CHAPTER - III

Early novels
(Pre-Independence Novels)
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EARLY NOVELS (PRE-INDEPENDENCE NOVELS)

Society consists of many families. Without the families, a society cannot exist and society is bound up by various kinds of relationships among the people. In a family, there are husband and wife, brother and sister, and grandparents and grandchildren. They are related to each other in some way or other. There are also other (close) relations between members like uncles and aunts, granduncle and grandaunts; and a variety of cousins. Among these people, there are varieties of relashipships. Outside family, there are also friends, teachers, students and other people holding different professions. As mentioned above, the relationships are varied among these people. For example, the relationship between a husband and a wife is different from the relationship between a student and a teacher; the relationship between a mother and child is different from the relationship among friends; and there is also other relationship like that of owner-servant relationship, quite different from other relations of a family (members). Thus one can see that in a society there are various kinds of relationship such as father - son relationship, brother - sister relationship, teacher-student relationship, mother-son relationship, etc. Such relationship is called human relationship.

This chapter deals with human relationship in some (selected) novels of R.K. Narayan. Most of Narayan's novels deal with human relationship. As R.K. Badal has pointed out:
“The real theme in all the novels of Nrayan is human relationship.”¹

In his novels, Nrayan tries to present the complex interpersonal relationships. Instead of writing social and political novels, Nrayan uses family sphere where family relationships are intertwined. A. Hariprasadna, in his book *The World of Malgudi; A Study of R.K. Narayan’s Novels* opines about the novels of Nrayan as:

“.........his novels seem to be concerned with an examination of intimate human relationships..........................”²

William Walsh also beautifully remarks about the human relationship in the novels of R.K. Narayan in the following way:

“The family is the immediate context in which his sensibility operates, and his novels are remarkably for the subtlety and conviction with which family relationships are treated – that of son and parents and brother in *The Bachelor of Arts*, of husband and wife and father and daughter in *The English Teacher*, of father and son in *The Financial Expert* and *The Vendor of Sweets* and of grandmother and grandson in *Waiting for the Mahatma*.”³

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I. SWAMI AND FRIENDS

*Swami and Friends* (1935) is the earliest novel of R.K. Narayan. It is from this novel that Narayan began his career as a novelist. With the recommendation of Graham Greene to Hamish Hamilton, the novel was published in 1935. It was appreciated by many readers. Praising this novel, O.P. Saxena remarks:

"But the reason why the story is so haunting is because all the tragic misunderstandings, helplessness, frustration, and unrequited love which flesh is heir to are present in the story both actually and potentially".4

As the title suggests, the novel is the story of Swaminathan and his school friends. The story revolves round the character of Swami. From beginning to end, there is a series of incidents in the life of Swaminathan. When the novel opens, Swaminathan’s dislike for school and homework can be seen. Sunday is a happy day for every child. When unpleasant Monday comes,

"Swaminathan was reluctant to open his eyes. He considered Monday specially unpleasant in the calendar. After the delicious freedom of Saturday and Sunday, it was difficult to get into the Monday mood of work and discipline. He shuddered at the very thought of school that dismal yellowbuilding, the fire-eyed Vedanayagam, his class teacher and the Head Master with his thin longcane."5

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Even though Swaminathan does not like to go to school, his school friends make his life happy and joyful. Some of his school friends are Somu, the monitor; Mani, the mighty good for nothing; Samuel who was nicknamed as “Pea” and Rajam, the son of a Superintendent of Police. Swami was involved in the political unrest of 1930. As a result he was expelled from Albert Mission School on charge of breaking panes. After that he was admitted to the Board High School where he never got happiness with his new friends. Swami with his former friends founded M.C.C. (Malgudi Cricket Club). He ran away from the school since he could not bear the punishment of the Head Master for not attending the drill and scouting classes. Swami was afraid of his father very much and so he did not return home and disappeared. He could not participate the match. Y.M.U (Young Men’s Union) won the toss. In the final part of the novel, Rajam was separated from Swami since his father was transferred to Trichinopoly. The novel ends when Swami gave his ‘Fairy Tales’ to Rajam as a parting present and bid good bye to his ‘dearest friend’ Rajam.

In this novel, Swami’s relation with his school friends is the most important. In fact, it is on this relation that the plot of the novel is constructed. In his class, he honoured only four persons. The first was Somu, the monitor, the second was Mani, the mighty-good-for nothing, the third was, Sankar, the most brilliant boy in the class and the fourth friend was Samuel known as ‘Pea’ on account of his size. Swami’s another friend was Rajam, a newcomer in the school. Among his friends Swami loved Mani and Rajam most. When Rajam came to the school, the whole class seems to be impressed since, “he dressed very well – he was the only boy in the class who wore socks and shoes, fur cap and tie and a wonderful coat and knickers. He came to the school in a car. Inspite of all these things, he proved to be a very good student too. There were vague rumours that he
had come from some English boys' school somewhere in Madras. He spoke very good English exactly like a "European"; which meant that few in the school could make out what he said. Many of his class-mates could not trust themselves to speak to him, their fund of broken English being small. Only Sankar, the genius of the class had the courage to face him, though his English sounded halting and weak before that of Rajam". 6 Mani did not like Rajam to become a new power in the class as well as to come between him and Swami. So, Mani invited a fight to Rajam and Swami acted as a medium of communication between Rajam and Mani. Later on Mani and Rajam became friends instead of fighting as enemies.

Rajam's coming to school was not liked by other friends of Swami. They thought that Swami was uninterested in them with the coming of Rajam. So Rajam became a wall between Swami and his friends. They called Swami 'Rajam's Tail'. Though Swami admired Rajam, he also loved his other friends. He asked himself that "what was wrong in liking and going about with Rajam? Why did it make them so angry?" 7 Swami was anxious and restless 'to his position as the enemy of Somu and company'. 8 There was a great fight on the question of "tail" between Swami and his friends but all of them were brought together by the diplomacy of Rajam and they became loving friends.

Swami's relation with Mani and Rajam was different from his relation with Somu, Sankar and Pea. Their relation was "a purely scholastic one, which automatically ceased when the school gates got closed". 9 But Swami's

7. Ibid., p.32.
8. Ibid., p.33.
9. Ibid., p. 67.
relation with Mani and Rajam was ‘more human’. Though examination was over, they were always together and most of the evenings doing whatever they liked. If Swami had a problem, he would go to Mani and Rajam. They were also ready to face any problem for the sake of their friend. When Swami told them about the coachman, they went to the coachman’s house to help him. For them hot sun was nothing. In summer, when people were inside the house due to fear of heat, “Swaminathan, Mani and Rajam would have been surprised if anybody had taken the trouble to prove to them that the Malgudi sun was unbearable. They found the noon and afternoon the most fascinating parts of the day.”

There was a match between M.C.C. and Young Men’s Union. Though it was called a ‘friendly match’, in fact, it was a challenge. Rajam was very anxious to think about the match and he wanted Swaminathan to have a little practice for only one hour in the evening. But Swami could not come in time to the field because of the Drill and Scouting classes. Swami did not like to attend the Drill class because playing Cricket was more important than the Drill class. So, he avoided many Drill classes. The Headmaster punished him for not attending the Drill classes regularly. Swami could not bear the punishment and so he ran away from the school.

The last part of the novel shows Swami’s relationship with Mani and Rajam. After running away from school, he did not return to home. He wanted to go somewhere. Before he went he wished to meet Rajam and narrated what had happened in the school. Even in the confused state of his mind, Swami never forgot his friends. First of all he remembered his friend

10. Ibid., p.78.
Rajam. He felt unhappy when he would not be able to attend the Cricket match. He could not say it to Rajam. Swami disappeared as he was afraid of his father.

While the match was going on Rajam's father, the superintendent of Police asked Rajam whether he would like to come with him to bring back his friend. Rajam was very angry with Swami for not attending the match. He behaved as if he did not think anything about Swami,

"but an unnoticed corner of his mind began to be busy with something other than the match" 11

When Mani heard the news of Swami, he came and asked what had happened to Swami and they talked about the match. Swami learnt that the match was lost and Rajam thought that Swami was responsible for the defeat. Swami felt very unhappy when he knew that his dearest friend Rajam was angry with him. He could not bear it and wept when he came to know that his friend Rajam outcast him.

In the last chapter of the novel, Rajam was separated from his friends. His father was transferred to Trichinopoly and the whole family would be leaving Malgudi. When Swami heard the news from Mani,

"The world seemed to have become blank all of a sudden. The thought of Lawley Extension without Rajam appalled him with its emptiness. He swore that he would never go there again" 12

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11. Ibid., p.168.
12. Ibid., p.174
Swami could never believe that Rajam would be separated from him. Swami thought that Rajam was his only friend whom he loved most. For Swami, life was meaningless without Rajam. Swami's relationship with Rajam shows a clear picture of a true friendship. On the other hand, Mani also violated Rajam's ban and told Swami about the departure of Rajam. This is also a sign of love between the two friends. In fact, Swami's happiness vanished with Rajam's going. Swami gave Andersen's *Fairy Tales* to his dearest friend Rajam as a parting present. It was his most precious thing. Swami's question was not from his mouth but it came out from the core of his heart,

"Oh, Rajam, Rajam, you are going away, away. When will you come back?" 13

Swami was waiting for a letter from Rajam unknowingly whether he should write to him or not.

