Savitri are characters that abound in the Indian society. To that extent, it could be termed a universal view of the place of woman in the society. Ramani is an employee of an Insurance Company with its headquarters at Madras. He is a bully and reduces his wife and children into submission. The wife mechanically undergoes the routine of catering to the tastes and temperament of Ramani, notwithstanding the perpetual tension that grips her until she decides to shake it off. She has her duty cut out - to wait on him at dinner so that he is fed according to his taste, welcome him on return from office on the dot and see him off while going to the office. Such a dull routine is by itself enough of a dark room for a woman in this country. But there is another dark room for her where she spends moments of tension, humiliation and hurt - a
room which she needs to frequent. In the very first chapter the dictator in Ramani celebrates his first assault when he says "Go and do any work in the kitchen you like, but leave the training of grown ups to me. It is none of a woman's business.". Obviously there are men's business and women's business. This is when Savitri pleads that Babu is running fever and hence may not attend school. He proudly says:

"What a beautiful wife! Would rather starve than precede her husband! You are like some of the women in our ancient books."

Naturally the better for it, is what is meant. He adds:

"You have a lot to learn yet. You are still a child, perhaps a precocious child, but a child all the same."

The patronising tone never flags, and when it does, it does only to become rasping and raucous. He has an assured self-importance and enjoys his role as a husband, often being solicitous about her comfort in the cinema. Taking her to a cinema is a rare courtesy he offers Savitri. Ramani is proud to have possessed her. A highly irritable Ramani chides Savitri for something done and for something not done. Not only Savitri, but even children adjust themselves to his shifting moods. They are kept constantly on tenter hooks, breathlessly waiting—if the worst should happen. Ramani does not lack in notions of child rearing. He believes in being tough with children and it is rarely that he ever pets his children. Only when Savitri leaves him, do they find a
The Navaratri festival brings in its wake, misery for Savitri. It all started because of Babu's enthusiasm in fixing the lights with connections going wrong with the fuse blowing out. Ramani is upset at finding the house dark on his return and thrashes Babu for meddling with the lights. Savitri is cut up, but helpless. Nevertheless, she managed to ask him why he was beating Babu. Ramani considers this affection a sentimental performance and is unworried that Savitri should forego food and retreat to the dark room. Children implore her to return, but Ramani exhibits cold indifference to Savitri's way of protest. He is even prepared to get sweets if Savitri should still be sulking in her dark room. He would even be tender to Ranga the cook, at the expense of Savitri, if only to demonstrate that he was least affected by these antics. Janamma, one of the few friends of Savitri, can discuss with also takes sides with Ramani and says that whatever a husband says or does is right. She also gives an account of how her grandmother had to suffer three concubines in her life, thereby preaching patience. Evidently, Savitri should be much better placed in that she has not had the misfortune of seeing a concubine! But that too is not far to seek.

The novel takes a dramatic turn when women probationers are to be interviewed and Ramani is given the job of recommending
candidates. He fancies Shanta Bai, the last applicant and evinces more than normal interest as he likes her pluck. Shanta Bai is apparently not impressed with the theory that education will improve the position of women. More especially in her case, as she is unemployed with a B.A., degree. She says:

'It is all nonsense to say that women's salvation lies in education. It does not improve their lot one bit; it leaves them as badly unemployed as men.'

A highly impressed Ramani sets about doing everything to help this lady who had left her drunkard husband. He acts fast and not Shanta Bai needs to stay at hotel any more, but finds herself settled in the lumber room, now cleared for her by Ramani. He even makes a sacrifice of the spare cot at home pleading rather pleasantly with Savitri for one. He also feels that women are as good as men and must be treated accordingly. Ironically, his sympathy for her swells and thinks that men deserve to be whipped for treating Shanta badly. His visits become frequent and Ramani finds himself dancing to her tunes.

The news of this affair reaches Savitri and the crisis develops quickly. Savitri is hurt where any woman is most vulnerable—sharing a husband with another woman. Even her friend confirms having seen Ramani with Shanta Bai in the cinema. Savitri decides to shake it off, after initial vacillation and attempts at weaning him away from Shanta Bai.
She confronts him one day. "This sort of thing has to stop. Understand?" In a rare moment of assertion she tells him:

I am a human being. You men will never grant that. For you, we are play things. When you feel like hugging and slave at other times. Don't think that you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose.

When all this hardens Ramani, she firmly says:

You are not having me and her at the same time, understand? I go out of this house this minute.

He prevents her from even touching the children. She finally thunders:

You are dirty, you are impure. Even if I burn my skin, I cannot cleanse myself of the impurity of your touch.

As for possessions, "What possession can a woman call her own except her body." She empties all ornaments that came from her husband. She even relieves herself of her father's gifts too since they are also a man's gift and leaves the house. The die is cast and she walks down the silent street.

Savitri tries to commit suicide - for, is it not the only alternative traditionally available to women? She ruefully says:

The prostitute changes her men, but a married woman doesn't, that's all; but both earn their food and shelter in the same manner.

Finally, her feeling before attempting suicide is "no one who couldn't live by herself had a right to exist!"
But she is rescued by Mari, the burglar and is taken to his village. Mari and Ponni try to fix a job in the temple for her. Soon Savitri realises that she is a misfit for that life. Hard reality makes her take an about turn and unannounced she returns to the Dark Room that is Ramani's house. Meanwhile, Ramani keeps going with his affair only a little hesitantly. It was becoming increasingly difficult for him to live up to the stories he concocted to children about Savitri. She returns much to his relief. But she is not the old Savitri any more. She is a weather beaten and hardened Savitri. She has paid a heavy price and realised that a part of her is dead!

Thus, the relationship between Ramani and Savitri is one of master and slave and an attempt at deviation fails frustratingly for Savitri. Her revolt is all too sudden; and an equally all too sudden decision to commit suicide cannot be a solution to the problem, but can only end a person. In her situation, helpless as Savitri is, a revolt is bound to fail since she does not have the wherewithal to see through the ordeal. She realises her helplessness, with the children's memories crowding her. Though, Ramani is in a fix as far as the children are concerned, greets her return nonchalantly. The end keeps them probably back in square one.

Savitri has been often compared to Nora in Ibsen's 'Doll's House' where she asserts herself by leaving her husband.
But it turns out that Savitri, unlike Nora or even Gouri in *The Old Woman and the Cow* of Mulk Raj Anand, is unable to make a challenge of it. She is defeated and humiliated. She probably attempted something beyond her capacities, though for all that she is a changed person. Life cannot be the same, at any rate for Savitri anymore. Both tradition and the society pin Savitri down to submission and helplessness. The family ties, her educational background compel her to return to the Dark Room. Perhaps Savitri returns a sadder and wiser woman from her plunge and again perhaps the effect may not be totally lost on Ramani too, though his relationship with Shanta may not be at stake.

