CHAPTER IV

THE MYTHICAL STRUCTURE IN R. K. NARAYAN'S NOVELS

DEFINITION AND THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT OF THE USE OF MYTH.

The word 'myth' has been so constantly used in the literature of the world over the last few decades that it has now become something of a cliche of the literary criticism. Besides its use in literary criticism, the term is also used in a variety of meanings in Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Philosophy and in comparative religion, each field of study investing it with different connotations. But its use in literature is more extensive now-a-days and interests the literary critic more widely than anyone else. The concept of myth has therefore come into Indo-Anglian literature in its natural way. But before we discuss the ways and means in which myths operate in Indo-Anglian literature, especially in R.K. Narayan's fiction we must define and analyse the specific context in which the word 'myth' is used in this Chapter.

Let us first make a comprehensive analysis of the distinction between the conscious and unconscious use of myth. In literature these are mainly the ways in which myths are used. Of the two uses the conscious use of myth is a popular literary device and part of a modern trend. This is the method used by Eliot in 'THE WASTE LAND', by Joyce in 'ULYSSES', by E.M. Forster in 'A PASSAGE TO INDIA' and by O'Neill in Contd...P/274.
'MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA' etc. All these writers differ widely in their techniques and intentions, but there is one common element in their diverse methods. Each of them uses mythical or classical situation or characters in a modern context, thereby seeking to illuminate the predicament of contemporary man, viewing him in a larger perspective of time. The uninitiated reader reads the narrative for its own sake, but when the mythical or classical parallel is recognised, his response to the work is enriched by an element of recognition. The conscious use of myth is now a familiar and more popular technical device used by many contemporary writers. Virginia Wulf, James Joyce and Huxley etc. of the forties and John Updike and Archibald Macleish of the late fifties and sixties took keen interest in the application of this method of conscious use of myth. John Updike's novel 'THE CENTOURE' (1963) and Archibald Macleish's play 'F.B.' (1958) show evidences of this method.

Secondly, there is the unconscious use of myth. There are many novels and dramas in which the writer may not have been conscious of using a mythical situation or character but readers or critics have discovered the unconscious ways in which myths have operated in them. There is the example of 'HAMLET' which Gilbert Murray traced to a primitive myth connected with the ritual battle of Summer and Winter, of Life and Death. This kind of archetypal criticism claiming descent

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from Jung's theory that modern man preserves, though unconsciously, those prehistoric areas of experience which he interpreted in myth, is undoubtedly a fruitful and fascinating approach to literature. But that is not our point of discussion here. We shall limit ourselves to the study of the conscious use of myth in Indo-Anglian writers, mostly as part of their technique. To meet our ends in this matter we shall consider not only the literary myths used by them such as stories from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and Puranas - but also from the local legends, folk-lore as well as primitive rituals like the ritual for rain, for harvest or fertility and similar other sources. Before we discuss the use of myth in R.K.Narayan's novels our analysis will include the novels that are constructed on a single-sustained myth as well as those works where myths, rituals and folk tales are used as digressions or illustrations in order to add to the novels a special characteristic of Indianness or a mythical colouring to the work because this is part of our cultural pattern, our ideals of aspiration that may or may not have any basis in the actual conduct of real human beings.

One basic question may crop up here as to why are myths important in the study of literature; why do myths operate so powerfully in the modern literary works; why are myths and legends a significant factor in the thought pattern of the writers? The answer to these questions is not difficult to find. It is very interesting to speculate why poets...
and writers have always been drawn towards myths and legends. The first and foremost reason may be their quality of timelessness and antiquity. Myths are old, far-off distant things; naturally they lend enchantment and charm to the modern people. The charm of the Indian mythological stories, inspite of their distance from contemporary reality does have a kind of fundamental significance. The Indian writers are aware of this and recreated the myths with all their 'literary possibilities'. Another reason is that myths along with folk tales and ancient legends provide abstract story patterns. Northrop Frye has made a significant remark on this:

Writers are interested in them for the same reason that painters are interested in still life arrangements, because they illustrate essential principles of story-telling.

The writers derive patterns of stories or story-contents or essential principles of story-telling from those legends and folk tales.

There is another reason in favour of the presence of myths in literature. This view may not be accepted by all but its importance cannot be ruled out wholly. It is the literary nature of all myths. Writers and poets are always attracted to myths mainly because myth is literature. Myth is ethical, philosophical, religious and cultural.
Indian myths are part of Indian life and culture. Similarly, Indian myths are part of Indian literature; we can therefore assert that myth embodies the nature and spirit of literature. Writers are attracted to myths because of their literary nature. We have seen how the classical myths and legends have always been used as sources of reference to English poets and writers. Achilles and Hercules, Diana and Apollo, Prometheus and Hector, Job and Judas have again and again appeared in the literatures of the last few centuries as references, allusions and decorations. Let us take a single instance to show how myths engulf the poetical temperament of Shelley and Keats. Shelley is an admirer of Greek world. He has read extensively the Greek literature. He has developed a sort of affinity with the mythical imaginative gesture of the Greek. He feels that the figure of Prometheus will stand for him, particularly as that figure has an imposing bearing in the history of literature. In 'PROMETHEUS UNBOUND', Shelley tries to incorporate his ideas, especially his ideas about the liberation of humanity. The Greek myths give him sustenance and allow to develop his poetry. Shelley has committed that he has Aeschylus in mind while writing 'PROMETHEUS UNBOUND'. Aeschylus has maintained the strict contours of the Greek myth. In 'PROMETHEUS UNBOUND' Shelley starts with the well known myth of Prometheus. But that is only the starting point. As the poem evolves Shelley goes about creating his own myth. In the first place the original Greek myth
is altered to his liking and certain other figures are introduced. Prometheus, Asia, Panthea etc. undergo a process of transformation and they are encircled from time to time by strange spirits and fauns. Instead of taking away from the beauty of the poem they enhance the beauty of it and identify the rich possibility of imagination of Shelley. Shelley's fiery imagination sees in 'PROMETHEUS' a symbolic quality, the quality of the spirit of revolution and ultimate liberation of humanity. Shelley's use of myth in his poems is therefore, to recreate his imagination and delight in mythological creations. Keats also used myth in his poems to cultivate the spirit of Hellenism. His response to the Hellenic world is primarily spontaneous and imaginative. He could revive like Shelley, in a singularly happy fashion the unanalysed atmosphere of the world of Greek mythology, on the one hand the restraint so characteristic of the world of Greek mythology, on the other hand the restraint so characteristic of the classic temperament. Another easily recognizable quality in him is seen in his frank worship of beauty. Keats was imaginatively moved by the distant world of beauty and harmony. His 'ENDYMION', 'ODE TO PSYCHE', 'ODE ON A GRECIAN URN', 'HYPERION' etc. assume a new dimension for their use of mythical references.

But the structural use of myth is clearly a Twentieth Century literary phenomenon. In English literature,
the revival of interest in myth derives largely from the works of W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot and James Joyce and each of them made myth meaningful in a different way in modern literature. Their use of myth is similar to that of the romantic poets in the sense that all of them derived joy and inspiration from the classical legends and stories but different in the sense that the Twentieth Century writers took myth as part of a digressional technique. It can be shown that the concern of the writers with myth has now been part of a broader Twentieth Century tendency, shared by anthropologists and scholars in other allied fields of learning. The discoveries of Jung and Frazer have also played a significant role in the revival of myth in modern literature. We need not go into the origin of the movement which was partly intellectual and partly emotional that revived myth and its literary value. Myth was an existing trend - a popular theme for the Indo-Indian literature as it was already a dominating factor in English and in other European literature of the Twenties and Thirties.