Out of his school life, at home Swami's very close friend was his grandmother. His relationship with his grandmother was closer than that of his own parents. She was the only friend of Swami at home. He told her everything that had happened to him at school with his friends. He told her his likes and dislikes. Swami felt unhappy when he did not buy lemon for her. He was so quick to go to the field for practice of cricket. it was the nature of the boys to take playing more important than any work. Everyday after the night meal he rested on her lap and told her about the happenings of the day. He told about his friends. The grandmother knew all the friends of Swami and their nature. She knew Mani, Rajam, Pea, Sankar and others. Swami narrated everything to her as he narrated to his friend.

13. Ibid., p. 178.
She was the only supporter of Swami in the family. On certain occasions, Swami pretended to be ill because he did not like to go to school. His father knew his trick and forcibly tried to send him to school. At this time, she spoke in his side. She is more attached to her grandson than her own son. As she remarks:

"The child is so fond of me. Poor thing! He has been trying to tell me all sorts of things. You are not in the habit of explaining things to me. You are all big men..." 14

Swami narrated about cricket to his grandmother who did not know anything about the game. She also listened as if she was interested in the game. This shows that she never spoke against him. She always supported his view. She was the only listener of Swami at home. When Swami spoke to her she never argued and she listened attentively. When old age comes, human beings seem to be very lonely and melancholic. Swami’s grandmother was free from this unhappiness with the company of Swami. Swami spent with her if he was free. It was her happiness to join with her grandson. She was so happy to have Swami with her. She took care for her grandson. She could not live without Swami, her friend, her grandson and he was all she had got.

In this novel Swami’s mother was a shadowy figure. It was the father who always imposed strict rules on his son. He was introduced when a letter was sent through his son to the Head Master of Albert Mission School complaining against the Scripture Master who always insulted the Hindu religion and provoked the non-Christian students in the school. He was the only person whom Swamy was afraid of. If he was at home he

never allowed Swami loafing in the afternoon and ordered to do his school work and this order should be obeyed without any question. If his father was at home Swami could not do anything except pretending as if he was reading attentively before his father. When his father was out of his sight he could do whatever he liked. On the eve of the examination of his son, Swami’s father was very strict and he looked into what Swami was doing. He always asked Swami to read books remembering that the examination was very near. As a father, he wished his son to pass his examination and for this, he was always worried. If he saw his son reading, he was very pleased; and Swami’s displeasure was his father’s staying at home. He should do whatever his father said. If he was at home Swami was not allowed to be free even for a single moment. Only when his duty was over, he was free. Though the examination was over, the father imposed such a strict rule that Swami should read and clean the books if necessary. For Swami it was like a torture not to go out in the evening. But as his father was at home, he was helpless and he read like an obedient son.

In the character of Swami’s father one can see the image of such a busy man. In most of the time he was not at home. At any freetime, his duty was to look after his son Swami. He rebuked his son but he really loved his son. It was only for the welfare of Swami. He felt pity for his son when he was forced to read and confined his son all the afternoon. He brought Swami with him to the club for rest. The nature he showed to his son was the nature of a strict father. When Swami was expelled from two schools, he somehow tried to manage. His love and affection for his son can be seen when Swami did not return home. He went far and wide in search for his son. Swami’s disappearance was due to the fear of his father. Swami thought that,
If he went home, father might beat him, thrash him or kill him, to make him return to the Board High School. Father was a tough man...\textsuperscript{15}

Swami also knew that his father had no ear for him. He was such a stern and stubborn person. But Swami loved his father and he was also afraid of him.

Swami’s father went far and wide in search for his son when he did not come back home in time. He went in every lane and street of Malgudi and every place where he might go. He did so for the sake of his wife and mother since they were always asking him to go and search for Swami. He believed that Swami might go somewhere. But when he thought of the hospital and the river, he could not think it anymore and he tried to sweep away everything from his mind. He could get peace when he was informed that Swami was under the care of the District Forest Officer. Thus Swami’s relationship with his father is such a relationship that one cannot see from the surface level.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p.150.
2. THE BACHELOR OF ARTS

R.K. Narayan's second novel *The Bachelor of Arts* was published in 1937. It is the story of Chandran who tried to search for his place in society. Like other youths of his time, he could not get a job for livelihood after taking the B.A. degree. There was also disappointment and frustration in his love for Malathi whom he met in the river bank due to the ill matching of horoscopes. His final return to Malgudi after much aimless wandering as a sanyasi and marriage of a girl of his parents' choice after being the agency of a newspaper, is the return to the society from where he wanted to run away. Regarding his marriage, in the introduction of this novel, Graham Greene remarks:

"In his second novel – a very funny and happy book– there is Chandran, little more than a schoolboy, whom we leave at the end of *The Bachelor of Arts* in a bubble of excitement at a marriage which has been arranged with the help of a dubious, even dishonest, horoscope."¹

The novel is divided into four parts. Part one consists of five chapters in which Chandran is shown as a student of Albert Mission College. When the novel opens, Chandran is persuaded by Natesan, the Union Secretary to be the Prime Mover of the Union debate on the subject, “In the opinion of this house historians should be slaughtered first”. Chandran was a good orator and he also participated in the activities of the college. He was also

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(All the subsequent reference are to this edition)
the first secretary of the Historical Association. Before the examination, he conducted about eight meetings of the Historical Association. He also read a paper on "The Lesser-known Aspects of Mauryan Polity". Besides the activities of the college, Chandran was so serious about his examinations also and it is reflected by the following remarks:

"In March Chandran lost about six pounds in weight. He hardly thought of anything, saw anybody, or did anything, except study."²

Chapter I ends with the last day of the term. Chandran felt that it is the last day of his college life.

Chapter II consists of five chapters. Many suggestions came to Chandran as to what he should do himself after becoming a graduate. It is at this time that Chandran came across Malathi with whom he felt in love at first sight. He had a strong desire to marry the girl. He persuaded his parents to make an arrangement for the marriage. Out of the age-old customs, Chandran’s parents sent Ganapathi Sastrigal, a match maker to Malathi’s house with a proposal of marriage. Due to the ill-matching of horoscopes the girl’s father rejected the marriage proposal. Chandran was disappointed and he decided to go to Madras.

Part Three of the novel consists of two chapters showing that Chandran wandered aimlessly as a Sanyasi for about eight months and he had acquired many experiences. And these Chapters ‘describe that state of drift, of mysterious experience, of strange happenings, of a kind of death, which

². Ibid., p.50.
forms a significant stage in the process of the protagonist's self-education. Instead of going to his uncle's place at Madras, Chandran went to a hotel where he met Kailas who came to Madras to enjoy life. Chandran also ran away from him. Suddenly, a great change came to his mind when he thought that 'he had definitely left his home. Now what did it matter where he lived? He was like a sanyasi. Why "like"? He was a Sanyasi. He jumped out of the train which went to Bezwada. Next he went to Mylapore and became a sanyasi. He wandered about eight months and after that he reached Koopal Village in Sainad District. In that place also he did not like to stay long. Now Chandran realised his aimless wandering and came to the reality of life. With the help of the postmaster of Maduram, Chandran reached home from where he at one time wanted to run away.

Part Four consists of six chapters which deal with Chandran's search for livelihood. He met Mohan, who was working as a reporter for *Daily Messenger*. He heard Mohan's success in his job, and he decided to be Chief Agency of the paper. With his uncle's help he got the job and he also accepted to marry the girl of his parents' choice. Chandran learnt that it is not Malathi alone who can win his heart but there are also other girls who are as beautiful as Malathi. When he saw Susila he fell in love and he gave his acceptance for marriage. At last, Chandran was absorbed in the family life.

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The novel revolves round the character of Chandran. Chandran is the protagonist of the novel. Various kinds of relationships with Chandran can be seen in the novel. Chandran’s relationship with other characters can be divided as: his relationship with his family members specially with his parents and his relationship with other people outside his family life. This relationship includes his relationship with his college friends specially with Ramu and Mohan. And his relationship with Malathi whom he wished to marry and his relationship with Susila, the girl he is married to are also included in this kind of relationship.

Chandran’s relationship with his parents can be analysed in relation to his growth as a boy. His relationship with his mother is quite different from his relationship with his father. Chandran’s mother represents the age-old customs and the traditional values. Chandran’s modern outlook is quite different from his mother’s outlook. Though Chandran was brought up in a family absorbed in superstitions and blind beliefs, he wanted to escape from these social rules and restrictions. Like the womenfolk of the Hindu family, Chandran’s mother also had a belief that if her family was blessed by a Sanyasi it would be a happy and prosperous family. Otherwise, it might be a cursed family. This belief can be seen when a Sanyasi was caught one day at daybreak for stealing flowers from the garden. After many attempts the thief was caught. But he was such a middle aged man wearing only a loin cloth of ochre colour. It indicates that he was a sanyasi. The orthodox and superstitious nature of Chandran’s mother can be seen when she says:
"Is he a sanyasi?" Mother asked, and noticed the colour of the thief's loin-cloth. "Ah, leave him alone, let him go". She was seized with fear now. The curse of a holy man might fall on the family. "You can go, Sir", she said respectfully.\(^5\)

Chandran reacted the attitude of his mother and he was out of the false belief. He did not have any fear to see a sanyasi unlike his mother. Instead of that he asked,

"You wear the garb of a sanyasi, and yet you do this sort of thing!"\(^6\)

Since Chandran's mother belonged to another generation there should be a generation gap between she and her son, Chandran. Chandran always tried to handle his fate by his own hands but his mother disagreed with this idea. According to her it is the question of fate whether one would have good luck or not. She believed in a fixed fate which was destined to a life. There was no place for individual's choice, ad everything was going in a fixed fate.