The predicament of an Indian housewife economically dependent, is necessarily a one-sided compromise. With economic independence and education, Savitri would have been different with different results. Then, suicide would have been out of question and her return would have been honourable. But the male-dominated society has separate norms for man and woman. While a man’s affair with another woman is slurred over, a woman cannot think of separation, leave alone having an affair. Then, interestingly, along with men, women also would turn against her. In a class-structured society, a woman is treated as a possession and is exploited by man. The man probably does not realise that he derives vicarious satisfaction by subjugating woman since he is wrecking his frustration on her. Any amount of physical pain and suffering, Savitri may bear. But Ramani hurts her at the most vulnerable point — an
affair with another woman— and hence her demonstrative rebellion. But before she actually rebels, she tries to put it off by well meaning feelings that after all these rumours could be just there. But once roused, she hits back remarkably, back to the wall. But all this is in vain and her return signifies her defeat. But may be, the rebellion was worth it, even when it was doomed to failure. Thus, the strangle hold of tradition of the exploitative society is established in the case of the relationship.

The question is asked if Narayan could not have ended the novel on an optimistic note, giving Savitri a certain amount of freedom. The question is no doubt academic. But looking to Narayan's approach as also the middle class, nothing else was expected and thereby hangs a tale. No doubt Bamani is portrayed with irony. Sometimes, he even appears ridiculous. But in the end, it does not bring hope to women like Savitri. Since the author operates within the structure of the society, and in that, within the preserves of the middle class, the characters are conditioned by the class character to which they are heir to. It is a question of going thus far and no further. Savitri becomes a victim of male dominance and prejudice. She has to grin and bear it.
(b) The English Teacher (1945) is a beautiful essay in domestic bliss and harmony. Krishna, a lecturer in a college and Sushila are married and the treatment of their love is almost lyrical. It is a made for each other couple till fate wills otherwise. But for occasional quarrels, the stuff that marriage is made of, they get along excellently until Sushila takes ill and typhoid takes toll of her. An admirable house keeper, Sushila managed the house economically. The domestic peace and happiness is anybody's envy. With her death, a sudden emptiness overtakes Krishna who has to both mother and father his daughter. By a strange coincidence, he comes into contact with some one who becomes the medium through which he can communicate with his dead wife. This mysterious contact with his dead wife almost acts as a physical presence of his wife to Krishna. A sense of peace returns to Krishna and he gets reconciled to the realities of the situation.

The theme of the novel is the death of Sushila in the first part and her resurrection in the second. May be, Krishna tries to regain the paradise that he had lost. The relationship between Krishna and Sushila may not be demonstrative, but it is quiet and contented. But it has its ups and downs in the sense that it has occasions of lover's quarrels. Krishna is solicitous of Sushila and is rarely angry with her. Sushila is also given to her moments of anger. But all this does not
detract their happiness one bit. When Krishna speaks of making provision for future children, she speaks out "You would think differently if God somehow made you share the bothers of bringing forth." She could even tellingly defend selling the old clock which brings an under current of misunderstanding in an otherwise happy relationship. She also insists on walking by the river even when it means going in the opposite direction. For all this, she is pleasant and reigns supreme in managing the house. The middle class family is sailing along merrily when the calamity befalls him. He is overtaken by the sneaky ways of fate. It all starts very innocuously with Sushila visiting the backyard of a house they intended to purchase. She has the fright of her life in the toilet whose nause is long in vanishing. She takes ill and it is diagnosed as typhoid. As the illness draws on, Krishna experiences excruciating agony, swinging from hope to despair. The trumatic experience leaves Sushila shocked and she never really recovers. Krishna gets into a routine and gives the best of nursing to her. But ultimately Sushila dies. This leaves Krishna stupefied and he is unable to reconcile to the situation.

The relationship takes an unusual turn when the most incredible things happen. A Godsend sends a message that his wife wants to communicate with Krishna. From now on, the whimsical and fantastic take over and in a series of attempts, Krishna is able to resurrect dead Sushila. Krishna reaches ecstasy when he almost feels the presence of Sushila with him. With Sushila's resurrection, Krishna reaches reconciliation.
He even decides to resign his post of lecturer and takes up to nursery school. This realm of para-psychology is what takes the cake. No doubt, such psychic occurrences are abundant in Indian life and mythology. "It was a moment of rapture immutable joy — a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death," says Krishna towards the end.

As a contrast, the headmaster has a nagging wife. The headmaster's domestic harmony is totally disturbed. He has ceased to worry about what he considers a necessary evil. He faces the situation without remorse if not regret. He finds an escape into the school where his involvement with the children is complete and total. It is the school that sustains him when nothing else goes right for him. His wife is sore that the headmaster is unworldly and that he has given up his claims to his father's house where his father's second wife and children are living. She is most unhappy living among the ramshackle lot and with a vengeance sends the children to other schools rather than her husband's. Truth to tell, the headmaster is making an experiment in education by following a 'leave them alone' system. He has an ideal to live by and naturally it sustains him in spite of the dull and uninspiring circumstances he confronts. The wife is tired of his idealism and is cut up by his irregularity to the house even for food.
She insults the husband before Krishna that she is no watchwoman of the house. The Headmaster behaves like Socrates and takes it lying down. He even concedes that sending children to the schools of her choice is her right. He lives almost unattached to the family with the school being his only mission in life. She takes on him all her frustrations since she has nothing else to hang on. She asserts "I am not going to be another woman than myself even if the king is here." Notwithstanding her assertion and stubbornness, the Headmaster hopes that things may change. His wife may not be among those who have a rough tongue and soft heart. But he takes consolation in the fact that it could be worse. In point of fact, it is. He has learnt to speak plainly without the varnish of the adult world—a gift in the form of his close association with children. Since he believes that the problem with his wife is not external, she must be left alone to expect a miraculous transformation in her. Besides, his life is also conditioned by what the astrologer has laid down for him—every damned detail, even the day of his end. He is so taken in by it that he meticulously follows every detail of it to the extent of believing that his end is supposed to come on a particular day. He feels vicariously happy that his wife shall have it as a surprise one of these days. He also says "That's why, I am patient with her."
He believes his last day has come and requests Krishna to take care of his school. But, fate fouls the prediction of the astrologer and he does not die. When Krishna visits his house to suggest that the Headmaster, for all purposes and intent may be dead, the wife creates a scene—a heart rending one at that. Her regret, apart from the fact that the children had become orphans and literally thrown to the street is, couldn't he have confided the prophecy in her! But the Headmaster considers this a new lease of life and turns his face against his wife and plunges into the work he believes in. The Headmaster had recognised the reality of death and it became easy for him to do what he believed in. This makes Krishna wonder if his pining for communication with his wife is not self deception. Thus, the Headmaster and his wife stand out in bold relief against the relationship of Krishna and Sushila. Krishna decides to resign his job and involves himself in the school. 'If death is a reality, it is also true that life is also a reality in the sense that the show must be on and the flag must be kept flying.' Both the Headmaster and Krishna try to rise above the structure and lend meaning to their endeavours. The Headmaster is never bogged down despite of the nagging of his wife, who almost becomes a drag on his ideal. The death of Sushila has totally bogged Krishna down to the point of nothingness in life.
But he also reaches the point of maturity, after trials and tribulations, to say in the end that it was a moment of raya, immutable joy - the moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death.