THE SCOPE OF THE USE OF MYTH IN INDIAN AND INDO-ANGLO-INDIAN LITERATURE

It is necessary to point out here that many of the trends and movements in Indian literatures have been derivative in nature. Sometimes they have been imitative either consciously or unconsciously. Most of the literary
trends and movements in India have found their root in Europe. In Bengali literature of the Twenties and Thirties the pervading tone was that of post-war European disillusionment. The situations that gave rise to that despair and frustration were not present in exactly the same form in India at that time. It was clear reflection of the then war-tossed European temperament. The Pragativada movement in Hindi literature of the Thirties was nothing other than a counterpart of the trends of the leftist writings in Europe at the same time. We notice a predominantly existentialist movement in Bengali fiction in the Sixties which is not at all a natural growth but primarily inspired by the contemporary existentialist writers in Europe. The primary cause of disillusionment in Indian literature is different from that of the Western literature. The despair in Western literature is of an intellectual and spiritual origin whereas the disillusionment in Indian literature leading to frustration and futility is born of the inability of getting its minimum needs of living - the needs of food and shelter and clothing. These two are totally different experiences and therefore cannot produce the same kind of literature. Just as most European trends have found their echoes in India, the Western writer's concern with myth was bound to be reflected in Indian literature.

But Indo-Anglian literature is such an area in which direct derivation is not possible. Unlike the Bengali,
or Hindi or Marathi writer, an Indo-Anglian writer has to face some peculiar difficulties in this matter. He can benefit from the technical experiments of the European models; he can execute the stream of consciousness method in his fiction or share the existentialist view of the modern European literary artists. An Indo-Anglian writer has the freedom to make experiment of any kind without any difficulty. But when he attempts to use myth in his writings, he finds that his freedom is strictly restricted and his area of movement is narrowly bound. He cannot draw his materials like the English or American writers from the Christian, pagan or classical sources. This poses to be a great difficulty or a more creative challenge to him because he had to turn to the mythology of his own culture to create significant patterns of fiction.

The thing may not seem to be difficult at all because the people of India are closer to their mythology than the modern Irish or British people are to Celtic folklore or Greek legends. The Indian people are deeply conscious of their culture - their rich past. They still grow up absorbing the myths and legends of the country. Here it is almost a custom to recite the mythological stories to the children and along with their growth they naturally develop a strong fascination to this golden treasury of the myths. The public recitation of tales Contd... P/282.
from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas pointing out its contemporary relevance is even now a living tradition. The influence of the epics in our national life is so dominat­
ing and so far-reaching that if a world view is required to make literature meaningful in terms of shared human experience then the Indian epics offer a widely accepted basis of such a common background which permeates the collective unconscious of the whole nation. Apart from that the epics and the Puranas are among the few common links which constitute an all India frame of reference. Since the Indo-
Anglian writing has its root in India, the writers should have been attracted towards this rich material.

But in reality, the consciousness of myth is very slow to evolve in Indo-Anglian fiction. It could be held that too close a proximity of the writer to these myths was itself perhaps a hindrance to their objective realisation. But it may be nearer the truth to admit that most Indo-
Anglian men or women who were more exposed to Western culture than to Indian, if not in actual life at least in literary training. They were therefore, unused to finding meaningful patterns in Indian myths for possible use in literature. It is not until the fifties that we find any significant use of myth in the Indo-Anglian novel, and even then it is only in writers as exceptional as Sudhin Ghosh or Raja Rao whose encyclopaedic knowledge and eclectic
interests traverse with equal ease Indian folk lore and Sanskrit classics as well as the history and culture of Europe.

**TWO WAYS OF THE USE OF MYTH IN THE INDO-ANGLIAN FICTION**

In Indo-Anglian novels myths have been used mainly in two ways. M.R. Nair has used myth as part of a digressional technique and in this he has excelled all others. R.K. Narayan, M.R. Anand and others have used myths as structural parallels where a mythical situation under lies the whole or part of a novel. There are other writers who have experimented on both the methods. The method of Sudhin Ghose is mostly digressional. In general, Sudhin Ghose weaves variety of legends and myths and folk tales into the fabric of his novel to attain some desired effect. Only once he has withdrawn from the digressional technique when in 'THE CRADLE OF THE CLOUDS' he uses one particular ritual as the central design. This method of using myth as a structural parallel is sometimes used consistently through out a novel as in Narayan's 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' or Anand's 'THE OLD WOMAN AND THE COW'. But almost in all cases it is done in a fragmentary way, illuminating a character here or enriching a situation there. For example, B.Rajan in in his novel 'THE DANCE OF THE DARK' uses the Mahabharata character Karna as a symbol of not belonging: "Which son of Kunti do you suppose I am?" he asked here. "You are Karna", she replied without hesitation. "The man who could not belong". 

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Krishna's situation in the novel is parallel with that of Karna. But the analogy is not extended far enough to become significant. The post-partition Hindu-Muslim clashes as described in the same novel are viewed as re-enactment of the battle of Kurukshetra.

In the employment of method every Indo-Anglian writer has individualistic vision that affects his attitude towards myths. This difference in method reveals the basic difference of attitude towards the past. The myths of Sudhin Ghose are so real that sometimes the line that divides mythical time from historical time is quite blurred. Baja Bao uses the mythical parallel to extend our understanding of a present situation. But Anand's method is quite opposite. To a certain point Anand follows the mythical design and then changes the direction and the line perhaps in order to indicate that the same ending is no longer possible or desirable in our times. A.K.Narayan's mythical structure is only partly a self-conscious device. He uses the same archetypal pattern in all his novels. Bajen employs mythical parallels only incidentally to illuminate certain situations and characters. Exactly for the same purpose Bhabani Bhattacharya uses his myths.

Anyway before we proceed to a detailed discussion of the different aspects of the conscious use of myths and
their proper suitability in the context of modern times one incidental observation may be made about the way in which myths unconsciously operate in these novels. This is noticed in certain archetypal figures, situations and relationships that recur in the series of novels and give a mythical colouring to them. Sita has been regarded as the archetype of Indian womanhood in all her suffering and sacrifice in 'THE DARK DANCER', 'A TIME TO BE HAPPY', 'SOME INNER FURY' and 'THE DARK ROOM' and in many regional novels of the country. The legendary name of Sita and Savitri has an emotional and spiritual effect on the Indian minds and the Indo-Anglian novelists have taken appropriate advantage of this sentimental point. Another archetypal figure is the elemental earth mother who appears as little mother in Raja Rao's 'THE SERPENT AND THE ROPE', Akkaya and Lakshamma in his short stories for ever giving abundantly without expectation of return. An archetypal situation encountered in may novels is a sacrifice done in order to gain a divine favour. The fasting of Raju into death to end a draught as in 'THE GUIDE', the sacrifice of the simple village women to bring about rain in 'THE CRADLE OF THE CLOUDS' or the fasting of Moorthy in 'KANTHAPURA' for the purification of self are only a few rare instances. These and many other archetypes appear again and again in the Indo-Anglian novels not only for the sake of giving mythical colouring to them but because these are part of Contd.....P/286.
the cultural pattern, our ideals of aspiration that may or may not have any basis in the actual conduct of real human beings.