"It is all a matter of fate," said mother.
"You can marry only the person whom you are destined to marry and at the appointed time".\(^7\)

Chandran's mother was the follower of orthodoxy and the traditional social norms. She is the great supporter of the dowry system which Chandran strongly opposed to. She wanted to take a rich dowry in the marriage of her

\(^5\) Ibid., p.43.
\(^6\) Ibid., p.43.
\(^7\) Ibid., p.158.
son. She scorned when she heard the dowry which Malathi’s father proposed to give for his daughter. She gave reference to her own marriage. It indicates that her father gave her rich dowry in her own marriage many years ago. On the other hand, Chandran thought that in his marriage there should not be any unnecessary expenditure. He also did not like to take dowry and other presents from the side of the bride. Chandran thought that these things were unnecessary for a marriage. To him, marriage is the unification of two souls. He wanted to marry the girl whom he loved. He was uninterested in gold or silver presents from the girl’s side and he also did not like to impose big dowry on the girl’s family which might lead to the breakdown of the marriage. Opposing his mother’s view he says:

“I shall never forgive you if this marriage does not take place through your bickerings over the dowry and the presents.”

Chandran who belonged to the modern generation wanted to fight against the old social values and the orthodox nature of the Hindu culture. But he is helpless against the collective force of the traditional society. Chandran’s wish to marry a girl against the wish of his parents is his desire to bring about some changes in the age-old-customs of the society where he could not express his love to the girl by himself. The marriage of Chandran could not take place because of the ill-matching of horoscopes. In the Indian society, there was no freedom of choice. The question of status, age and horoscope came up and it plays a very important role in the life of an Indian. It was in this question that Chandran’s opinion varied from his mother. If the horoscopes of a boy and a girl do not match, the marriage is impossible. Chandran’s mother strongly believed in these age-old-customs

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8. Ibid., p. 84.
of the society. She was the conventional image of a mother who loved and
cared for her children. She loved Chandran so deeply that she could not
bear to see him miserable. It is only when Chandran desired to marry
Malathi that the tension builds up between mother and son. But as a mother,
she was taking risk, against the age-old customs, of sending Ganapthi
Sastrigal to the bride’s house. It was only for the sake of her son.

Chandran’s mother was restless while Chandran was wandering
aimlessly as a sanayasi for about eight months. After the return of her son
from his wandering, Chandran’s mother thought of her son. It shows that
she wanted her son to have a settled life. Chandran sought individual freedom
in the society but he could not scape from the bondage of the society and
he voluntarily returned to it. Chandran accepted his defeat in life and
submitted himself to his fate. Realising the facts of life, he gave his
acceptance to marry Susila, a girl who was the choice of his parents. The
difference of opinion between mother and son was thus no more and he
accepted the opinion of his mother.

In the family, it was Chandran’s father who looked after Chandran in
his daily activities and he was also the listner of his son. He advised his
son what he should do or what not; and explained what is right and what is
wrong. Sitting in the veranda Chandran’s father was keen in observing every
step of Chandran. He examined at what time his son went to College and at
what time he returned to home. He never rebuked Chandran for what he
was doing. Instead of that, he told his son what was good and what was
bad. Chandran also tried to convince his father what he had done. If he had
any plan, he consulted his father. Chandran’s father also tried to solve any
problem of his son somehow or other. If Chandran returned late, he was
restless and he would wait till his son came. Chandran also knew that late coming would upset his father. But he never showed any sign of anger. He only said:

"But I wouldn't advise you to make it a habit. Late shows are very bad for the health." ⁹

Chandran's father was helpless against the social norms. Chandran's mother represents the traditional values and the age-old-customs whereas Chandran's father stood for modernity in thought and action. Even then, he still followed the traditional social norms. It was because he was brought up under such social restrictions. He could not escape away from the traditional values. He could not stand, as his son Chandran, against the age-old customs. Though he was helpless against the social norms he was modern in heart. When Chandran expressed his desire to marry Malathi, the question of horoscope came up. Without comparing the horoscopes, the marriage was impossible. It showed that the marriage depended on horoscope, Chandran's father disagreed with the idea that matching of horoscopes would bring long life, happiness and harmony. He had no faith in horoscope as he says:

"Why bother with horoscopes? asked Chandran's father
Personally I have no faith in them". ¹⁰

It was only for the sake of his son that he sent Mr Sastrigal to the bride's house. It was against the time honoured custom which was in practice that the proposal of marriage would come first from the bride's side. Chandran was always persuading his father to support his idea in the absence of his

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⁹. Ibid., p.9.
¹⁰. Ibid., p.78.
mother. Chandran’s mother wanted to follow the traditional norms but Chandran’s father took initiative to send Sastrigal to the bride’s house. After the proposal was sent to the bride’s house, horoscopes were exchanged. But the bride’s father D.W. Krishna lyer strongly rejected the proposal on the ground that the horoscopes were ill-matched. He was so orthodox that he believed in horoscope. Thus the marriage of Chandran was dropped. The calling of Krishna lyer to his house to negotiate the matter of marriage was also for the sake of his son.

While Chandran wandered aimlessly as a sanyasi for about eight months, both Chandran’s father and mother prayerfully waited for their son to return to home. Chandran’s father tried to conceal his feelings when he saw Chandran after his wandering. He behaved as if he did not feel anything in the absence of his son. What Chandran’s parents did when their son was out of their sight for some months is clearly shown by Seenu’ speech:

"Father and mother were worried about you, brother. Nobody would talk to me in this house. They were all tempered and morose all these months. I did not like out house, brother. No one to talk to me in the house except the cook".  

It was also Chandran’s father who told Chandran about the plan of his marriage with Susila, who was the choice of his parents. Chandran’s father did not want to be obstacles in his son’s path. He somewhat or other tried to do anything for his son. He was nervous to talk to his son about his marriage. But he wanted Chandran to have a settled life. He might think that married life would bind Chandran physically and mentally. Otherwise, his life would be such a life without any hook. When Chandran announced

that he could not marry the girl, he said nothing opposite of his desire. To be married or not was left in Chandran’s hand. But he warned that single life would lead him to a bondless life. He indirectly warned Chandran with this speech:

“I saw in your office some papers and letters lying loose on your table. They are likely to be blown away by a wind. Reminded me, I will give you some paperweights tomorrow.”

Out of the family life, there are other persons who led Chandran to know the reality of life. There were Ramu, Veerswami and Mohan on the one hand and on the other hand, there were Malathi and Susila. Chandran tried to be a free spirit among the rules and regulations of the society. He was always bound by rules and restrictions both at home and outside home. In the college, he could attract the attention of the History Professor Ragavachar and he was appointed Secretary of the Historical Association. He was a good orator and in his secretaryship, he arranged meetings and discussions and he also read a paper on “The Lesser-known Aspects of Mauryan Polity”. He was not only involved whole-heartedly in the activities of the college but also read hard for the examinations.

Out of his family life, he, in most of the time, was with Ramu. It was with Ramu that Chandran went to cinema and took rest after his day’s activities. Chandran also was delighted in the company of Ramu. Chandran felt:

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12. Ibid., p. 152.
“Ramu’s company was most important to him. It was his presence that gave a sense of completion to things. He too smoked, chewed, drank coffee, laughed (he was the greatest laughter in the world), admired Chandran, ragged him, quarrelled with him, breathed delicious scandal over the names of his professors and friends and unknown people.” 13

If Chandran had any problem he would tell it to Ramu and it seemed to him to get some relief. Without Ramu Chandran was so lonely and he was not accustomed to going alone. He seemed to be helpless without Ramu. In the college, if Chandran did not find him in the reading room where he would be reading magazines, he would search for him everywhere. He searched for Ramu in the chess room as well as the ping-pong room. Sometimes, he went to the river without Ramu but everything seemed to be silent. He felt loneliness and solitariness only when Ramu was absent. If Ramu was with him, he would go to the river or to any restaurant talking and laughing in any topic. It was after the examinations that many friends were out of sight. Ramu also disappeared forever after the result was announced. He went from place to place in search of employment. Only a card was sent to Chandran informing him that he had joined the law course in Poona.

After wandering for about eight months as a Sanyasi, Chandran returned to home and tried to have a settled life. At this time he remembered Ramu who at one time shared the joys and sorrows of life. From his mother, Chandran learnt that Ramu did not send any letter to him in his absence. Chandran remembered that Ramu was not in the habit of writing. This may be also one reason for Ramu’s not writing to him. He has no means to know where Ramu was and what he was doing now. There seems to have

no link between him and Ramu. The one time link that is called "friendship" was cut off from him. It may be due to the changes of time. Chandran was very unhappy in remembering the warm companionship of Ramu in his college life. He remarked shockingly:

"I and he are parted now. He won't bother about me anymore. Very frivolous minded. Won't bother about a thing that is out of sight." 14

Ramu did not even inform him that he had secured a job. Chandran asked himself why Ramu did not inform him of a happy news of securing a job. Ramu seemed to forget his friend Chandran. Chandran came to realise what is life and in this life there is a thing called "friendship" which did not last long. In a life, one can come across many things and that cannot be held forever. All of them would go into different directions. The attitude of Ramu showed that his friendship with Chandran was meaningless and nothing to him. Chandran was shocked to think that Ramu did not remember a single moment for him. Now Chandran realised that:

"Friendship was another illusion like Love, though it did not reach the same mad heights. People pretended that they were friends, when the fact was they were brought together by force of circumstances. The classroom or the club or the office created friendship, when the circumstances changed the relations, too, snapped. What did Ramu care for him now, after all the rambles on the river, cigarettes, cinema, and confidences? Friendship what meaningless expressions had come into use!" 15

14. Ibid., p.117.
15. Ibid., p.118.
To Chandran, it was the Historical Association to bring a contact with Mohan. Mohan became the only friend of Chandran till the end of the novel. Mohan wanted to read his poems before the Historical Association but he failed since Ragavachar, the President of the association did not like the Historical Association to mix-up with such subjects like poetry. He wanted to keep the Association for the protection of historical matters and discussions on the subject related to history, Chandran was willing to hear the poems by himself and he suggested to publish the poems in a paper.