(c) Waiting for the Mahatma (1955) is yet another novel where R.K. Narayan describes man-woman relationship, but against the background of patriotic fervour with Mahatma Gandhi influencing every man, woman and thing that comes in his way. Critics are a little harsh on R.K. Narayan for this novel, considering it ambitious go to the extent of suggesting that it is sadly disappointing. C.J. Narasimhiah lashes at it and wants its withdrawal! Others like William Walsh praise it for the lyrical love of Bharati and Sriram. While the criticism is that Gandhi is difficult material to handle, R.K. Narayan brings Gandhi as a character in the novel which means that he dominates and nothing much remains. While this is true to some extent, R.K. Narayan's prowess of describing the events has its way and the novel may be a bad patch in an otherwise illustrious career. Also, it may not be an ambitious novel since any writer was tempted to write about freedom struggle had this problem would amount to writing about Gandhi, either as an indirect presence or as a character.
The novel begins with Granny taking Sriram to the post office to open an account in his name. Soon Sriram is found lavishing his new found independence and money. He is accosted by Bharati for some donation and he involuntarily gifts some money into her box not realising that this incident might change the course of his life. Just a look at pretty Bharati transports him to a different world and he feels the beauty in Kannu's shop on which he had set his heart paled into insignificance before Bharati. It was love at first sight. He was so hypnotised that he had not even asked what the contribution was for, leave alone asking her name. From now on Bharati is an obsession for him and a magnificent obsession at that.

Gandhi arrives on the Malgudi scene and Sriram finds Bharati having something to do with Gandhi. He attends the meeting addressed by Gandhi without notions of patriotism or anything of the kind. He is young and has some money. His thoughts are full of impressing women and thinking of marriage. Nothing else mattered. When he sees Bharati sitting along side with the Mahatma, her khadi saree now appears as the loveliest of stuff which he had once condemned and abandoned. Bharati becomes a vision for him, inspired as he "is, by love of her. He considered her divine in his youthful exuberance of love."
Sriram follows the meetings of Gandhi and finally meets Bharati at the gate of the hut. After a good deal of hesitation and rambling, Sriram tells her that he is prepared to do anything told by her as it pleased him to be with her. But, for Bharati, trained as she is in the Gandhian way, this would not be enough. That meant meeting the Mahatma also. He is initiated into the life of the volunteers. The life is not comfortable, but Bharati has drawn him so much that Sriram first a little unwillingly, follows the do's and don'ts in the Ashram of the Mahatma. This association with Bharati is often punctuated with frivolity and stupidity. But they delight in each other’s company before long. But something about Bharati keeps Sriram always at a distance. While Sriram questioned himself several times as to why he could not bring himself up to touching her, when all he desired was to touch her, she always behaved as if she was unaware and unmindful of the feelings she roused in him. When she complains that she would write to Bapu about his anger and bitterness, Sriram reached the limit of patience. He overwhelmes her by a suddenness which takes her by surprise. Sriram embraces her and Bharati finds it difficult to wriggle out of hands. He mutters a few incoherent things like love and marriage by which time she has got herself released from his grip. But it is not that she dislikes Sriram.
She is prepared to marry him only if Baçu sanctions it and not otherwise. She admits "I shouldn't be coming here or meeting you if I didn't" when Sriram asks if she likes him. But this love does not leave Bharati altogether intact. She feels small, thinking of what Bapu might think of her. Sriram feels happy that Bharati's pride is at last crushed. When he drags her into the inner sanctum and is ready to tie khadi yarn as tali, she rebukes him, "If I had not trusted you, I would not have come here again." In a confused state of inconclusive love-making, he attempts another assault which she beats back decisively and Sriram is crestfallen. But Bharati does not hate him and tells him that she likes him when he does not misbehave.

The Quit India movement separates them with Bharati courting arrest and Sriram falling into the hands of an extremist ending up in jail. He tries to meet Bharati in jail with the help of Jaadeen, the photographer-terrorist. But that does not come off. Sriram, desperate to please Bharati, would stop at doing nothing. His whole being, he thought, would acquire some meaning only if he did something in relation to Bharati.

After return from jail, Sriram meets Bharati at Delhi. He wonders if he had destroyed her trust though he only cared for her love. But her quiet and composed behaviour unnerves him. Though he is always willing to express his love for her, he is warded off by her. He was almost frightened of her. She
seemed too magnificent to be his wife, he thought. She had become so important in the Mahatma's entourage, that Sriram felt it was not right to expect her to be his wife. But finally Bapu sanctions their marriage and waiting for the Mahatma is over.

The love of Sriram for Bharati is described by William Walsh as lyrical. But Sriram is obsessed with his love for Bharati so much that he is unable to do anything in life. It's infatuation since even after going the extremist way and ending in jail, Sriram still behaves stupidly when he thinks of Bharati. No doubt Bharati's thought has totally engulfed him. He is often torn with thoughts of aggression about her, but becomes saner thinking that he may lose her. His one aim in life, to love Bharati and marry her. In spite of having undergone ordeals in jail for having gone the extremist way, he does not seem to grow in that he behaves stupidly by asking silly questions of her. But Bharati bears this all in a very degumified way, chiding and rebuking him sometimes and consoling at other times. She comes out a much more mature and balanced character, while Sriram is a love-sick character given to frivolity and even childishness. Sense of time and place do not bother Sriram when it comes to expressing his love for Bharati. While it is love at first sight with Sriram, may be, it is his perseverance and pursuasion that strikes.
response in her. But true to Indian tradition, the woman does not express her feelings readily for Sriram. Even Bapu approves of this towards the end of the novel. Both of them have come out with different experiences of life. But that does not reduce their love for each other one bit. It has been a long wait and quite a struggle for Sriram to win her hand. The gentle but strong Bharati and an erratic but sometimes stupid Sriram finally are united in love. Bapu's blessings have come and the waiting is over. Bharati's love for Sriram is delicately touched and she is not given to flourishes or demonstrative love. Her strength of character gives her a sense of dignity and poise throughout her relationship with him. But Sriram could be erratic and reckless more often. Throughout, he is influenced by her and her love becomes central to him in whatever he does. He becomes a volunteer not so much because he was fired by ideas of patriotism, but because it meant being his love. This takes him through a career of violence to end up in jail. But yet his one unsullied thought is his love for Bharati. It is her love for him that restores him to himself.