**MYTH AS PART OF DIGRESSional TECHNIque**

The digressional method of story-telling is perhaps the oldest device in narrative literature. Weaving in stories within a story or attempting to describe a parable to bring out a moral lesson - all these are characteristic devices of the Puranas, Upanishadic stories, Panchatantra, Vishnupurana and other classical narrative devices. The same devices are applicable to the stories of the Ammayana and the Mahabharata as well. Many Indian novelists, especially Raja Rao spoke highly of this technique of narration in his introduction to the novel 'KANTHAPURA'. He was in fact the spokesman of the digressional method of story-telling in Indo-Anglian fiction. In his discourse in the forward to 'KANTHAPURA' Raja Rao observes:

> Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another thought. This was, and still is, the ordinary style of our story-telling. I have tried to follow it myself in this story. 3.

It would be better to call it the oral tradition of story-telling. The same style of narration can be found...
in the Bible as well as in the Greek epics. Chaucer in his 'PROLOGUE TO THE CANTERBURY TALES' has followed this method where episode follows episode in a meandering fashion. Not only in English or in Indian literature, the earliest narrative works of any literature either religious or secular are closer to the oral tradition and therefore they have this popular digressional manner of unfolding. In almost every regional literature of our country this was perhaps the only traditionally accepted method of narration. The system of telling stories from the epics and Puranas was very powerfully effective in order to educate the unlettered masses in the ancient ages. This was in those days a very popular process of injecting new ideas and thoughts into the village people. The writers have therefore tried to maintain the same old technique in their present day works also and frankly speaking, their attempt and purpose have not failed. Sometimes numerous interpolations are added to the original work through the centuries, and even if it was not oral composition in the beginning, it soon acquires the distinctive marks of an oral tradition in the process of being spoken aloud or recited by succeeding generations.

The general condition of the oral tradition of story-telling is the sharing of a common mythology where the narrator comes very closer to the audience and
establishes a closer relation with them. Raja Rao and Sudhin Ghose have adopted this method. They have drawn abundantly from the mythological sources and the myths they use in their novels are of three kinds. The well known tales from the epic and the Puranic myths are easily communicable to Indian readers. Raja Rao, for example uses the polarities between good and evil as exemplified in Bama and Havana as the basis to describe the Gandhian struggle against the brute force of the red demon in 'KANTAPURA'. The eternal longing of legendary Radha for Krishna appears as very favourite theme to Sudhin Ghose. His treatment of this theme is to represent human love from different angles. He says in 'THE FLAME OF THE FOREST' :

Every woman in love is Radha, and her lover is Krishna.  

Or

The human soul's longing for reunion with the Divine as symbolised by Krishna.

The mythological love theme of Radha and Krishna always provides a useful frame of reference in the novels of Sudhin Ghose.

Secondly, there are the localised myths and folk tales which Raja Rao calls the Sthalapurana - The legendary history of place or village. These myths do not have all-
India appeal. The novel centres round a particular local myth of the place and attain distinctive mythical quality but the novel does not get Pan-Indian familiarity. The story of Raja Rao's 'KAATHAPURA' is an instance of 'Sthalapurana' connected with a local myth of the village of the Western coast of India. There are also examples of localised myths and legends in the novels of M.R. Anand, Sudhin Ghose, R.K. Narayan and Khuswant Singh which give them a distinctive regional flavour. In Sudhin Ghose's novel 'THE FLAME OF THE FOREST' the legend of Ati, the Nemesis and its connection with the landmarks of Calcutta, Omichand's tower specially is described in full detail. Sudhin Ghose's first two volumes contain many scattered examples taken from the history of the Penhari Parganas situated along the border of Bihar and West Bengal where it is told, the people were ruined five hundred years ago through their excessive love of wrestling. All the volumes of Ghose were replete with local legends, myths of the tribal people and rituals of the village folk. For him the roads and landmarks even in Calcutta are rich with Sthalapurana. The difference between a prominent Pan-Indian myth and a Sthalapurana is that the reader's acquaintance with the former can be taken for granted and therefore variations and nuances are possible, while the latter has to be told in some detail before references can be made to it. But as soon as the local legend has been narrated and established,

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its function becomes the same as that of a more well-known myth.

Lastly, there are the rites and rituals and incidental reflections and allusions which do not form integral part of myth but greatly help in providing a frame of reference. The ritual for rain which forms the main motive of 'THE CRADLE OF THE CLOUDS', the supernatural tantric rite of reviving a dying man by exchanging his soul with another in 'THE FLAME OF THE FOREST', the ritual of meeting the soul of the dead in 'THE ENGLISH TEACHER' or the ritual of arathi with kumkum or the offering of coconuts and betel nut and the camphor censer that we find very often in the novels of R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya.

But in this connection we shall have to note that a mere conglomeration of myths, legends and rituals do not give a novel a distinctive stature unless there is an underlying design that holds together all the digressions and enrich the structure of a modern novel. One of the main defects of Raja Rao's technique is that he has paid little attention to the inner design and as a result his novels, specially 'THE SNAKE AND THE ROPE' suffers from the fault of 'Philosophical garrulosity'. There were enormous possibilities - he has drawn very largely from the mythological sources. Had he taken proper care of the sources and

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the materials to serve the useful structural purpose the novel could have become a fine specimen of literary work. The same criticism is also applicable to the literary technique of Ghose. All his works are richly laden with myths, legends and rituals. But due attention has not fallen on the basic underlying pattern which should have been strictly repeated in the total design of the plot.

**MYTHICAL DESIGN AND THE CYCLICAL CONSTRUCTION IN R.K. NARAYAN'S NOVEL & MYTH AS A STRUCTURAL PARALLEL**

It has already been pointed out by critics that R.K. Narayan's 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' has a definite sustained mythical structure. It is the method of using myth as a structural parallel which has been consistently applied in this novel. But in case of his other novels this method of the structural parallel has not been thoroughly used but done in a fragmentary way, illuminating a character here or enriching a situation there.

The material Narayan works with in 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' is rich in myths and legends and he uses the same old technique more effectively here than he did elsewhere. The relevance of the classical myths and legends to modern life is apparent to a greater or lesser extent in those novels. In 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' his method of mythologising contemporary reality becomes ever more apparent

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and important. The method of using myth as a structural parallel is consistently used throughout in the novel. In the previous novels, even in 'THE GUIDES' the use of myth as a structural parallel is more often done in a fragmentary way, illuminating a character here like Aju who is suddenly raised to a mythic level or enriching a situation there like that of the unexpected catastrophe that results from the deviations of Margawa making him a beggar over night. In 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALUDI' A.K. Narayan has presented a definite sustained mythical structure. Reviewers have read it as an allegory; some have pointed out that the novel closely follows the classical pattern of Sanskrit literature. In his introduction to 'Gods, Demons and others' which followed 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALUDI' Narayan explains some of the principles which constitute the classical myths in his novels. They are the inevitable triumph of good and the destruction of evil, the law of Karma, the time-scheme of the Gods and the specific stylized roles of Gods; demons, Kings and Sages. With the impact of modern literature the Indo-Anglian novelists begin to look at the Gods, demons and Sages not as some remote Puranic characters as described in the mythological stories but as types and symbols possessing psychological validity, even when seen against the contemporary background. These Characters make a link between normal life as we know and the cyclically ordered universe with which it is continuous.