Chandran frequently went to Mohan's hotel since his room was just opposite to the house of Malathi whom Chandran wished to marry. At this time Mohan became the only friend of Chandran. It was also from Mohan that Chandran learnt everything about Malathi. Mohan as a friend gave suggestion to solve any of Chandran's problems. The marriage of Chandran with Malathi was dropped due to the ill-matching of horoscopes. Yet Chandran tried to give a letter to Malathi through Mohan. Unfortunately the letter could not reach her hands.

Chandran's relationship with Mohan as a friend became closer after his wandering of eight months as a Sanyasi. After the examination the friends of Chandran were out of sight. Chandran was so lonely and solitary. After his sanyasihood he could not get information from any of his friends. At this time, Mohan became the only friend of Chandran. He wanted Mohan's company to tell about his experiences during his sanyasihood in which he found a new philosophy of Live and friendship. He discovered that 'Love and Friendship were the varied illusions'. Chandran told Mohan that he was a sanyasi for eight months. He did not even tell his parents but he told it to Mohan. It showed Chandran's love and faithfulness to his friend Mohan. As he says:
“Remember, I have not told anyone that I was a sanyasi.” 16

It was also Mohan who suggested Chandran to be the Chief Agency of the *Daily Messenger*. Chandran was confused whether he should go to England or not. He consulted Mohan about his problems and took his advice as a friend. After many thoughts he dropped the idea of going to England and decided to be the Chief Agency of the *Daily Messenger*. He asked for the approval of his father who wanted to consult this matter with his brother who lived in Madras. With the help of his uncle, Chandran was appointed as the Chief Agency of the *Daily Messenger* of Malgudi.

Chandran discussed all his problems with Mohan and tried to take his advice. He told Mohan the coming of his father to his office with an offer of marriage with Mr. Jayarama Iyer’s daughter, Susila. Mohan also expressed his idea on the matter. As a suggestion on this he says :

“If the girl is not bad-looking, and if you are getting some money into the bargain, why don’t you marry? You will have some money and the benefits of a permanent helpmate.” 17

As a friend, he also advised Chandran to marry Susila, the choice of his parents. It would also please the parents who always were worried about him. At last, Chandran gave his acceptance to marry Susila. Mohan looked after the office while Chandran was going to Talapur for his wedding. In Chandran – Mohan relationship one can see a true picture of a friendship. Whatever Mohan did was what a friend must do for a friend.

16. Ibid., p.123.
17. Ibid., p.155.
In the life of Chandran, he came across two women. The first one was Malathi whom he could not marry and the other one was Susila whom he married to. It was from these two girls that Chandran learnt many things in life. Chandran began to know what was reality in life and what was romance, which played a very important role in the life of a man. After many experiences Chandran knew that he could not live in the world of illusion and he should live in the world of reality.

It was on the bank of the Sarayu river that Chandran met Malathi who was playing with a little girl. Chandran felt an ‘acute interest’ to see the girl. For Chandran, it was the love at first sight. Chandran wanted to know what her name was and where she lived and which caste she belonged to. His infatuated love of the girl made him think that whatever her caste or sect might be he would marry the girl. He did not like to have such caste divisions in India. Opposing such a caste system he says:

“If India was to attain salvation these water tight divisions must go – Community, Caste, Sects, Sub-sects, and still further divisions.” 18

From his friend Mohan, Chandran learnt that the name of the girl was Malath. Her father was Mr. D.W. Krishna Iyer, Head Clerk in the Executive Engineer’s Office. Instead of saying to his mother, Chandran told his father that he wanted to marry Malath. After that horoscopes were exchanged through Ganapathi Sastrigal, a match maker for a few important families in Malgudi. But the horoscopes were ill-matched. So the girl’s father rejected the marriage proposal. Though Chandran tried to give a letter to Malath, it

18. Ibid., p.56.
could not reach her hands. Chandran felt shocked to hear the news of Malathi's engagement. Since he had no hope for getting Malathi he decided to leave home and go to Madras.

It was because of Malathi that Chandran left home and became a sanyasi. He thought that he could not go on living without Malathi since she was married and there was no way for getting her. So, he decided to become a sanyasi discarding the pleasures of life. But his sanyasi was quite different from other sanyasies. Other people became sanyasi to attain peace but for Chandran it was not. According to him sanyasihood was a kind of suicide. He could not get what he liked. His inner self seemed to be dead. He wanted to take a revenge on society as well as on his own fate. This fact is revealed in the following lines:

"His renunciation was a revenge on society, circumstances, and perhaps, too, on destiny."^{19}

After wandering for eight months as a sanyasi, Chandran began to know the reality of life. It is because of malathi that Chandran left home and deserted his parents who were always worried of him. But Malathi did not care anything for him. She seemed to be a statue to Chandran. She might have plenty of opportunities and chances to say "yes" or "no" to express her own idea. She said nothing to Chandran. Without any expression she was married to someone. Now, Chandran realised that there was no such thing called love. He came to the idea that one should live according to time and place. He questioned himself why he should abandon his parents and his duties for a thing which does not exist in this world. In his Sanyashood he learnt a new philosophy of Love which is as under:

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10 Ibid p 108
“There was no such thing; a foolish literary notion. If people didn’t read stories they would not know there was such a thing as love. It was a scorching madness. There was no such thing.”

Chandran realised that there was no need for torturing body and mind. Realising the uselessness of his aimless wandering as a Sanyasi he returned to home and accepted the wishes of his parents to marry Susila, daughter of Mr. Jayarama Iyer, a leading lawyer in Talapur. It was because of Malathí that Chandran discarded the pleasures of life and became a Sanyasi. But now he accepted to marry Susila, another girl, the choice of his parents. It is because of his incredibility in love which once drove him away from home and from his parents. Replying a question of Mohan, Chandran expressed his idea on love as:

“I don’t believe in love. It doesn’t exist in my philosophy, there is no such thing as love.”

When he saw Susila, he realised, that there were other girls also as beautiful as Malathí. He was driven so mad by the charm of Susila. When he saw Malathí on the river bank, he fell in love at first sight. The same case also happened when he saw Susila. He fell in love with Susila the moment he saw her in her house. He thought that Malathí was the only woman whom he loved but when he saw Susila he was impatient to marry her. Chandran came to know that love was such a thing which one could create. After seeing Susila his heart was full of Susilas. There was no place for Malathí and he viewed her as a sister living in a distant town. In every corner of his heart there was Susila and nothing else.

To conclude, we can say that the novelist has skilfully treated various kinds of relationships among various persons of the same family as well as the society.

20. Ibid., p. 112.
21. Ibid., p. 156.
3. THE DARK ROOM

The Dark Room, the third novel of R.K. Narayan, was published by Macmillan in 1938. It is the story of a woman named Savitri who has lost her independence and right as a wife. Savitri is the symbol of the traditional Indian wife who bears the misfortunes of life without any complaint. In the male-dominated society like India, Savitri is powerless and helpless and she cannot do anything. She cannot even die in peace. Traditionally, in the Indian society, man always oppresses woman. She has no way to get out. She has to live with her oppressor. In this novel, Narayan tries to portray the picture of a married Indian wife who has devoted her life to her oppressor. In his autobiography My Days Narayan writes about this novel as:

"I was somehow obsessed with a philosophy of Woman as opposed to Man, her constant oppressor. This must have been an early testament of the "Women’s Lib" movement. Man assigned her a secondary place and kept her there with such subtlety and cunning that she herself began to lose all notion of her independence, her individuality, stature, and strength. A wife in an orthodox milieu of Indian society was an ideal victim of such circumstances. My novel dealt with her, with this philosophy broadly in the background."

Different critics and scholars have given different views on this novel. To point out the opinion of Willian Walsh,

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The Dark Room is the account of marriage given throughout from the point of the view of the wife in which the image projected is that of the Indian woman as a victim."^2

The Dark Room consists of three important characters: Ramani, the office secretary of the Englandia Insurance Company, his wife Savitri, a pious Hindu wife and a symbol of Indian womanhood; and Shanta Bai, a woman who worked in the Englandia Insurance Company. There are also other minor characters like Mari, the burglar, Ponni, Mari's wife, Janamma Gangu, etc. The story( of the novel) also revolves round the character of Savitri; and her relationship with her husband presents a clear picture of the Indian society where a helpless Indian woman depends her life on her oppressor.

When the novel opens, Ramani is shown as a dominating figure in his family. The other family members seem to obey his order without any resistance. His wife Savitri had been looking the activities of her husband whether she liked them or not. Ramani tyrannically ruled his family without hearing any word from the other members of his family. The happiness and melancholy of his family depended on his mood. The situation became critical when a woman named Shanta Bai who had deserted her husband entered the life of Ramani after she had joined Englandia Insurance Company. It destroyed the peace of Savitri’s domestic life. Savitri unsuccessfully attempted to bring her husband in the right way but her attempts were useless. Since she had no other alternative, she left her home and tried to commit suicide. This might be the only thing she could do but she was rescued, she tried to live alone without any help from

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anyone even from her husband. Soon she became homesick and realised the dependent nature of woman. When she returned to home, she found that her husband remained unchanged in his behaviour. Her return to her home is to return to her dark room again.