(d) The Guide (1973) is perhaps one of the mature works of R.K.Narayan where the man-woman relationship brings out subtle nuances of love and sex. "The stages through which the protagonist of the novel, Raju, undergoes the ordeal is probably the stuff with which a first class tragedy is made.
But the inescapable irony with which Raju's life is sketched as Guide, lover and swami renders this explosive theme a serious comedy. "Raju and Rosie are caught in the webs of tension and anxiety in life. The crisis leads to resolution and resolution to awareness on the part of characters. An evenness of manner achieving both the farcical and sentimental, characterises the fiction. A tranquility of temperament runs through the novel. It is by far the most mature of novels written by R.K. Narayan which also won the Sahitya Academi Prize. The story is the proverbial love triangle with Raju, Rosie and Marco making up for the principle characters. Raju is a tourist guide with no flourishes or distinction about him. He has been leading an uneventful life till he meets Rosie, wife of Marco, a researcher of sorts. There is an uneasy love-hate relationship between Rosie and Marco what with Marco being totally indifferent to Rosie. Nothing interests him except his study and research and Rosie feels a neglected wife. Raju falls in love with Rosie inspite of Rosie having her husband about her. A few insights into their domestic disharmony encourages Raju to make advances towards her which are not rebuffed if not readily welcomed. While Marco is busy doing research on the peak house, Raju takes Rosie on the town on sightseeing. He also shows her a king cobra which is what Rosie had wanted to see all her life. There, Raju has an insight into
her talent of dancing as she rhythmically moves with movement of the snake. This is a vital discovery on which hinges several situations. At the door of the hotel room, after initial hesitation, Raju makes bold to enter and from then on begins an illicit relationship between them which ultimately culminates in Rosie being cast away by Marco. Finding no alternative, Rosie comes to live in Raju's house much against the will of his mother. Rosie wanted to dance, for she belonged to a family of dancers, except that she was a Master's degree holder in Economics. Raju had several times asked her to resume dancing. But that's what Marco hated. Now Rosie begins her rehearsals. Her urge to dance is so great that exhaustion does not bother her. The artist in her is aroused and it only cries for fulfilment. Raju has spoken of plans for her future as an artist and dancer. Her career as a dancer begins on a humble note, but her fame zooms and afterwards she moves on from one place to another on dancing engagements. The guide turned lover becomes a manager of her shows which in its waxe brings fame and money. Money corrupts Raju and his life style undergoes a dramatic change. That he has problems with his house, now under litigation, comes in handy for him and he changes the residence to another locality into a spacious house. Meanwhile, nothing seems to interest Rosie than her dancing and she is totally involved in it. She does not bother about how the engagements are fixed and the accompanying money there from.
She would sign any number of cheques, but would be happy when at the end of the programme she was gawled. She would even preserve the jasmine garlands fresh in her house. But Raju goes about taking reckless advances and the money is spent. Rosie is unable to keep pace with the schedule. May be, Rosie was a goose that laid the golden egg and Raju intended to exploit her.

But things change and change pretty fast for Raju. His carefully built reputation and the edifice on which he felt secure, crumbles by the sheer weight of his own indiscretions. Of late, he has become a little jealous of Rosie's bon homies with the journalists and others. His sense of possession is hurt. Though Rosie has not gone against him, she has been quietly asserting herself which disturbs Raju. He feels insecure in her life and ends up by committing one or two indiscretions. He hides the book sent by Marco from her sight for fear of losing her again. Again when the lawyer's notice for the release of Rosie's jewel box is received, he recklessly forges Rosie's signature which spells his doom. He stands arrested on a complaint by Marco and nothing can save him. Rosie raises resources for his bail and supports the case by earning money by arranging dancing programmes. She had almost thought of crying a halt to it. Raju is sent to prison for two years where it could have been seven. Raju becomes a sadhu after
release from jail by a queer circumstance of fate. These borrowed plumes inexorably take him on a path of adventure and sacrifice. He is seen collapsing after a fast of eleven days invoking rain for the parched fields of the village where he has come to establish himself a swamy.

The Guide is structurally superior to other novels of R.K. Narayan with the stages of evolution of Raju as guide, Rosie's lover and swamy evoking suspense and anticipation. The story begins with the release of Raju from prison and Velan recognising him as a swamy. The flash back occurs actually towards the end when the fast is in progress as told to Velan, which however does not damage his image as a swamy a wee bit in the eyes of Velan.

The man-woman relationships of Raju and Rosie as also of Macro and Rosie is a study in contrast. Rosie has married Macro against an advertisement - a little unconventional indeed coming to think of Rosie's antecedents. She belongs to a family of dancers who are sacrificed for the temples and cannot dream of marriage. That is simply out of question for them. But Rosie is an educated woman in that class - a situation where an unconventional event can prevail. The marriage itself takes place after an interview where after protracted talks, the agreement for a registered marriage is reached. The temperament of Macro is cold and intellectual. The relationship is none too
warm. as it turns out, with Marco frowning on Rosie's zest for dance. This sore point often threatens to blow up the relationship. Only Rosie plays it on a lower key, to keep the relationship intact. Marco is absolutely cold towards Rosie in everything - taste and temperament. What was Rosie to do with herself when he was locked in the cave for days on end, is something that does not bother him. He is indifferent to all her demands - of feeling and company. Marco is oblivious of Rosie. Once he is immersed in his world of research, he is intolerant of questions. Since Rosie belonged to the despised class of dancers, she had married Marco for the sake of respectability. This unresponsive attitude of Marco leaves her dis-satisfied in life, with her instincts and aspirations unfulfilled and her nerves jingling. Marco's icy temperament suggests an implacable malovelence towards warmth and life. It is when Rosie is in such a situation that Raju meets her. Raju falls in love with Rosie inspite of the husband being about her. Both of them are of the same kind and it does not take time for them to respond to each other. But the affair itself is neither heady nor tumultous, but a quiet affair. He is first alone with her when Marco is seriously engaged in his work-in-the-peak house. He takes her to the town on a sight seeing tour. He also takes her to a snake charmer as Rosie's first wish after alighting from the train was to see a cobra.
They return to the hotel. After some hesitation, confidence and nonchalance overtake Raju and he steps into her bedroom. This incident affects them in different ways. While for Raju, the only reality in his life and consciousness is Rosie, she on the contrary, contemplates on the sinful relationship she has entered into with Raju. She tells him "After all, he is my husband. I have to respect him." Her chagrin is not only that she has committed adultery, but that it is a question of right and wrong with reference to Marco. She says:

After all... is this right what I am doing? He has been so good to me, given me comfort and freedom. What husband in the world let his wife go and live in a hotel room by herself, a hundred miles away?