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The two important Indo-Anglian writers, namely, Baja Rao and Sudhin Dhone, have drawn very largely from mythological sources and given them appropriate modern interpretation. The myths they use in their novels are of different kinds. Firstly, the epic and Puranic myths used to communicate the contrary elements of good and evil and the ultimate triumph of the virtue over vice. Secondly, the myths containing the legendary history of a place or a locality which may be appropriately called localised myths or legends. Thirdly, the rites and rituals which may not fall into the category of myth proper but used as a source of reference.

But the texture of myths, legends and rituals cannot give a novel a special stature unless there is an underlying design holding together all the digressions and interpolations, all these episodes within episodes, and mere description of the rituals and legends without any proper context will rather weaken than enrich the structure of a modern novel. David M. Cutchion has said about Baja Rao's 'THE SERPENT AND THE ROPE':

the major fault of the book is its philosophical garrulosity. Baja Rao cannot control his material.

But the same criticism is not applicable to Narayan’s work. 'THE MAN-EATER OF MAUJUDI' of Narayan has a mythical structure —
it is richly laden with myths and rituals. We shall attempt to examine its use of myths to determine whether the profusion of myths and rituals serves any useful structural purpose.

- STRUCTURAL UNITY IN 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' -

It is in this novel 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' where the structural unity is wholly based more on a mythical parallel than on a philosophical concept. Just as in a myth some of the chief characters are gods and demons and other beings larger in power than humanity, in this story H. Vasu, the power-hungry taxidermist and the dynamic man of action who operates much as Dr. Fal did in 'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT' is presented as a figure much above the common run of men. He has been ironically described as the 'Man-Eater' and the rakshasa as a demoniac creature possessing enormous strength, strange powers and genius far above the ordinary level of humanity. He is designed after the Hanuman, the rakshasa character of Ramayana or the Asuras described in the Indian Puranas. He is portrayed as the incarnation of evil. In the novel Vasu occupies an all-pervasive monster-like position. His demoniac personality raises him to the level of an Asura by identifying his activities with the feats of the classical demon. In his character the writer implies that no one on earth is so powerful as to evade the stern hand of divine justice. The hot-headed and self-willed taxidermist

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who threatened to defy all the prized human values and compunctions to satisfy his own selfish needs, is ultimately caught in his own trap and dies by his own hands. Here the destruction of the 'Man-Eater' offers a parallel to the destruction of the evil-doer Ravana in the hands of Rama, the Godman. Sastri's puckish homily to Nataraja, signifies the moral underlying the mythical structure of the novel:

*Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the Rakshasas that were ever born. Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity?*

Narayan aptly compares Vasu to the mythological Bhasmasura, the unconquerable, who scorched everything he touched, and finally reduced himself to ashes by placing the tips of his fingers on his own head. By this mythological story he suggests that Vasu too like Bhasmasura met his death by his own hands. This mythical analogy cannot be systematically followed through to find exact points of correspondence but it gives an insight into the innocent mind of the Malgudi people that R.K. Narayan has attempted to present in 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI', the kind of mind.

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in which myth and fact are not clearly distinguishable. Moreover, for such a mind a fact does not become significant until it can be related to a myth. The author seems to suggest that the hard-hearted taxidermist is given to cannibalism and the annihilation of his own kind. He adheres to the Indian classical tradition by mythicising the central character and gives his hero that unusually Rakshasa status.

The myths and legends are part of the characterisation of Vasu and also integral to the progress of events. The central theme of 'MR. SAMPATH', 'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT' and 'THE GUIDE' is concerned with the sense of 'matra' (limits) and the transgression of it. The use of myth in those novels is not arbitrary - but done with the definite purpose of delimiting the author's total scope and imposing a deeper pattern on the literal level of his narration. The parallel design is complicated enough to make a sudden recognition of the total design at the end of a gratifying experience. Northrop Frye speaks of two kinds of recognition in fiction:

One is the continuous recognition of credibility, fidelity to experience. The other is the recognition of the identity of the total design, into which we are initiated by the technical recognition of the plot. 8.

Some of Narayan's novels specially 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' assumed a new meaning as soon as the second recognition has been experienced.

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Narayan is aware of the total design of the plot of the novel. He succeeds in maintaining the integrity of the structure. About the inevitable triumph of virtue over vice in the classical mythology Narayan comments:

The strong man of evil continues to be reckless until he is destroyed by the tempo of his own misdeeds. Evil has in it, buried subtly, the infallible seeds of its own destruction and however frightening a demon may seem, his doom is implied in his own evil propensities. 9.

Narayan executes this idea of the mythical demon in the novel and describes its relevance to modern times. Thus, Vasu, the outsider is 'typed' fairly early in the novel:

"He shows all the definitions of a Rakshasa", persisted Sastri, and went on to define the make-up of a Rakshasa ..... He said, 'Every Rakshasa gets swollen with his own ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something or other will destroy him' 10.

The mock-heroic method as used by Narayan in the story depends on a balance between credibility and irrationality. Once Vasu's identity as a Rakshasa is established and his tenacity and aggressiveness are exposed with the fullest measure, all encounters with him take on the character of...
mock-heroic skirmishes with an invincible demon. Vasu is too confident of himself, too sure of his superiority over others and too quick to challenge the knowledge and authority of others. The following observation of Nataraj on his nature gives a clue to his being called the 'Man-Eater':

Now it was like having a middle aged man-eater in your office and home, with the same uncertainties, possibilities and potentialities. 11.

Yet all events in the novel remain credible while the final explanation of Vasu's death alone is deliberately absurd. Hangi's explanation of his death tormented by mosquitoes is like this:

Next minute she heard a sharp noise like a thunder-clap. The man had evidently trapped a couple of mosquitoes which had settled on his forehead by bringing the flat of his palm with all his might on top of them. 12.

Vasu has smashed in his own skull. Such an explanation may sound ridiculous, but that matters little. His death is an established fact which was inevitable in course of time. Like every demon Vasu also carries within him a 'tiny seed of self-destruction' which brought about his end. Sastri returns to Malgudi, having shrewdly absented himself while the police investigation was going on in the press. He offers Nataraj the mixed holy ash of his pilgrimage as if absolving
him from his involvement with Vasu. The story that Vasu killed himself is a parody of the well-known myths about demons such as Ravana and Varaha: Nataraj accepts the parody, recognizing the reference and the assumptions of the myth.

**THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI - A SUSTAINED ALLEGORICAL STRUCTURE**

If 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' is read as an allegory, it is because of its sustained mythical structure. It will not be an exaggeration to have said it written in the classical pattern of Sanskrit literature. The contrast between the hero Nataraj who is a gentle, normal, devoted husband and a meek printer and Vasu, an aggressive man of action do not escape our notice. Nataraj like Sampath is a printer and like Sampath he has -

'hung a blue curtain' 13.

between his parlour and the press. Moreover, he too maintains the harmless romantic fiction of having a busy staff of foremen, compositors, office boys, binders and accountants. Nataraj is a dreamer who prefers presiding over his 'debating parlour' where the Malgudi eccentrics and intellectuals love to collect and engage in endless talk. Nataraj considered from all aspects is characteristically passive. He is not a man of action. He is a gentler virtuous version of Sampath too in his constant pretence of being busy. He has little

Contd.....P/300
control over things in life; he has little power to influence and dictate events. He is not audacious and cannot assert. He is mainly passive under the guise of false pretention of being busy. He is aware of his passiveness:

The trouble with me was that I was not able to say 'no' to anyone and that got me into complications with everyone, from a temple prostitute to a taxidermist. 14.

He is a foil to formidable Vasu who is a great advocate of individual achievement. The peaceful life of Malgudi is jerked out by his sudden arrival from outside. The peace of Nataraja's printing world is rudely, dramatically disturbed by the face of Mr. Vasu peering over the curtain like Sampath's little boy:

a tanned face, large powerful eyes under thick eyebrows, a large forehead and a shock of unkempt hair, like a black halo. 15.

The 'black halo' simile is perhaps the first hint of Vasu's demonic character and role. Emerging into full view he turns out to be six feet tall, bull-necked with a grip like iron. He comes to set up his business of taxidermy unaided by anyone. Overbearing, violent, desperate and possessed of enormous strength, he takes a fancy to Nataraj and moves himself as the non-paying tenant of an attic in the printing works.

Contd...P/301.
It is with the ambition of flourishing as a taxidermist on his hunting in the forests of Mempi Hills, rich in wild life, that he comes to Malgudi and makes the press of Nataraj his shelter. He secures a game license for hunting in the Mempi forest on his own initiative, and kills, processes, stuffs animals, packs them in boxes and sends them out to different places single-handed, while:

I (Nataraj) noted it all from my seat in the press and said to myself - 'from this humble town of Malgudi stuffed carcasses radiate to the four corners of the earth.'

The whole place is soon filled with the sickening odours of the chemicals used in taxidermy. Nataraj is a silent and helpless observer to all these things. He has no courage to protest. The formidable looks of the man and his rough and aggressive behaviour frighten him to freeze. When Hataraja's neighbours complain to him about creating insanitary surroundings in a residential area by using a room of his press for the tanning and curing of skins, he, however, requests Vasu to find a new house for himself:

'Look here Vasu', I said, with a sudden access of foolhardiness, 'you should leave others along; it will make for happiness all around'. 'I cannot agree with you', he said, 'we are not lone dwellers in the Sahara to live self-centred lives, and there is no point in living like a recluse.'
If action and inaction are the two attributes of Vasu and Nataraj, associated with them are also the qualities of tolerance and intolerance.

It should not slip our notice that in spite of his insistence on man being a social animal, it is Vasu himself who is anti-social, unlawful and unmannerly in his ways of life. He tries to evict Nataraj by unlawful means, frightens children, kills dogs, disturbs the people of his neighbourhood by his unsocial manners and with the stench of his workshop. But not only that. He defies social conventions by bringing prostitutes home. The extension of his hunting instincts to women goes beyond all limits and decency. He despises marriages for the same reason:

You don't have to own a coffee estate because you like to have a cup of coffee now and then... 18.

Nataraj beholds a procession mount his stairs to Vasu's monstrous embrace:

Sometimes a slim girl went by, sometimes a fair one, sometimes an in-between type, sometimes a fuzzy-haired woman, some mornings a fashionable one who had taken the trouble to tidy herself up a bit before coming out... I had no notion that our town possessed such a varied supply of women. 19.  

Contd... P/303.
His greed for wealth is demonic and his views on sex and marriage are equally anarchic and horrifying. He does not feel the pricks of conscience to utter:

Only fools marry, and they deserve all the trouble they get. I really do not know why people marry at all. If you like a woman, have her by all means.  

Nataraj is deeply agitated by his arrogant behaviour. The taxidermist's profession is abhorrent to a vegetarian disciple of ahimsa, but Nataraj feels a strange mingling of dread and admiration for his boisterous tenant. The role of landlord-tenant, host-guest is ironically reversed when Vasu threatens to sue Nataraj for neglecting his duties as a landlord and ruins what is left of the printing business with his taxidermic odours. Even Vasu's sexual depredations have their effect, undermining Nataraj's innocence and bringing him into disturbingly close physical contact with 'ladies of the town' like Rangi. Vasu on his side wishes to maintain a bond with Nataraj, taking a semi-sadistic delight in making him a witness or accessory to his illegal and immoral activities. Vasu takes a sardonic pleasure in violating legal and sacred codes. All his acts throughout the novel are such as to excite the condemnation of the conventional moralist. Ironically the habit is traceable to his early career as a nationalist agitator who took part in the

Contd.....P/304.
civil Disobedience Movement against the British rule, broke laws, marched, demonstrated and ended up in jail. At this date he was not physically stronger than most. After quitting the nationalist movement he undergoes a training in body-building and physical exercises under a reputed strong-man who fed him up on tons of milk, eggs, almonds and chickens until he could:

'snap chains, twist iron bars and pulverize granite' and all with his bare hands.

This Frankenstein monster had naturally violent animal spirits which carried him away into all manner of extravagances - disrespectful to all people and prone to mischievous frolics. He was incorrigibly wayward and imprudent so that he was accounted one of the wildest fellows in Malgudi at that time. When delighted or grieved or angry or anxious he was apt to fall into paroxysms of frenzied excitement and to behave literally like a mad-man. How arrogant and fearless are his replies to the police Inspector who comes to confiscate his arms:

'Are they loaded?' - he asked.

'Of course, they are loaded, they are not toys'.

'Where is your ammunition statement?'.

'In that envelope'.

'When did you discharge your last shot?'

Contd....P/305.
'Shut up, Inspector, and get out. I don't have to answer your questions. What's your authority for coming and questioning me?'

'Oar D.S.P's order.'

'It is my order that you clear out, with this bunch of men who have no business here.'

The journalist protested. Muthu jumped up and down in rage. Vasu said, 'Inspector, you are trespassing in my house. Where is your warrant to enter private premises? Come on, produce a warrant. Otherwise I will complain against you for trespass and these men will be my witnesses. I will wire to the Inspector General and the Home Minister. You think you can fool me as you fool all these wretched bullock-cart drivers and cobblers and ragamuffins whom you order about. Whom do you think you are talking to?'

Rangi, the public lady knew him closely. She speaks of his obstinacy and recklessness:

He is so strong and obstinate. If he thinks of something, he has to do it; no one on earth can change his mind.

Vasu is thus a strange - a horrible species of dishonesty and imperfectness, evil and obstinacy. He confides

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in Nataraj that he fears nothing on earth except mosquitoes.