In this novel, various kinds of relationships i.e. father-son relationship, husband-wife relationship, the relationship of two friends, etc. are dealt with. Among these personal relationships found in this novel, the husband-wife relationship is the most important one. Savitri’s relationship with her husband is the most important relationship in this novel. Narayan also tries to show that this kind of husband-wife relationship is not uncommon in the Indian society. The writer has portrayed the picture of an Indian wife suffered in the hands of her husband. She bore all the sufferings as she could. As a traditional Hindu woman Savitri was a devoted wife as well as a good mother. It was for the sake of her family that she returned to home. She sacrificed her life for their family. Her family was so important in her life that wherever she went the thought of her family always haunted her. In her fifteen years of married life she could not get anything from her husband except his oppression. Ramani also never thought what his wife had expected from him. She spent her life in such a way that she had to conceal her desire and her feelings. Whenever she behaved as dump, the family was in peace but when she expressed her feelings, it destroyed the harmony of her family. This is what Savitri found in her life.

Britta Olinder, has divided R.K. Narayan's women characters into three groups:

“In trying to define R.K. Narayan’s presentation of female characters, I have found it interesting to classify them in terms of their relations of power to men and to explore the reasons for those relations. They fall into three main groups: first, dominating, powerful women; second, powerless, frustrated
women; and third, women accepting the system – in this case, the Indian society of strong masculine dominance – but at the same time finding ways and means to informal indirect control of their situation.”

Savitri is included in the second category i.e. the category of the oppressed women. The early chapters of the novel has showed a clear picture of the helplessness of Savitri in her own family and it also showed what kind of relationship Savitri had with her husband Ramani. Ramani did not hear even a single word from Savitri. He tried to rule his family on his own sweet will. He was never satisfied with his meal. He always complained for something or other. Savitri always listened silently to without any objection. She fully knew that it was useless thing to give any comment. It was because of the fact that Savitri knew her own position in her family. As a mother she should have the right over her children. But she did not have any right in her family even over her own children. Ramani sent his son Babu to school by force even though Savitri said that he was not well. Sabitri danced in the tune of her husband whether it was right or wrong. She had no right to ask or discuss any matter. That is why she always listened to whatever Ramani said and it was useless thing for her to give her opinion. Ramani seemed to have the idea that the other family members should obey his order without any objection. So, he was always in his commanding position. Savitri was helpless in his order. She had no time to think whether she should obey or not. She was pulled in the direction he liked. In the long fifteen years period of married life, the wife and husband could not establish a real understanding between them. Savitri fully knew

the sentiments of her husband but it was Ramani who never tried to know the real sentiments of his wife. It was from these uncertainties that the conflict arose between the husband and the wife, and it led to the disharmony in the family. Savitri as well as her children could not live peacefully in their own home in the presence of Ramani. It was because of Ramani's attitude towards them. Sometimes Ramani seemed to love her and even wanted to accompany her to the cinema. As a husband, he was very proud of his pretty wife because:

"She had a fair complexion and well-proportioned features, and her sky-blue saree gave her a distinguished appearance. He surveyed her slyly, with a sense of satisfaction at possessing her. When people in the theatre threw looks at her, it increased his satisfaction all the more, and he leaned over and said, "They are showing Kuchela.""  

But it is not genuine affection of a husband. It is the pleasure which arises out of possession for a rare object.

After marriage, Savitri began to suffer under the dictatorial manner of her husband. It was in the two incidents that she burst out her long suppressed anger like volcano. The first incident was when Ramani beat Babu for the failure of electricity on the Navaratri festival. Savitri stood before him as the protector of her son. She could not bear when Ramani mercilessly beat Babu. Her question to her husband was not coming out from her mouth but it came out from the innermost core of her heart. As she says:

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"Leave him alone, he doesn't need your petting." 5

After that, she went to the dark room. It expressed her dissatisfaction with the behaviour of her husband and it was also the only thing Savitri could do. It was the first revolt of Savitri against the suppression of her husband as well as against the male-dominated society. In the Indian society, women are kept under the chain of restrictions and those restrictions destroyed the freedom of the women. A wife who does not complain is regarded as the modest woman in the society. Savitri revolted against the age-old custom of the society but she was defeated. Ramani did not care for the feelings of his wife. Instead of discussing any matter, he tried to rule his wife. What he wanted was that he wished to be the authority of the family and no other voice was needed for him.

When Savitri remained in the dark room without any food, her children were restless and it was also useless to ask their mother to take her food. Knowing not what to do, they went to Janamma and asked her to console their mother. Janamma came and asked Savitri to take food. Janamma was such a woman who thought everything a husband had done was right. She spoke in favour of Ramani. She advised Savitri to be tolerant and to compromise with her husband for what she had done. She took up an example of her own saying that everything her husband had done was right. In her opinion, Ramani beat his son to bring him in the right way. She asked Savitri not to oppose what he was doing. As a woman who accepted the age-old customs of the society, she gave various examples of women who obeyed their husbands without any protest. She opines that whatever they are doing depends on their mood. As she says:

5. Ibid., p.48.
"Men are impetuous. One moment they will be all temper and the next all kindness. Men have to bear many worries and burdens, and you must overlook it if they are sometimes unreasonable."

Another incident that shows Savitri’s unwillingness to the suppression of her husband is her running away from home. Savitri represents the group of women who wanted to revolt against the strong masculine dominance of the society. The peace of the family was destroyed when another woman named Santa Bai entered in the life of Ramani. Savitri’s unhappiness increases when Santa Bai came between her and her husband. She joined Englandia Insurance Company as a woman probationer. Ramani whole heartedly helps to appoint her. When he first saw Santa Bai he was driven mad by her beauty. It was from the strong recommendation of Ramani that she was appointed to the post and thus Ramani got the chance to close with her and a storm also arose in his family. He arranged a room for her and later on it became a place for rest. Sometimes he did not return to home and sometimes he returned to home very late. Savitri would wait for her husband till he returned. When he returned at any time he liked, she could serve him half asleep. But he did not appreciate the service of his wife. Instead of that he might thought that it was the duty of a wife to serve her husband. His idea was that whatever a husband orders, the wife should obey. He fully knows that if he returned late Savitri would wait for him. Ramani also knew that for whatever he had done his wife would not question anything. If he had done something wrong he tried to conceal it.

6. Ibid., p. 60.
Savitri examined the changing attitude of her husband but she never thought that her husband had a love relationship with another woman. She only thought that:

"The poor man was perhaps pouring over account books all night and now without a moment's rest he would have to be rushing back once again the hot day after heavy food. All for whose sake?" 7

Savitri's friend Gangu informed her that Ramani and other women were sitting together in the hall seeing a Tamil picture. When she heard the news, she felt shocked. Her suspicion which she kept hidden for many days, came true. It was not the account books on another woman that he spent the whole night but it was on another woman that he got rest. She was speechless and her tongue seemed to be twisted. This news shocked Savitri so much that she was motionless fixing her eyes to the floor. She was frozen to where she was sitting. Tears fell down on the cheek. She thought that it was because of her old age and ugliness that her husband discarded her. Describing her ugliness and old age she says,

"I am middle-aged, old fashioned, plain. How can I help it?
She must be young and pretty." 8

Even though Savitri knew that her husband fell in love with another woman, she never thought to divorce him. She also knew that Ramani was not interested in her. He was in different even to the children. She tried to bring him in the right way. She did not like to live in confusion and she feared

7. Ibid., p.96.
that if anything happens, her family would be a broken family. She wished
to have a happy and peaceful life. Savitri consoled her husband indicating
that she wished to have a happy married life but Ramani was opposite to
it. It was useless effort that Savitri tried to use her right as a wife by saying
to herself as:

"Now, will you promise not to go near her again?" 9

Ramani did not care for the feelings of his wife. When Savitri tried to use
her right as a wife, he tried to overrule it. Seeing no way to correct her
husband, she decided to leave her house. Ramani thought that it was a
threat. He never tried to know what was in the core of her heart. Savitri
could not bear anymore. She came near the bank of Sarayu and attempted
to drown herself but she was rescued by Mari, a blacksmith. For Savitri,
she could not even die freely and she had no way to escape from this
burden of life. She decided not to return to her home again and she wished
to have a life of her own. With the help of Mari and his wife Ponni, Savitri
got a job in the village temple. A new way of life was opened before her.
She now realised the pleasure of a free spirit which was not depending on
anyone. She seemed to have the peace of mind which she never enjoyed
when she had eaten the rice of her own:

"This is my own rice, my very own; and I am not obliged to
anyone for this. This is nobody's charity to me". 10

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9. Ibid., p.110.
10. Ibid., p. 184.
Her pleasure was momentary. She was so dependent on her family that she could not live alone any longer. As the dependent nature of woman she was dependent on her parents before her marriage but after marriage she was dependent on her husband. In the village temple, she remembered the comforts and joys found in her home and she became homesick. Her momentary pleasure in the village temple did not last long. She decided to return to home and meet her children. Her effort to break away from the bondage of life was useless. Whenever the thought of escape arose, she became chained tighter to the duty of life. She lamented for being woman who could not live without a support. So she cries:

"What despicable creations of God are we that we can't exist without a support. I am like a bamboo pole which cannot stand without a wall to support it ..."\(^{11}\)