Though dissatisfied with Marco, Rosie is alive to the reality that Marco has his plus points after all. It is against this background that she feels for what she has done. But the cryptic reply of Raju possessed as he is of Rosie is, "It is not a hundred miles, but fifty only." Raju attributes her defence of Marco to the distance that may enchant the view. They end up nowhere, since Rosie can't take interest in what Marco does and Marco is oblivious of her presence. It is a stalemate. The relationship of Raju and Rosie itself is none too passionate for the heavens to take note of. The feeling of possessing Rosie oppresses Raju. But it is not sensuality that characterizes it. Also, sexual possession is not a theme that is popular with R.K. Narayan to suggest any sensuality in their relationship.
True to Indian tradition, sex is too private and even holy to be rendered into public art, fears Narayan. But there is a streak of puritan bleakness in not bringing in sensuality in their relationships against a culture with too liberal doses of sex in art forms on ancient temples which still mock this attitude in derision. Raju kindles Rosie's talent for dancing and that sustains their relationship afterwards. For, the relationship of Rosie with Raju appears to be one of more feeling than sensuality, more a temperamental one than a passionate union. The more Rosie thought of dance, Marco would probably be banished from her thought and hence Raju encouraged Rosie to day-dream. But things start happening. Raju enters into a row with Marco and Rosie also pleads with him that he should leave them alone. Raju leaves them and goes home with mixed feelings. That Rosie should abandon him after so much of encouragement, deeply hurts him. When Rosie comes to Raju's house, he is surprised and delighted. For a whole month he was not himself, thinking of Rosie and nothing else. He takes her cut and Rosie tells him how she had an argument with Marco on dancing which culminated in a quarrel. When Marco asked Rosie to give up her training, she had blurted that every one liked her dance and only he didn't. Her giving away Raju's name meant so many things to Marco. He was stung by this and from then on, totally
ignored her. Rosie swallowed her pride and went behind Marco to apologize for her indiscretion. Her patience worn out, prestige hurt, Rosie asked him, "Have you not punished me enough?" All that Marco said was, "You can go where you please or do what you please." Marco leaves for Madras after completing his work, unmindful of Rosie following him. She goes to Raju's house straight from the Railway station. After all, Marco had called her a woman who went to bed with anyone that flattered her. All attempts at reconciliation have failed and Rosie is back in Raju's house— the right place according to him. Now that Rosie starts living openly with Raju, his worries and difficulties increase. Taking umbrage, Raju's mother leaves the house with her brother. Raju and Rosie spend some months before Rosie gets tired of the romance and asks Raju about the plans. Raju swings into action and is able to snatch an engagement or two for Rosie. From then on, it is an engagement spree as Rosie has had a new lease of life as Nalini, the dancer. Raju's ego gets bloated to think that he gave her a new life. Hereonwards, it is a success story with Raju emerging more the manager of the show than a lover, besides being a trainer and agent. A humble Rosie acknowledges his help when she says, "Even if I have seven rebirths, I won't be able to repay my debt to you." Soon they move to a bigger house with enough space for an office. Now, Raju presides merrily over all the activities of Rosie—his creation as a dancer. He begins to believe that Rosie is
his personal property and would frown if any one made a direct approach to her. He becomes so possessive and intolerant that he resents the small talk that other artists have with her.

He nurses an unknown fear that familiarity with Rosie by others would bring in complications. Added to this, money did not mean much to Rosie, while warmth and friendship did. Raju would not mind pulling her out of company if only as a kill-joy, only to keep her in a citadel of his making. But Rosie is becoming sick of all this publicity glare and she often feels like being one with the crowd. But Raju is still glowing in the radiance of fame and money, forgetting that Marco is still there, lurking.

His sunny days are abruptly ended when he finds the book sent by Marco, duly acknowledging the help rendered by Raju. He wavers several times before hiding it from the eyes of Rosie. Marco in this light might produce a positive influence on Rosie and he is afraid she may leave him. Even when Rosie asks for it, he dodges it with one excuse or the other. But Rosie asks him tersely for the book for she knew he had received it. Raju realises that the system he had built around Rosie is giving way. He rashly says that it came to him and that he need not show it to any one. This hurts Rosie and she retorts, "Why does it irritate you when I speak of him?" Raju unwilling to be defeated replies, "Do you ask why? Don't you remember when and how he left you?" Rosie is forthright and says "I do, and deserved nothing less." This attitude strikes
Raju dumb. He had eaten, slept and lived with her without understanding her mind! He assures Rosie a break after completing the engagements on hand. But he realises that Rosie is tired of this mechanical life of engagements, performances and cheques.

The worst in their relations happens when Raju receives a note from Marco's lawyer for the release of a jewel box pertaining to Rosie. Unnerved, he behaves squeamishly and desperately forges Rosie's signature. He himself posts it and keeps on asking if the parcel had come. Some days later when he is in the thick of dance recital, the Superintendent of Police brings a warrant of arrest. When Raju tells the truth, she takes it stoically and says, "I felt all along that you were not doing the right things."

After three days, Raju is released on bail, thanks to the efforts of Rosie. Rosie also realises that there is not much of money left with them. Suddenly Raju finds himself at the receiving end and the mastery has passed on to her. She refuses to go before the public again after what has happened. She is even ready to stop dancing and go back to Marco. If he didn't accept her, she would prefer death at his doorstep. She raises money to fight his case by going through her engagements though a little unconcernedly. Raju realises that neither he nor Marco had any place in her scheme of things. Only, she had a sustaining vitality which every one had underrated.
After all, Rosie did not lose her heart to Raju, since whatever interested Rosie irritated Marco. Rosie says:

> I would have preferred any kind of mother-in-law if it had meant one real live husband.

Further:

> But in a context which denied life, Raju came to symbolise to her the warm flow of life that ministered to the vital human needs which had been starved.