All might yet have been well for Nataraj and his world if Vasu has not set his mind on shooting and stuffing Kumar, a temple elephant who is to be taken in a festival procession organised to celebrate the poet's completion of a portion of his religious epic on Radha and Krishna. Nataraj, the organiser of the festival gets very much upset the moment he learns from Angi who has been carrying on her liaison with the taxidermist that the latter has his eye upon Kumar and will shoot it on the night of the proposed celebrations. Nataraj reports to the police authorities to take precautionary measures against the rash and wicked intentions of the taxidermist. Vasu sends a police Inspector back packing with a broken arm. Nataraj roams Malgudi in despair, near to madness apprehending of the impending danger. But the situation takes a drastic turn there. The procession passes away without any untoward incident. The elephant is spared. But Vasu was found murdered on that night, his skull battered. Vasu's negative acts set him apart from common human beings. Fairly early in the novel, Sastri identifies him with the Rakshasa embodying the forces of destruction. The definition of the Rakshasa given by him reminds one of the 'sense of matra' which was discussed earlier. In 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI', the demon gets swollen with his ego.

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He crosses all the limits. He thinks he is invincible beyond every law, but finally he oversteps his limitations and is destroyed.

The contrast between Nataraj and Vasu is so clearly marked that one is tempted to read in the story of their conflict an allegorical or mythical proportion. Theirs is the opposition between Satva and Rajas. The battle between the Gods and Demons, between the Sura and the Asura is a recurrent motif in Hindu mythology. The Asuras were powerful, sometimes even more than the Gods and many times they triumphed threatening Indra in Heaven with chaos and confusion. But every time Indra's throne was saved by some miracle or divine strategy whereby the demons caused their own destruction and order was restored in the cosmos again.

THE STRUCTURE OF 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI OF THE PURANIC PATTERN'

The structure of 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' more or less follows the same Puranic pattern. The drawn blue curtain of the printing press stands for order and normality. It is as it were a world of eternal calm and peace. From the day the six feet tall, broad-shouldered giant Vasu crosses the threshold intruding in the privacy beyond the curtain confusion begins; peace and normalcy are violently disturbed. Peace and happiness of Nataraj are also gone forever. Vasu's very philosophy of life is in opposition to the peaceful

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ordered universe of Malgudi. He announces himself as a rival to nature soon after his arrival:

... after all we are civilised human beings, educated and cultured, and it is upto us to prove our superiority to nature. Science conquers nature in a new way each day: Why not in creation also? That is my philosophy. Sir, I challenge any man to contradict me.

Vasu fights against nature by slaughtering everything from tiger cubs to cats and dogs and stuffing dead animals to make them look real and fresh. The conflict is not between Vasu and Nataraj alone, though the novel derives some power and interest from Narayan's skilful presentation of the contrast between Vasu and Nataraj, the wild man and the quiet one. The conflict is more between Vasu and the social life in general. The presence and stay of an unconquerable 'Man-Eater' in society is never safe to humanity at large. It is an evil sign - may be a grave threatening to law and order. Vasu in full-blooded revolt against the 'gentle image' of India has no time for the cultural pretensions of Malgudi for its regional politics. As a "terrible specimen of human being" he almost compels Nataraj and many other to be the unwilling agents of his destructive activities. The magnetic power of the evil captures the virtue and degenerates it without any
loss of time. Yasu's seeming superiority over so vast a force merely underlines the fact that evil is often more powerful and dynamic than the powers of virtue. Nataraj is primarily attracted to Vasu - partly by the attraction of the opposites, partly by the immoral sexual athleticism, cool disregard for authority, independence and courage. Vasu represents everything that Nataraja is not. Yet his attempt to reestablish his relations with Vasu illustrates that evil is not merely stronger but also more attractive than goodness. Nataraj remarks:

He was a terrible specimen of human being, no doubt, but I wanted to be on talking terms with him. 26.

It is though ironical but an eternal fact that goodness at the initiative stage is threatened by the forces of badness. It is simply in response to this fact that the gentle pacifistic Nataraj had to maintain 'talking terms' with the ruthless demon. The settled order of Malgudi was threatened with dislocation by Vasu. But the threat is finally dissipated and the novel ends where it began - with the enduring cosmos. It is evident that the story of 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' follows the familiar pattern of a tale from the Puranas where a demon gets too powerful, threatens the heavens with his elemental forces of disorder.

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and anarchy, but in eventuality goes up in the air like a bubble in the sea, leaving the universe as peaceful as before. At the end of the novel Nataraj and Sastri return to printing bottle-labels for an aerated water company and the blue curtain of the printer's room is peacefully drawn.

Undoubtedly, the story of the novel, 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALODI' has a mythical structure of order followed by dislocation of order and which is again followed by restoration of order. This mythical design is reiterated by references to the Puranic conflict between Sura and Asura. Here the use of the myth is structural relevant to the total concept of the plot and not incidental. But there is one important point to notice here. Was Narayan using consciously myth as a technique in the novel? Or was it an unconscious expression of his basic outlook which sees in the existing order of things a desired stability that should be permanent against all the odds of the evil? We have already discussed earlier about the distinction between the conscious use of myth and the archetypal pattern where a mythical situation underlies the whole or part of a novel and which sometimes unconsciously operates in a work of art. The novels of Raja Rao belong to the former category. There is no doubt about the fact that he is the most outstanding exponent of that technique.

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Apparently Narayan's 'THÈ KAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' falls into the category of the archetypal pattern. This is seen in certain archetypal figures, situations and relationships that recur in the novel. Nataraj is the archetype of honesty and goodness of traditional Indian life and culture. Vasu is the archetype of evil force that goes on relentlessly in its fight against truth and nature. An archetypal situation encountered in the novel is the incident that shows how finally the unconquerable man-eater:

reduced himself to ashes by placing the tips of his fingers on his own head.27.

The situation was created to show the destructibility of the evil forces and the eternity of peace and order originated from the ashes of destruction of the said forces. Similar archetypal situation encountered in 'THÈ GUIDE' is a sacrifice done in order to gain divine favour, for example fasting unto death to end a draught, or the fasting of Moorthy in 'KANTHAPURA' for the purification of self, or the sacrifice of the village women to bring about rain in 'THÈ CRADLE OF THÈ CLOUDS'. In the relationships between man and woman, two chief archetypes are seen in the Indo-Anglian novels: the Radha-Krishna motif where the woman is the playmate as well as the beloved and the Rama-Sita relationship where the woman is the submissive sufferer, who through her suffering enhances the nobility of her husband. These archetypes

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appear again and again, not necessarily because the authors are trying to give a mythical colouring to their work, but because they are part of our cultural pattern, our ideals of aspiration, that may or may not have any basis in the actual conduct of real human beings.

In a way Narayan sees any sudden change, not as a positive factor of being, but much more negatively as a play of shadows, an illusion, an unreality like a bubble which will burst sooner or later and the normal order of cosmos will prevail again. In this sense very few of Narayan's novels have a plot which shows a development of the story to a conclusion through interaction of different forces. Usually there is no conclusion as such, but reintegration of an original state of stability and normalcy. In 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' the stability of the print shop, the sanctity of the blue curtain at the end returns not through the inept efforts of Nataraj, but because Vasu carried the seed of his own destruction. The repetition of the pattern is so regular in Narayan that we may doubt if it operates unconsciously because it is part of his world view. In this sense the mythical structure of 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' is only partly a self-conscious device, it is mainly the archetypal pattern that is to be found in many of his novels.
Like the classical authors Narayan employs certain mythical parallels to illuminate certain situations or characters. The reference to the festival procession led by the temple elephant appears to be an incidental reflection but in fact this mythical parallel is linked with the main structure of the novel and an integral part of the same. In addition to that, the reference to the rituals of worship of Krishna and sacrifice also becomes a means of establishing the atmosphere as well as a device for concretizing 'the point of view'. A puja is being offered to Krishna:

The priest was circling the camphor light before the golden images ..... this God Krishna was really .... an incarnation of Vishnu, who had saved Gajendra; he would again come to the rescue of the same animal on whose behalf I was .......