She remembered the children and she was restless to think what would the children do without her whether they eat or not; or whether they dress properly or not. Suddenly she decided to return to her home and meet the children. Her going out from home was a fight against her fate, against the society and against her own husband but she was defeated. Her decision to return to her home showed her acceptance in her defeat. After taking leave from the old man of the temple. She came to Ponni's house to inform her that she was going home. Ponni and her husband helped her as they could. Savitri never forgot the affection showed by them. Ponni's wise counsel to Savitri showed how to keep man-woman relationship in a good way as she says:

\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 189.
"Remember: men are good creatures, but you must never give way to them. Be firm and they will behave." (p. 192)

When she reached home, she found that Ramani did not return to the previous night. She found that there was no change in his behaviour. It seemed that Ramani did not care whether Savitri returned or not. Even the children also seemed to have no difference whether their mother was at home or not. They enjoyed themselves in one way or the other without their mother but Savitri returned to home for their sake. Ramani did not express any surprise or pleasure to her return. Savitri fully knew that a true husband-wife-relationship was dead for her. She lived only in her own individual self. She had lost her right as a wife and Ramani never gave her the right. That was why Savitri could not call Mari when he came in the street crying. Her just impulse was to call him and to show the gratitude to him for what he and his wife had done for her in the time of need. But in the next moment she realised her own state in her family. She was nothing in her family and she had nothing to give to whom she loved and this thought coiled her mind. She lived only in name and everything a wife should have had was lost for her. Thus, the novel ended where it began showing that nothing has changed in her relationship with her husband. Ramani behaved as ever and Savitri returned to her daily routine of life. But the voice she once cried to her husband will be a revolutionary voice in the heart of every woman. As she cried:

"I am a human being. You men will never grant that. For you we are playthings when you feel like hugging and slaves at other times. Don't think that you can fondle us when you like and kick us when you choose." (p.110)
Savitri’s fate is more clearly illustrated when one compares it with other husband-wife-relationships specially those of minor characters. For example, Mari’s relationship with Ponni is quite harmonious and adjustable. They share the joys and sorrows of life and Mari is always ready to lend his ear whenever Ponni expresses her view. Such relationship is quite contrary to the relationship which Savitri has with Ramani. Another illustrative example is the relationship between another pair of minor characters – Janamma and her husband. Unlike Savitri, Janamma accepts her husband’s mental and physical superiority. She is the mirror image of the Sati Savitri type of Indian woman. She has neither frustration nor mental agony because she accepts her status and fate willingly. Savitri is different from Janamma due to her rebellious mentality and for this she suffers as a tortured soul in Hell. In fact, here R.K. Narayan attempts to show that behind the flattering concept of obedient and dutiful Hindu wives there are numerous Indian wives who suffer like Savitri because they have no choice, no strength to abandon their role as housewife.

To conclude, we can say that R.K. Narayan has very finely portrayed the various aspects of human relationship in the novel *The Dark Room.*
4. THE ENGLISH TEACHER

_The English Teacher _is the fourth novel of R.K. Narayan in chronological order. It was published under the title _Grateful to Life and Death_ in the U.S.A. in 1946 by Eyre and Spottiswoode. With this novel, Narayan completes the trilogy of his novels. The other two novels are _Swami and Friends_ (1935) and _The Bachelor of Arts_ (1937). From a schoolboy Swami became a Bachelor of Arts and served as a lecturer in English at Albert Mission College under the name of Krishna in _The English Teacher_. This novel is dedicated to the memory of his wife Rajam who died prematurely in the first week of June 1939. It is an autobiographical novel and since Narayan put his own personal feelings as well as his own experiences in this novel, it stands apart from his other novels in content and theme. About this novel, the writer remarks in his autobiography, _My Days:_

"More than any other book, _The English Teacher _is autobiographical in content, very little part of it being fiction. The "English teacher" of the novel, Krishna, is a fictional character in the fictional city of Malgudi; but he goes through the same experience I had gone through, and he calls his wife Susila, and the child as Leela instead of Hema. The toll that typhoid took and all the desolation that followed, with a child to look after, and the psychic adjustments, are based on my own experience." ¹

It is clear that his novel is closely related to the life of the writer. Narayan was so affected by the loss of his wife Rajam and he had lost interest in life. At that time, his only hope i.e. pleasure was his daughter Hema. Emptiness and darkness spread before him. Every moment he was haunted by the memory of his wife. He felt that he would never write a word in his life. His friends particularly Graham Greene and Dr. Paul Brunton inspired him to write a novel about what was within himself. The English Teacher was the product of such circumstances.

The story of this novel revolves round the character of Krishna, the English teacher in the Albert Mission College, Malgudi. When the novel opens, he is shown as a very busy man in his daily life. Getting up at eight every day he prepared Shakespeare, Milton and Carlyle for his class lecture. He lived in the hostel since his wife and daughter were in her parent’s home. After finishing his duty in the college, he would return to the hostel and would take rest after the dinner with his colleagues in the neighbouring room in the hostel indulging in light talks and discussions for something or other. His colleagues were Rangappa, lecturer of Philosophy and Gopal, lecturer of Mathematics. After much lengthy discussions, he went to bed. In the very first page of this novel, Narayan had presented a very clear picture of Krishna’s hostel life and his duty as a lecturer.

A very great change came in the life of Krishna when there was a proposal from his father to set up a house. In a letter sent to him his father suggested that he should take his wife and baby from her parent’s house and set up a peaceful life and he should not waste his valuable period of life in the hostel. Thinking that it was right, he decided to search for a house. He also got some relief to know that his mother was willing to come and help him to set up a family. He was so confused to think how he could
manage a house with a little child of seven months. His first duty was to find a house before his wife and the baby came. For Krishna the time had come to leave the hostel where he spent many years as a student and then as a teacher. His duty of life then was to set up a family of his own. He was going in search for a house. But most of the houses were undesirable to him. At last, he found a house in rent in Sarayu street and he decided to shift into that house with his family.

His mother came from the village to help him and to train his wife in the domestic work to set up a family. After the arrival of Susila, Krishna’s mother stayed with them for two months and then she returned to the village. Krishna and Susila led a very happy and peaceful married life for several months. A proposal came from his father to buy a house since he did not like his son to live in a rented house for long time. Decided to search for a house or a site, Krishna with his wife Susila, was going to Lawley Extension, Unfortunately, she was in contact with typhoid virus in an infected lavatory of a house. From the same day she fell ill and after several weeks of illness, she died leaving Krishna and the child in this world. Krishna lost all interest in life without his wife. In his aimless life, he came across a man who knew how to have psychic contacts with the spirit of the dead. With the help of this man, Krishna could communicate with the spirit of his wife, Susila. It was very interesting to him and it also made him to lift the dead load from his mind.

It was after the death of Susila that Krishna met the headmaster of the children’s school who had introduced a new kind of educational system i.e. “The Leave Alone System” where children were very happy and free in their education. He left his wife and children and dedicated his life to his school. Krishna admired the headmaster of the children’s school and he had
a strong liking for his new education system. He sent his daughter Leela to his new education system. He sent his daughter Leela to his mother and wished to live alone. At last, he resigned his post in search for mental peace. Since he could not forget his wife, in his dream he called the name of his wife many times. But at that moment she was sitting near him. He was united with the spirit of his wife and truly, it was the union of the living and the dead.

In this novel, various kinds of human relationships are dealt with but the writer presents Krishna’s relationship with his wife as the most important relationship. Krishna is the protagonist of this novel and all the events revolve round this character. The aura of his relationship with his wife shines bright than the other relationships found in the novel and it dominates the plot throughout the novel. Besides husband-wife relationship, there are also other relationships like: father-daughter relationship, grandparent-grandchild relationship, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, teacher-students relationship, etc. But their function is very limited in this novel and they help to make Krishna’s relationship with his wife an ideal relationship. R.K. Naraya presents a clear picture of a perfect husband-wife relationship in the characters of Krishna and Susila. For a close analysis of Krishna’s relationship with his wife, it is necessary to look into the kind of relationships Krishna keeps before and after her death. For this purpose, the novel can be divided into two parts. The first part of the novel deals with the happy domestic life of Krishna and his wife till the untimely death of Susila. In this part a true husband-wife relationship can be seen. In the second part of the novel, there is Krishna’s relationship with the spirit of his dead wife. This kind of relationship is made probable by a psychic communion of Krishna with the spirit of Susila. For a clear examination of their relationship, these two parts of the novel can be analysed in detail.
The first part of the novel begins with Krishna’s hostel life. Everyday he was busy in preparing for the lecture, taking his meal, dressing and running to the college in time. During free time, he would discuss something or other with his colleagues and sometimes he would walk by the side of the Sarayu river which aroused him a poetic feeling as well as freshness in body and mind. His life in the hostel came to an end with the coming of two letters - one was from his father and the other was from his wife Susila. There was a common suggestion from his father as well as from his wife to set up a family of his own. A house was found in Sarayu street and Krishna decided to shift to that house with his wife and the baby. The time had come from Krishna to set up a family of his own.

Before Susila came Krishna’s mother had arrived from village to help her son to set up a family. Krishna’s waiting for his wife at the Malgudi railway station shows how much he loved and cared for his wife. He was in such great anxiety to think how his wife and the baby would arrive safely. Before their arrival he arranged a coolie to carry down the luggage from the train. He thought how could Susila with the baby manage the train journey and it also made him worried when he thought whether the child’s head would bang against the door. With these thoughts he was restless and so eager to wait for the arrival of the train. The train had arrived in time and from among the crowd, Susila and the baby could reach his side safely. It was the re-union of two lovers after a long time of separation. All his anxieties were no more when Susila was by his side and he felt relieved. Krishna had an impulse to see the charming face of his wife. R.K. Narayan describes such impulse thus:
"I gazed on my wife, fresh and beautiful, her hair shining, her
dress without a wrinkle on it, her face fresh, with not a sign of
fatigue. She wore her usual indigo-coloured silk saree. I looked
at her and whispered: ‘Once again in this saree, still so fond
of it.’ 2

It shows that Krishna admired everything of her even her hair, dress and the
coloured saree. When they reached home his mother gave a warm welcome
keeping mango leaves on the threshold and white flower designs on the
floor and doorway. After staying two months with them Krishna’s mother
returned to the village leaving Krishna and Susila to themselves.