While Raju gave a new life to Rosie, he watched her in abstraction without carnal thoughts when she danced. Rosie wants to make peace for the sin, for violating the social code. She atones for her folly and recovers from it. She has remained dignified and noble all through her suffering. Raju also, is not altogether abandoned as he does not end up as a recluse, but a sadhu. He takes upon himself the larger role than what he is capable of. He almost becomes a sacrifice under trying circumstances in which he has slowly found himself in.

The success built around Raju and Rosie collapsed as suddenly as it came about. The intrigues, the curiosity, jealousy and sheer love of the devious inexorably take Raju to prison. For no tangible reason, Raju forges the signature of Rosie and gets caught. For the first time, he does something for love.
Thus, Raju and Rosie's relationship flounders because there cannot be truth or beauty in relationships if there is no frankness. The relationship of Raju with Rosie is characterised by a certain amount of levity and pettiness. Time and again, he tries to hide things from Rosie. No relationship can last without trust. Raju suffers a feeling of insecurity in the love of Rosie that he behaves the way he does. While accepting things is a character of the middle class, feeling insecure is also another. This sense of insecurity conditions Raju to lie, deceive, and do petty things. May be, every saint has a past and every sinner a future.

(e) The Painter of Signs (1976) is a novel which is not rated very high. But from the point of view of the problem, it offers an interesting material since the relationship between Raman and Daisy is rather unique. For once, we find in Daisy a character that is assertive and capable of toeing an independent line. None of the other female characters exhibit such strong sense of determination among Narayan's characters. The theme is Family Planning and it offers Narayan abundant scope for his sharp sense of the ironic and comic. Daisy is obsessed with the promotion of Family Planning. Accidentally, she comes in contact with Raman, a Painter of signs, a sign board painter. Nothing very extraordinary characterises either of them except that they operate within the confines of the author's frame work. Daisy is unattractive and there are
no flourishes either, in the way she goes about her job. Raman goes about his job of painting with a relish. In the first meeting which turns out to be a casual meeting of business, nothing much happens except that Raman's curiosity is aroused for a woman who propogated family planning. But the second meeting proves fatal for Raman. He is hypnotised by Daisy's confident and unabtrusive way of gettings things done. A third meeting makes her an obsession where he demonstrates his trial board. This plunks both on a tour of the villages where Raman is involved in selecting the location for painting family planning slogans. Raman always feels a sense of contradiction in Daisy advocating family planning. But her doggedness in doing her job seriously is what upsets him. He has been secretly loving her but never had a chance to speak out his mind. Daisy somehow seems to have possessed an uncanny knack of disarming him and keeping him at a distance. At times, Raman felt that she could even be reading his thoughts. It looks as if it is a case of so near and yet so far.

The tour keeps them together and Raman has opportunities of studying Daisy's prediictions. His quiet life has been disturbed and his one sided love reaches the breaking point when Raman embarks on an adventure. It should be now or never for him. But Daisy is not ungaurded and Raman's intensions stand exposed. Raman makes himself ridiculous by trying to convert what is essentially his defeat into victory by
behaving stupidly because he had nothing more to lose. He poses as her husband before the cartman and that meant the limit.

Daisy and Raman part ways at the bus-stand and return to Malgudi. Raman is desperate and his hopes of achieving Daisy's love are gone.

However, things take an unexpected dramatic turn when Daisy herself visits him, but not before Raman has undergone his share of anxiety and terror with feverish imagination. He probably sees ghosts where there are none. But then, Daisy makes her appearance one evening to the utter surprise of Raman.

They speak out about their lives—Daisy in a candid frank way and Raman with a certain amount of levity. This brings them together and in the next meeting Raman has almost achieved his aim, but not before Daisy has chided him for his frivolousness and incurable romantic disposition. When all seemed appropriate and timely for his marriage, his aunt being sent on a pilgrimage to Banaras, Daisy turns the table on him and leaves him high and dry in pursuit of her career and mission in life.

For once, we find a character in Narayan invested with a certain amount of independence and dynamism. Daisy has been a rebel even from her childhood. She had a dislike of life in a joint family. She always thought of being and doing different. She disliked the parading of girls before grooms for inspection and when it came to her turn, she rebelled and convincingly
proved a strong woman behaving unconventionally. That she is a run away child discovered by her parents near a river adds to the peculiar strength of her character. Marriage and settling down in life in the conventional sense of the term, has never been a priority. She preferred to work than be a wife. She tells Raman that she wanted to do something unconventional and out of the way. Her childhood has been spent in a joint family where it was over crowded, making demands on others. Daisy developed a perpetual dislike of crowds. Her run away life also influences her life which results in her commitment in life. She decides to do something unusual in life. May be because of her hard upbringing, she seems to have developed almost a dislike of sex. In the initial stages, she strikes frigid, as Raman repeatedly fails to arouse any sympathetic feeling. She looks cold and even repulsive in the sense that her physical description by Raman does not bring her in better light. She has an unpretentious air about her and she seems to be unworried about her security—moral and otherwise. She is also made up of some sterner stuff in that she is buoyant with confidence. Crisis in her job is something which she deals in a calculated way. She does a good job in the propagation of family planning. Raman often makes several ironical-sallies against her over-sealousness for family planning. Family planning has almost become an obsession with Daisy in as much as Daisy herself is Raman's fixation.
Daisy has common sense. She disagrees with Raman's aunt and says that people who are prone to grow fat are bound to, whether they sit on a mat or a chair. Whenever she is taken lightly, she would consider it a challenge to her faith. Raman would not credit that much of seriousness to her job. But she gives an inspiring talk on the overcrowding population, endless queues for food, medicine, shelter etc., and the consequent need for limiting family. Uncaring for comforts, she would put up with difficulties in the course of doing her job. The tour of the villages brings Raman and Daisy very close. Though Raman, though infatuated with her, is still not bold to propose to her. Something in her, struck silence in him and he almost abandoned the idea. But this joint tour is both an opportunity and an adventure for Raman. Though Raman had no fancy for propagating family planning, he seizes the opportunity of being with her on tour. But Daisy, unmindful of whatever torment Raman is undergoing, is going through her professional work. That way, she keeps a respectable distance from Raman. She believes that urban life standardises everything and hence would like to live in a tiny hut in a village. This prompts Raman to ask if she is a communist. She retorts "... Is there a label that one should always carry like a dog's collar?" Daisy's shifting moods—serious when conscious of her mission and smiling one when a little relaxed—makes Raman fondly feel that their relationship may be likened to a considerate husband and an irritable wife.
Daisy would go through her routine of meeting people, explaining the anatomy sometimes with the help of blackboard or a chart. She would insist on the presence of children as they too needed the education, not because she loved children but may be because she considered them the symbols of defeat of her cause. Raman guesses right that she may mean "You lengthen the queues that's all." She is never warm to children which may explain her total commitment to her cause. It is such a Daisy that Raman hopes to arouse the woman in her. Her serious commitment to her cause often sends Raman to think of the wildest things to defeat her cause like what if he fornicated in every village if only to put her on the defensive—an entertaining day dream indeed! When Daisy argues with the village teacher on the need to start the programme before the onset of monsoon, Raman almost characterises Daisy's as a paranoapher's philosophy of life. Otherwise why should her mind always be behind closed door sexual activity? Morbid thoughts alright. But that is a product of Raman's love-hate relationship with her. Her keeping count of the number of children in family is policing, feels Raman. When Daisy is confronted by the statement of the chiefman that barren women go to the shrine, pray and bear children, Daisy answers, "You should ask the priest." Raman ends up by admiring the courage and subtlety of her reply. Daisy makes a clean sweep
of the villages except once when she meets the yogi who affirms that women pray and conceive to be rid of their barrenness.