Unknowingly I let out a terrific cry ......which drowned the noise of children, music, and everything. "Oh, Vishnu ! " I howled. 'Save our elephant and save all the innocent men and women who are going to pull the chariot. You must come to our rescue now! 28.

The motive or the point of view is now clear from the extract - to continue the struggle against the negative forces of life.

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The festival has a larger mythical dimension. It is a symbolic reaffirmation of the community itself. It brings Nataraj's talents out into the open for the first time. He organised and stages community festival of great dimensions successfully:

We were planning an elaborate ritual, procession, and feast for a thousand. A few of the persons we approached asked point-blank why we wanted to do anything at all if we had no money in hand - a perfect question but we did not contemplate a retreat.

The festival is smoothly staged despite the apparent financial crisis. As in the plot development of the classical story, it is the nature of such events which reveals or reintegrates the real situation of the characters. The irruption of the hot-headed and self-willed demon who threatens to defy all the prized human values and compunctions to satisfy his own selfish needs can be countered only by the introduction of an equally potent and inexplicable force: the divine (daiva) fate. Hence the utility of the invocation of the spirit of Vishnu, the saviour of the universe. Narayan accomplishes his story in the approved manner of the classicists with all his sincerity: the Nakshasa oversteps his own limits or sense of matra and kills himself. The incident has taken place quite in tune with our traditional beliefs that every...
demon carries within him a tiny seed of self-destruction, that is, the hamartia, which brings down home the worst of catastrophes.

Otherwise, what is to happen to humanity?

Actually it is the festival procession which hastens the death of Vasu. Vasu has threatened to shoot the elephant which is the central feature of the festival procession. Such a decision taken in a fit of passions eventually assures his doom. Nataraj takes every measure to avert the tragic incident which may cause death of many innocent men and women along with the elephant. Vasu beats up the Police Inspector who came to examine the armament of Vasu. Nataraj tries to postpone the procession and then to change its route away from the window of Vasu anticipating unrest and chaos of larger dimension. But others did not approve his plan. Finally, in desperation the festival having already started, Nataraj in a fit of mental unrest creeps into the room of Vasu and finds him asleep. Nataraj decides to steal his gun; he reaches the gun placed beside the 'sleeping' Vasu. At that moment the procession passes along the road. He glimpses the elephant; will vasu wake and seize the moment? Nataraj shudders in frantic fear. During this moment of crisis the alarm clock sounds; he drops the gun and leaves the place. But his purpose has already been accomplished. The prodigious task is accomplished by a mosquito,

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the lowest of god's creatures. The mosquito sits on his forehead and in order to swat it Vasu crushes his own skull and causes his own mortal death. Narayan skilfully places the moment of self-destruction at the peak point of the story by tying it to the high point of the festival.

- RETURN OF THE PEACEFUL COSMOS -

The power of the Rakshasa is so great that immediately after his death peace does not return to the world. Nataraj is suspected as a murderer. He has accomplished the feat in order to reintegrate the world of the printshop but that world still appears irretrievable. The spirit of the dead Rakshasa still envelops the atmosphere. Nataraj thinks:

This was the greatest act of destruction that the Man-Eater had performed, destroying my name, my friendships, and my world. This thought was too much for me. 31.

but when he was apprehending grave danger of life, he was in fact saved. As in the classical analogue it is here also goodness and honesty come out rewarded and the evil punished. The story ends with Sastri, the bulwark of the Printshop again taking his place by the composing board. He is the man
who runs the press and manages all its affairs. Gerow comments:

...the essence of his activity, though, is continuity, not enterprise. He represents the Indian alternative to Vasu and is in a way the embodiment of the Jataic doctrine of selfless, necessary action. 32.

Any way, when he returns to the press after a certain period of absence, the world is re-established. At the end there is a resolution of the dissonance, a reconciliation, a calm cosmos. This is the word which interprets Shakespeare's last plays - 'word over all, beautiful as the sky'. The resolution of the discords has ethical and spiritual significance; it is a moral necessity.

There is therefore no doubt about the fact that the 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALAUDI' has a mythological structure. But the question arises whether A.K. Narayan was consciously using myth as a technique or it was an unconscious manifestation of his ideal outlook which desires to see a permanent stability in the existing order of things. Narayan was conscious that he was creating an Asura in the person of Vasu, because he said afterwards in a Radio interview: 'THE MAN-EATER' is a man, not a tiger, an ego-centred man for whom the objective world is non-existent - a modern Rakshasa who wants to kill the elephant that belongs to the local temple. 33.

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Not only 'THE MAN-EATER OF MALGUDI' follows a clear mythical design of order-dislocation of order - restoration of order in the conception of Vasu as the Rakshasa opposed to the benign aspects of life but also most of the novels of R.K. Narayan reveal the same basic pattern. His people willingly or unwillingly, rightly or wrongly, naturally or unnaturally have opposed the positive values of life to invite disorder and confusion in their lives. But ultimately normalcy returns when they come back to the life they had left behind.

THE SAME MYTHICAL STRUCTURE: THE CYCLICAL VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE IN 'THE BACHELOR OF ARTS'.

His novel 'THE BACHELOR OF ARTS' begins with the normal order of things. The world of Chandran, a young college boy, the son of a retired District Magistrate is a world of inexhaustible enthusiasm and eternal sunshine. But the Eden id suddenly threatened with the wrath of God: thunder and clouds seem to shake and darken the dreamland of the young-man through an illusory love affair which makes the young hero run away and even becomes a Sanyasi for a few days. But ultimately the dauntless and indomitable spirit of man asserts itself and he is saved. He comes back home, takes a respectable job, marries according to his father's choice and begins to live happily. The sun shines again in the disillusioned youngman. In his life order and peace have been

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restored. The preoccupation with time in 'THE BACHELOR OF ARTS' anticipates the cyclical view of the universe. Two views of time are presented in this novel. The theme of the transience of human relations is already present in other novels, and is central to Chandran's view of the world in 'THE BACHELOR OF ARTS'. His awareness and impermanence is contrasted with his mother's awareness of an idealised order of events. This is the background both to Chandran's assertion of individual choice, and his acceptance, in the end, of the permanence of family ties alone.

For Chandran, the passage of time gives each moment its value. He says when he has taken on the responsibilities of a job:

> Where were all these now? He met so few of his classmates, though they were two hundred strong for four years. Where were they? Scattered like spray. They were probably merchants, advocates, murderers, Police Inspectors, clerks, Officers and what not. Some must have gone to England, some married and had children, some turned agriculturists, dead and starving and unemployed, all at grips with life, like a buffalo caught in the coils of a python. 34.

While for Chandran, the experience of the moment alone counts, his mother takes the opposite view. For her

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events in time have value only in so far as they reflect the 'proper order' prescribed in the time-honoured formulas of myths and legends:

She at any rate belonged to a generation which was no worse than the present one for all its observances and as long as she lived she would insist on respecting the old customs. 35.