After Krishna’s mother had gone he and Susila led a happy and peaceful
life. They enjoyed the company of each other. Krishna was such a man
who knew the duty of a husband as well as a father. He had a strong liking
for the company of his wife and the baby. There was a strong marital bond
between the husband and the wife. In their new home, they spent their
leisure time sitting and gossiping in the hall. She knew all about her husband’s
outside world, his friends, boys and the college. Krishna told his wife
about his colleagues, their nature and their likes and dislikes. She liked to
hear all that he was saying. She also told her husband whatever she knew
around her. It showed that there was no concealment between the husband
and the wife. About their honest way of life, A. Hariprasanna truly points
out:

“They are completely absorbed in each other and each tries to share
in the other’s interests.” 3

p. 33. (All the subsequent references are to this edition).

It was the daily routine of Krishna to go to college, do his duty and return to home at 4.30. He would try to reach home as soon as he could since he knew that the mother and the child would wait for him eagerly. Susila pretended as if she did not wait for him. The following conversation between the husband and the wife shows that there is a close attachment between them:

"I have taken only twenty minutes and already you are out to look for me!" She flushed when I said this, and covered it up with: "I didn't come out to look for you, but just to play with the child..." 4

She served her husband with care and she knew that her husband would return from college with empty stomach and tiredness. So, she prepared food which, she thought, would be liked by her husband. She felt happy to see Krishna eating the food deliciously.

As a cash keeper of Krishna, she kept the money to be spent in the useful way. She carefully checked the monthly budget. She asked her husband to buy only cheap but good commodities. She was the supreme in the kitchen. Krishna followed her wishes to get the goods she liked. He never changed the list of the goods and if anything was to be changed he would take her suggestions. It was the sign of full-faith and understanding between the husband and the wife.

Susila fully knew the feelings of her husband. She never disturbed him while he was reading or writing. She encouraged him in writing poetry, which was his favourite hobby. Krishna with the help of Wordsworth's poem indirectly expressed the love and admiration for his wife. As he says,

"She was a phantom of delight when first she gleamed upon my sight: A lovely apparition, sent to be a moment's ornament."  

Sometimes they exchanged arguments and quarreled about small matters. That was the nature of every husband and wife. They had a quarrel over an old clock which had been sold in his absence. He was very angry but his anger was momentary. He could not live a single moment without the company of his wife. He felt pity for his wife's gloom. He consoled her asking to go to a picture. Their quarreling was momentary. Their relationship as husband and wife was, such a close relationship that it seemed to be inseparable forever.

Krishna's father gave a suggestion to his son to buy a house or to build one, since he did not like his son to live in a rented house for long time. This suggestion made the couple very happy and they decided to search for a house or a site at Lawley Extension. The preparation for the journey began from the early morning. She dressed properly and was ready for the walk. Krishna was fascinated to see his wife's pretty face and her tall and slim figure. To him, she appeared:

"... like a vision, clad in her indigo saree and hair gleaming and jasmine covered."  

He felt very happy to see his wife in a beautiful attire. An unexpressed pleasure was felt when he was walking with his wife and everything seemed to be beautiful to look at in her presence. Krishna loved the morning walk.

5. Ibid., p. 46.
6. Ibid., p. 52.
along the river but on that day when he was walking with his wife something was felt in his heart. To Krishna, it seemed that the beautiful scene of nature and its objects beautified her more. She seemed to be an unearthly object to him. R.K. Narayan beautifully presents the feelings of Krishna in the company of his wife in the following words:

"The fresh sun, morning light, the breeze, and my wife’s presence, who looked so lovely – even on unearthly loveliness – her tall form, dusky complexion, and small diamond earrings- Jasmine, jasmine...." 7

Their dream of having a beautiful house was shattered with the death of Susila. She was infected with typhoid virus in a lavatory of a new house which they decided to buy. On that day she fell ill and never recovered. At first it was misdiagnosed as malaria but later on it was confirmed as typhoid. She suffered for some days and during her illness Krishna served her attentively. The illness of Susila brought them very close to each other. She refused to take food and medicine. Not knowing what to do, Krishna decided to fetch a doctor, Dr. Shankar of Krishna Medical Hall who was a famous physician in the town. The medicine prescribed by the doctor was useless and the fever never went down but later on, a blood test report confirmed that it was typhoid. Krishna could not bear the situation that she suffered from typhoid but he was helpless. He felt very unhappy when she got a new name as ‘patient’. His sad feeling is described thus:

"There was a slight twinge at my heart at the new designation my wife was given; “patient”. She would no longer be known as a wife or mother or Susila, but only as a patient!" 8

7. Ibid., p.53.
8. Ibid., p. 78.
Krishna nursed her day and night even though her parents were still there. When he heard noise or movement he ran to her to examine whether she slept well or not. Doctor Shankar also came daily to examine her but all their efforts were useless. She died leaving Krishna and her child alone in this world.

Krishna unwillingly accepted what the fate had given to him. He silently bore the pang of separation and distress. Since it was the duty of a husband to perform the cremation rites, he performed the heart-aching ceremony of cremating his wife. R.K. Narayan gives a vivid description of a cremation ceremony. The bearers carried the dead body of Susila and others followed her to the cremation ground. Krishna was given a pot which contained the fire and he followed the group. At that time, he could not see anything and he could not hear anything. He was like a blind and a dumb:

"The sun is beating down mercilessly, but I don't feel it. I feel nothing, and see nothing. All sensations are blurred and vague." 9

The face of Susila looked not like the face of a death. She still smiled and her smiling face was uncovered in the hot sun. Krishna looked helplessly at her face. Without any motion, he watched the heart rending scene of cremation. He brought her to that place in order to leave her there. He did not know what to do and he was lost in thought. The only thing he did was what the priest asked him to do. After he lit the fire of the pyre, he returned to home. Krishna at this moment accepted the fact of death and he realised that that was the only reality one should face in life. A strong feeling was aroused within his heart and he could not bear it anymore. He looked back at the flame and felt that:

9. Ibid., p. 95.
“There are no more surprises and shocks in life, so that I watch the flame without agitation. For me the greatest reality is this and nothing else.... Nothing else will worry or interest me in life hereafter.” 10

With the death of Susila, the first part of the novel also ended. Krishna’s happy domestic life also ended with the untimely death of Susila. Krishna lost his wife in flesh but death was not the end of a true husband-wife relationship. R.K. Narayan tried to present that a true love-relationship between husband and wife might have been after the death also. Death could not resist their strong love-relationship. Krishna had such a spiritual relationship with his wife after her death. The second part of this novel is premised on Krishna’s spiritual relationship with the spirit of his dead wife, Susila.

In fact, the second part of the novel is devoted to Krishna’s psychic communion with the spirit of his wife. Krishna’s relationship with his wife in the first part of the novel is quite different from his relationship with his wife after her death in the second part of the novel. In the first part, it was the relationship between husband and wife in flesh but in the second part of the novel, the relationship was between the husband and the spirit of the dead wife.

After the death of Susila, Krisna had lost all interests in life. Blankness and emptiness spread before him. He had never enjoyed a sound sleep since her death. Most of the nights, he was haunted by the memories of the past. He took the role of a father as well as a mother. He did not like his daughter feel the absence of her mother. He took care for her bathing, washing her clothes and her food. It was also his most important duty to keep the child happy. After the death of Susila, Krishna took the full responsibility of the child.

10. Ibid., p. 96.
A great change came in his life when he came across a man who could have psychic communion with the spirit of the dead. One day a letter was given to him with the messages from his dead wife. He was so excited and curious; and he wanted to know the matter. The letter was sent by a man from the village Tayur, who could communicate with the spirit of the dead through the medium of his handwriting by sitting at a particular place. The place where the man could have psychic communion is described as:

“A small pond with blue lotus; a row of stone steps leading down to the water. Tall casuarina trees swayed and murmured over the banks. A crescent moon peeped behind the foliage.”

There was also a temple which was locked in most of the time. It was in such place that Krishna with his friend was sitting and ready to hear what the spirit said through the medium of his friend’s handwriting.

With the help of this man he could now communicate with the spirit of his wife. From that contact Krishna learnt that even after her death she was still eager to communicate with her husband. It showed that the spirit of Susila could not forget her husband even after her death. There seemed to be an inseparable relationship between the husband and the wife. Even though she was in another region she continued of her attachment to him and it is described as:

“She is as deeply devoted to her husband and child and the family as ever. She watches over them and prays for their welfare- only she is able to see things far more clearly than she was on Earth...”

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11. Ibid., p. 111.
Now, Krishna could have a communication with the spirit of Susila. He could also ask any question and she also could tell whatever she wanted to tell. He was asked about the letters he burnt secretly in the night. He was also asked about a sandalwood casket of which Krishna had no knowledge. Their psychic communion was a very valuable meeting for Krishna seemed to talk to his wife as if she was alive. From one of their meetings, Susila learnt that his daughter was going to a nearby school. The love between the mother and the child was inseparable even after her death. She still looked after her daughter in her activities. It showed the strong attachment between the mother and the daughter.