The priest, eager to assert his reputation and authority, unravels a fraction of Daisy's past, much to the amusement of Raman. For, he had never known anything about her when even her thought affected him! That she is a run away child is only small comfort for him. Daisy, a little unsure of arguments with the priest leaves the place in a huff. But Raman's chance to know more about her has come and he visits the priest in the evening. The visit proves infructuous except that Raman has the knowledge of more trouble in the offing in relation to him.

In their journey by the cart, when Raman asks some question on the use of contraceptives, she asks him if he is so innocent. But she proceeds to emphasize that producing a child is the easiest thing in the world, but stopping one is the most difficult. She lectures with no inhibition and that makes Raman feel that it must be a freakish experience that may be responsible for such unmitigated antagonism to conception! It was such a command performance on family planning, Raman thought. But the half-hearted approach of Raman, his oscillations and prevarications reach their limit as the situation comes to a head and the circumstances aid and abet it. The bullock meets with an accident and both Raman and Daisy are stranded in the road. The cartman deserts them and goes in search of help to a neighbouring village. Moon light, a sense of stillness, all set for a romantic scene! Chivalrously Raman explains to Daisy
the comforts of the cart. It is at this point that Raman's feverish imagination runs riot. Raman thinks that it is a God given moment for action and that man must live for the moment and extract its essence. "Today is tomorrow's yesterday." His moment of decision has come and he flings at where Daisy would be sleeping in the dark. But the fate is out to foul him. He does not find her in the cart. It had been a case of willing to wound and afraid to strike all these days. But when he strikes, he strikes in the void. There was only the aftermath of the upsurge of love, his eventual moral collapse or so it seemed, and the frustration of the abortive attempt. When he meets Daisy again, Raman is a little light in the head, for he might well have been in the prison for an attempted rape. May be, he should be thankful to Daisy for having saved him from this ignominy. In the uneasy conversation that follows, Daisy alludes to the prowling tiger. She says, "When you are married to a Devil, you must be prepared to climb the tamarind tree." After some awkward moments, Raman reassures himself that he had done nothing to be ashamed of. After all, sex was a basic drive of life that kept the world spinning. But Daisy acts quickly and decisively and cries a halt to the cart and jumps out, leaving Raman in the cart.

Raman creates a scene and the cartman becomes an accomplice in the drama staged by Raman. The cartman, presuming them to be couples, advises both to eschew anger, thereby making the situation much more unsavoury. While Daisy has to face an
awkward situation in denying any relationship with him, Raman, in a rare case of effrontery, declares her his wife. Eventually he puts Daisy in the cart. But Daisy hisses at him saying:

**Taking advantage! You will learn your lessons like others who have learnt. I will see that you go to jail for this, I will tell the police the first thing.**

Raman begs excuse, cursing the priest as also the cartman for their encouragement in this escapade. They reach Koppal and without so much as a formal good bye, they part. Nothing said would ever appear natural in a such a setting!

This rebuff sets Raman seeing ghosts where there are none. He is not sure what will result from the unpredictable nature of Daisy. It even takes him to the Police Station to find out if Daisy has complained. It is such a relief that no such thing has happened and Raman settles down to his sign board living. He is unsettled to find Daisy in his house one day, when his aunt is away. Politely brushing aside his address as madar, she wants his signature for clearing his travelling bills. They visit the river and sit with feet in water. Unable to control himself Raman makes a move to touch her hand. She warns him,

"Don't try to get into trouble again."

When Raman says, "I like you, I feel lost without you", Daisy tells him that the love business is an imitation stuff and wonders if love will not strike one dumb! She further remarks:

Perhaps credible in Western society, but sounds silly in ours. People really in love would be struck dumb, I imagine.
Raman insists that love is the same in any society and argues that he may have been conditioned by Western romantic attitudes. Daisy retorts, "You are an incurable romantic in spite of what you say." After some degree of calm, Raman narrates his life's story—none too eventful or bright by itself. He demands Daisy to speak out about her life. Daisy does not mince words and speaks straight without embellishing any event with exaggeration. After all, without any sense of curiosity, she had taken Raman as he came. She speaks of the experience of her joint family life. She also gives an account of her behaviour towards the groom—how she bowled him—and how she ran away from home. It was a Bishop who reared her up. It is probably his training that has left a deep imprint of commitment in her life. She does not conceal anything and is not given to exaggeration either—a contrast to the confused and clumsy narrative of Raman. At the stroke of the nine, Daisy cuts short her narrative and departs.

This happens to be a turning point in the relationship between Daisy and Raman. When Raman meets Daisy next on the pretext of putting in a word in favour of the bangle seller, he perhaps has the best opening gambit in succeeding in his love. Even as Daisy is threateningly warning him, "No, no, you will be in trouble again. Be sensible." Raman makes an advance asking her why she allowed him to touch her hand near the river.
She explains it away with some excuse. But it looks as if her resistance is giving way and she is giving in. Raman feels proud even to say, "You command and I'm your ever slave." They both keep late hours and the effect starts telling on Daisy who finds it difficult to perform her official work efficiently. She decides that Raman should leave by nine in the night. The relationship endures and Raman announces his marriage with Daisy to his old and religious aunt who naturally protests. She is sent to Banaras. The ancestral house of Raman is renovated to receive Daisy. The date and time of Daisy's joining Raman is also set. Daisy visits his house and Raman explains the changes he proposes in the arrangement. But Daisy is none too interested. For, she has put one or two impossible conditions in consenting to marry Raman. Shockingly enough, she does not want to bear children. Added to this, she does not want to be bound by kitchen. Even these impossible conditions do not make Raman any less enthusiastic. His infatuation for Daisy is so intense that he either hopes for a change later, or is obvious of the implications. So he has to fulfil her mission of life as husband as Shantanu of the Puranas did. While going through the house, Daisy lies down and seeing Raman sit at a distance, asks him to come near. She, rather tired and yielding, embraces him involuntarily and Raman, surprised by the unexpected invitation, reaches his consummation for once. Raman visits Daisy a day earlier only to find an air of uncertainty. She bluntly
tells him; "Well, it does not seem to be possible now." Raman is disappointed. He was not prepared for such a situation after being fed with hopes. He retorts, "Have you no feeling? Have you no memory? But Daisy has decided and she has her arguments. None of the tricks of Raman is of any avail. Totally lost, he begs Daisy if he may join her in her work. But Daisy calls it the end. She even advises Raman to restore the Gods to their place which he had changed to please her. She even tells him that any one would marry him and that marriage was not her forte. She was not cut out for that. She gives a warm grip to his hand and takes it to her lips and runs down the stairs leaving Raman stranded.

R.K.Narayan who operates within the structure of the society, has family as the theme in his fiction. While Savitri is the very epitome of Indian womanhood, suffering and sacrificing undergoing brutalisation in life, for once Daisy can transcend marriage and family. She is one character with a streak of independence and stubbornness inspired by being daring and different. Raman is very much a family man and his first thought on seeing Daisy is love and marriage, children not forgetting. Since Daisy herself is an out of the ordinary character, it is not surprising that she baffles and puzzles Raman—for whom some of the attitudes and opinions of Daisy are positively unholy. But Raman has also
rebelled in a way, in his attempt to marry Daisy. His aunt could never reconcile herself to this marriage, religious and superstitious as she was. Not even for once does he think of her caste and only he is headlong in love with her. Despatching aunt to Banaras comes in handy and he can settle down in life without botheration. But the relationship after the rise and fall, finally ends up in parting of ways. Without forethought, Raman makes every conceivable concession to her. But Daisy is made of different stuff. She neither loves marriage as an institution, nor children. Her only concern is the mission she has accepted in life and that is to reduce the births. While a woman at family planning could be an embarrassment for herself as also others, Daisy goes through her work with no inhibition. This man-woman relationship is unique not so much because the lady says no to a willing man, but because the lady says no on grounds of commitment to a principle which she considers important. There are moments when Daisy feels aroused as a woman, but only occasionally so. The commitment and work on hand gets the better of her on such occasions. Daisy serves as an example to show that marriage and family is not the summum bonum of life. For Raman nothing seems to be beyond love and marriage. It is unthinkable how Daisy is so seriously after a career and mission in life. Her cold responses to his overtures of love is an enigma to him. He just cannot accept that she could be different and keeps hoping
that things will change for the better in the long run. He first does not take her vocation seriously, behaves irritably sometimes, talks with a certain amount of levity only to bring Daisy to his plane of thinking. But the relationship itself, based on unshared beliefs and temperament. There seems to be nothing common between them - Daisy a careerist with a mission in life and Raman, very much a family man. It is a relationship of the common and the uncommon. Surely it cannot last and the relationship flounders. For Daisy, marriage is not necessary for life. Even when she agrees to marry Raman, the Gandharva way, she does with a feeling that marriage may have to be occasionally tolerated. She is also not worried about the formalities of marriage. It is as simple as both of them living together on a particular day, while Raman is used to all conventional ideas of marriage. So, Raman is incapable of changing Daisy to his viewpoints, however much he stoops in order that he may win her. Daisy is not a character to be found abundantly in the society and hence she poses all sorts of problems to Raman. She is not even a sworn feminist for, she does relent and agrees to live with him though it is punctuated with her unnatural conditions, which probably do not amount to much, much less a marriage as is known. But on balance, she decides on her career and mission and not on marriage. It is not that she is callous in spurning his love and is going back on her word, but that she is not demonstrative
either when she loves or when she has to take a decision crucial to her life.

Thus, the Painter of Signs brings out a relationship that is unusual and out of the way in the society. It is also curious to note that both Daisy and Rosie are characters with a certain amount of independence. Such independence on the part of woman is hardly possible in the Hindu Society. Looking to the Christian upbringing of Daisy, such characters are a privilege of the Western society where pre and post-marital sex is permitted. Daisy enters the life of Raman like a whirlwind and leaves him to fend for himself.

The man-woman relationships in R.K. Narayan's fiction falls into the traditional pattern of man dominating the woman which is the stuff with which Indian society is made. Except for Daisy in The Painter of Signs, Rosie in The Guide, no character shows signs of independence. Even here, the social upbringing of both Daisy and Rosie makes them characters of some decision. Ideas of independence, liberation and an independent life do not bother the characters. But from meek and harassed Savitri of The Dark Room, to Rosie and Daisy is quite a development. A Daisy with a mission in life is not altogether without love. She is capable of seeing and appreciating finer things in love and life. But in a crisis she knows her mind and however unpleasant a decision, she is capable of taking one. Also, a calm and collected Daisy makes such a thing possible. She is
not flashy or showy in what she does or says. There is a certain amount of artlessness about her and there is no attempt at making her phisiognomy beautiful. She is a sturdy character sprung from life.

Rosie's upbringing in a family of dancers devoted to the temple invests her with the dancing art as also a certain amount of sexual freedom to understand her extra-marital affair with Raju. In fact, marriage is looked down upon by such families. She probably wanted to be different and the family finally celebrated the marriage. Denied warmth in life, she accepts the opportunity offered in Raju. The dancer in her is aroused and she comes to live with Raju. But Raju's bunglings bring disappointment to her. There cannot be beauty or truth in life unless one is frank. Raju is anything but that. Their relationship drifts and she is prepared to go back to Marco. Savitri in The Dark Room is a typical representative of Indian womanhood. It is rendered from a woman's point of view of marriage. The image of woman projected is that of victim of man's villainy and dominance. Savitri, the protagonist, carries on her slim shoulder, the entire burden of the Indian past. After the attempt at rebellion, she does not transform as a character. No doubt, a certain amount of sturdiness is there in her. But only to a degree, that is not enough. But finally what prevails is acceptance. In the English Teacher, Sushila is a graceful presence and the creator of
domestic happiness. Her pleasant way endears her not only to Krishna but the readers as well. This makes some critics praise R.K. Narayan as a post of Indian domestic life.

In "Waiting for the Mahatma," Bharati is a gentle and beautiful character who has the strength to face the situation. But for Daisy and Rosie, the other characters conform to the routine life that middle class is. Only Daisy and Rosie stand out as dynamic characters though it is a far cry from woman's liberation.
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43. Ibid., P. 144.

44. Ibid., P. 177.

45. Ibid., P. 177.