After Krishna could communicate with the spirit of his dead wife the death load seemed to be lifted. He returned to his normal life based on the routine of preparing for lecture, going to college, looking after the child, etc. He could devote to his studies attentively as usual. It was because of his spiritual communion with his wife. The true love-relationship between the husband and the wife could not be blotted and the love and memories still lingered within the heart of the living. In one of their meetings, she told him she felt unhappy when her husband felt the pang of separation and it was the desire of the spirit that Krishna lives in a happy mood. She told Krishna about her state of existence:

"Our life is one of thought and experience. Thought is something which has solidity and power, and as in all existence ours is also a life of aspiration, striving and joy. A considerable portion of our state is taken up in meditation, and our greatest ecstasy is in feeling the Divine Light flooding us..."  

13. Ibid., p. 130.
Krishna felt himself as if he was a man to know about the earthly life and the things beyond it. With the communication of the spirit of his dead wife, Krishna could learn many things beyond life and he also learnt the difference between the earthly life and the life beyond it. The difference is that one is the world of material and another is of thought. She talked about one's thought and fulfilment in her region in one of their meetings:

"Between thought and fulfilment there is no interval. Thought is fulfilment, motion and everything. That is the main difference between our physical state and yours." 14

For a psychic communication, there was no matter for time and place. The most important thing was the concentration of the mind and to keep the body and mind in perfect condition. The spirit of Susila asked Krishna to prepare himself for direct communication by not using his friend's handwriting medium. She also gave instructions to her husband for psychic communion directly with her without any help from others. For this, concentration of mind as well as receptivity was necessary and the direct psychic contact could only be done with an order and plan. She instructed him to have an exact time for communication since in all the hours of the day one could not be free from daily activities. Following the instructions given by the spirit, Krishna only at nights tried to have the development in psychic communion. At first he could not develop his mind but after putting many efforts he could communicate with the spirit of Susila. He himself also realised the development felt within himself. He began to get the benefit of the psychic experiment. He felt himself a sense which was not felt before.

His psychic experiment still continued along with his daily duties. After he sent his daughter to her grandmother, he felt loneliness but he consoled himself thinking that his daughter should also have a life of her own and that was the law of life according to which one might come and be separated. It is impossible for the human beings to fight against this law of life. The separation from his mother led Krishna closer to the headmaster of the children's school. At home, he could not get pleasure from the time of the death of his wife. Now, his daughter also had gone leaving him alone. Since he had nothing to do, he spent most of the times watching the children playing and listening to the stories told by the headmaster. To Krishna, the children's school seemed to be filled with pleasure and without any sorrow and suffering of life. The pang of separation and loneliness ceased when he was in the world of the children. When he saw them, his innermost self was pleased. Gradually, he began to admire the idea and the education system of the headmaster. He gave his resignation letter to Brown, the principal of the college thinking that would help him "in search of a harmonious existence". (178)

Krishna knew that Susila was very fond of jasmine. He remembered his wife on the day of farewell function, given to him by the college presenting to him jasmine flower. He brought the jasmine to his home but on the way he pondered over the use of the jasmine in his home where there was no Susila. He kept the jasmine in his bedroom. Suddenly, the atmosphere was changed and Krishna felt an ecstasy and he seemed to live in another world free from the sorrows and sufferings of life. He felt drowsyness and he softly called Susila many times. At that time his mind was filled with the name of his wife. When he opened his eyes his wife Susila sat near him. The rare moment had come for the reunion of the two lovers. There was no barrier between the living and the dead. The two souls were united as ever and the scene is described as:
"The boundaries of our personalities suddenly dissolved. It was a moment of rare, immutable joy— a moment for which one feels grateful to Life and Death."  

R.K. Narayan's treatment of another kind of husband-wife relationship found in the novel is the headmaster's relationship with his wife which was quite different from Krishna – Susila relationship. It was when Leela was admitted in the children's school that the headmaster appeared in the scene. The headmaster had a quarrelsome wife and three children in his home. Between the husband and the wife there was no understanding. They never tried to understand each other's feelings. So, there was no peace at home. Getting no happiness at home, the headmaster always tried to avoid his homely affairs. The headmaster and his wife had different attitudes towards life. He was an eccentric who had a peculiar notion of his own. There was a wide gap between them due to the lack of understanding of each others feelings; and each thought that whatever he or she did was true. They lived in their respective ways. The wife could not appreciate the activities of her husband. That is why she did not send her children to his school. She did not like to spend her life in the living style of her husband. The headmaster had no greed for land and money. To him, the pleasure of life is the inner satisfaction of oneself. Unlike him his wife wanted to have good fortune. Her anger increased when the headmaster was at home. The difference of opinion and ideas between them made him restless at home. He seemed to have relief when the wife was not at home or he was somewhere.

The headmaster's wife might be uncultured and quarrelsome but she was afterall a 'wife'. She had an affection for her husband. She did not take

15. Ibid., p. 131.
food without her husband and she lamented bitterly when she was told the prediction of her husband. She felt very unhappy to learn that her husband concealed the secrets of his life to her. So she shockingly cried:

"Ah, couldn't he have confided this in me, his wife?" 16

The headmaster and his wife might lead a happy married life if he was not eccentric or she understood the feelings of her husband. But it was too late for her. The prediction of the hermit brought about a great change in the life of both husband and wife. The changes also affected in their husband-wife relationship as they had no marital relationship. Though he was alive, he had no relationship to his wife and children. He was not a husband and a father for them. He wished to live alone without the bondage of family ties. He was no more of his old self, but he seemed to have a new life. A great change came in the behaviour of the wife after the prediction but it was too late to adjust with her husband. It was impossible for them to understand and unite with each other since the headmaster decided to go in his own way. They remained separated from each other. To Krishna and his wife, the husband and wife became puppets in the hands of fate and they are helpless. They accepted what the fate had given to them as they were separated. Unlike this case, the separation of the headmaster and his wife was their own creation. They were responsible for their own fate. R.K. Narayan portrayed beautifully the two different kinds of husband and wife relationships in the characters of Krishna, Susila, the headmaster and his wife.

16. Ibid., p.165.
Besides the husband-wife relationship, R.K. Narayan portrays another kind of human relationship in the novel. i.e. father-daughter relationship. Krishna's love and care for his daughter can be seen in the first part of the novel when he was waiting anxiously at the Malgudi Railway station for his daughter and wife. Their relationship became closer after the death of Susila when Krishna took the role of a father as well as a mother. After the death of Susila, he was automatically bound in the activities of his daughter. In the last part of the novel, she was separated from her father. Krishna also gave his acceptance to send his daughter to his mother as he thought that she should also have a life of her own and it was also his idea that it was very selfish for him to keep her under his control. He also knew that her daughter would live happily in her grandmother's house. That is why he could send his daughter to his mother. As a father, he felt the pang of separation from his daughter but he consoled himself thinking that she too should have a life of her own.

This separation did not mean that he did not think anymore of his daughter. He kept money for her future and he still loved and was worried about her. A strong attachment was within his heart though she was out of sight. Her going to her grandmother's house did not mean that without the child he freed himself. He fully knew that his parents loved his child. He also knew that the child was also happy with them. It was the right decision for Krishna to send his daughter to his parents keeping the love and memory in his heart.

Another human relationship found in the novel is the relationship between Krishna's mother and her daughter-in-law. Krishna's mother treated Susila better than her eldest daughter-in-law. The reason behind this was
that Susila followed "her house-keeping philosophy." It was the duty of every mother-in-law to train her daughter-in-law very well so that she could set up a house of her own. Krishna's mother had a strong dislike for her eldest daughter-in-law since she was not following 'her house-keeping philosophy'. Her remarks on Susila shows what she thinks about Susila. As she says.

"Susila is a modest girl. She is not obstinate".

Grandparent and grandchild relationship is also another remarkable relationship found in the novel. The grandparents of Krishna's child were very worried about the motherless child. The child had also a strong liking to go to her grandparents' house. She got pleasure and satisfaction in the house of her grandparents. She wanted her father to come and stay there with her. For Leela, the child, her grandparents were the only persons whom she liked most. Her paternal grandfather saved money for her future. Leela lived happily with her grandparents. The absence of her parents was to be filled up by the love and kindness of her grandparents.

Among the varieties of human relationships found in the novel, Krishna's relationship with the headmaster is also interesting. It was the relationship of true friends. Leela's going to school made Krishna acquainted with the headmaster. Gradually, Krishna began to admire the headmaster and his new method of education, "The Leave Alone System". Krishna was fascinated by the peculiar character of the headmaster. That is why he

17. Ibid., p. 28.
18. Ibid., p.30.
decided to work together with the headmaster in the rest of his life. The headmaster fully knew that Krishna was very sincere and truthful. He told the secrets of his life to Krishna which he did not even disclose to his wife. He opened his heart to Krishna and got pleasure in his company. The headmaster got peace and happiness in Krishna's house unlike his house where he could never got peace. It shows that he gets a warm hospitality from Krishna. On his last day, as the hermit predicted, he came to Krishna's house to request him to run his school after his death. He believed Krishna as the most suitable person to handover his school. In fact, it was the question of faith and truthfulness. After he resigned his job, Krishna tried to get inner satisfaction by working together with the headmaster. It is clear that Krishna's relationship with the headmaster is the true relationship between two friends.

In fact, in this novel, R.K. Narayan has successfully delineated various kinds of human relationships that make the novel one of the most popular novels ever written by the novelist. Here, R.K. Narayan has most successfully presented his notion of an ideal husband-wife relationship.