Or

Be patient, Chandra, you must allow things to be done in the proper order. 36.

She not only believes in the sanctity of custom, the prescribed epical manner and order, but also in a fixed fate. Even if all the conventions or manner and order have been followed,

it is all a matter of fate. You can only marry the girl you are destined to marry and at the appointed time. 37.

In this view, there is no possibility of individual choice:

It is settled already; the husband of every girl and the wife of everyman. It is in nobody's choice. 38.

The human tragedy of the horoscopes which do not match is implied in the letter which Malati's father writes:

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Nobody can have a greater regret than I at missing an alliance with your family. However, we can only propose. He on Tirupati Hills (the Lord Venkatesvara) along knows what is best for us. 39.

Chandran never leaves the orbit of social norms; this is why he does not become a true Sanyasi. He returns to the world because he has neither earned nor deserved by virtue of spiritual worth the gifts of food he is given by the villagers. He is placed as a conformist and a householder and his way of coming to terms with society is to convince himself that in ordering his life from the role of student to householder, each step is his own considered decision. Each compromise is accompanied by some kind of rationalisation.

**THE STRUCTURAL PATTERN IN 'THE DARK ROOM'**

In his novel 'THE DARK ROOM' Narayan describes the same circle and with the consummate skill. Ramani, the office Secretary of Englandia Insurance Company is a very domineering and cynical in his ways and hence governs his house according to his own sweet will. His wife Savitri is a true symbol of traditional Indian womanhood. Naturally, there is little understanding between husband and wife where the former is always at loggerheads with her, blowing hot and cold in the same breath. But life goes on. The wife revolts against his

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selfish ways of life and leaves the house in despair to commit suicide for which she makes unsuccessful attempt also. But eventually, the feelings of homesickness and a tormenting anxiety for her children make her restless. She realises the futility of her attempt to escape from the bonds with the temporal world and returns home and along with her we also come back full circle to where the novel had began.

Throughout the novel the mythical design is shown to touch contemporary reality. Savitri's desertion of the evil association of her self-willed husband and her ultimate return is more true to life - in the traditional norms of Indian womanhood. Her decision to submit to the inevitable is sad but this is the typical Indian trend. Ibsen's approach is revolutionary and radical because he portrays Nora from the Western point of view. But Narayan interprets contemporary Indian cultural scene in terms of his acceptance of a range of cultural values - particularly literary values from India's past. He is not the usual kind of neo-colonial literary phenomenon, the writer adept at westernising his own aesthetic heritage at all costs. Narayan is more keen on interpreting India and Indians to us as contemporaries. He is sophisticated and sensitive to western literary tastes and they have affinities to the larger tradition of western literature. Savitri's decision to leave home in protest of

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her husband's demonic treatment and immoral liaison with a stranger lady is no doubt radical and something new in Indian literature. Here Narayan's resemblance to the western taste is obvious but his essential Indianness is also obvious in his reference to the ultimate come back of Savitri to symbolise the Indian belief in the coherence of all reality. Savitri represents the Indian alternative to Santa Bai and Ramani who personify evil forces and she is in a way embodiment of the Upanishadic doctrine of selfless devotion and genuine womanhood. She offers a parallel to Sita in her suffering. Like Sita she has to leave her home and Sita's stay at Lanka can be said to present a parallel to Savitri's stay at a distant village. But it is after her return to home, that is, in the final development of the plot that the analogy to Sita breaks down. The novel is not a saga of suffering and patience but is intended to be the portrait of a woman who through suffering and misery finally discovers herself as an individual.

The name of Savitri is also suggestive and have a mythical significance. She is deeply devoted to her husband like the mythological Savitri of Mahabharata. She can be studied as the feminine principle that makes life holy and beautiful. She is the root of all strength that makes the universe move. She is Agni to Indra, Savitri to Satyavan. She bears all the trials and tribulations only.

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to make life worth-living. She is the 'Prakriti' that makes 'Purush' manifest. The 'matrishakti' of Hindu mythology thus gains a universal significance through Narayan's panoramic application of it. She is drawn on the mythical parallel in accordance with traditional Indian notions but she and the situation in which she lives and works are primarily and recognizably human and real. All her activities—especially her worship of God in the lonely temple during the period of her exile, her observance of rites during the Navaratri festival, her resort to Satyagrah in the dark room etc. appear deeply ritualistic and sufficiently human. Narayan succeeds in handling these matters without creating an aura of vague emotionalism. All these details are meant to elevate her traditional Hindu womanhood and human relationships into a symbolic one. We can conclude the point by repeating that Savitri offers real point of comparison with 'Sati' Savitri of Mahabharata, the woman of sacrifice and such mythical parallelism looks attractive by investing a modern novel with a certain sophistication.

SYMBOLIC ELEVATION OF TRADITIONAL HINDU WOMANHOOD AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIP

In connection with Narayan's novel 'THE DARK ROOM' we have just noted one prominent archetype of the patient, submissive ideal of womanhood as exemplified by Sita and Savitri that has occurred many times not only in Indo-Anglian
fiction, but in novels in every Indian language. The man-
woman relationship in which the man's role is dynamic and
the woman's passive is a pattern that goes very deep into
Indian ethos. This ideal is so much a part of the Indian
mind, that an Indian reader never pauses to wonder whether
the numerous novels that portray this relationship and
present woman as the symbol of purity and goodness draw
their material from real life, or merely follow a literary
convention. Dorothy Spencer asks a question:

As we observe with the mind's eye this procession
of devoted, submissive, faithful, loyal, self-
sacrificing woman, the question arises, are these
characters intended as realistic portrayals? 43.

Miss Dorothy Spencer attempts to prove with
various passages from Premchand and Bankim Chandra
Chatterjee that the authors have intended to treat these
idealised characters as real human beings. Even in Indo-
Anglian literature also the distinction between the ideal
and the real, especially in the case of women is almost
removed. In many Indo-Anglian novels we find women who
adhere to an archetypal pattern and who are like Sita,
Savitri or Shakuntala in their suffering and forebearance.
These women extol the time-honoured womanly virtues of
patience and devotion and thus convey the permanent values of

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human life. These ideals assume a mythic quality in their permanence within the cultural context of India.

SYMBOLIC USE OF THE EVIL SPIRIT OF MANHOOD - A PROMINENT ARCHETYPE

The prominent archetype of the impatient, aggressive evil spirit of manhood as exemplified by Ravana and Dushasana in our epics has occurred many times in Indo-Anglian novels. The traditional dynamic and dictatorial role of the men in the man-woman relationship is also a pattern that goes deep into Indian ethos. The women present ideals of purity and goodness but the men in most cases, are evil incarnate. Evil is a frightening quality only when it appears along with recognisably concrete human attributes. Indo-Anglian fiction has dearth of real figures of evil in the sense Henry James' Gilbert Osmond is evil or Dushasana in the Mahabharata is evil because they are symbols rather than human beings. Mulak Raj Anand's landlords are villains without being really evil. In a hierarchical society these men merely perform their roles, their function is representative rather than individual. But it is the artistic ability and realistic approach of Narayan that enables him to create convincing figures of evil. They are symbols as well as concrete creatures, villains as well as evil, representative as well as individual. Ramani, the aggressive husband of

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Savitri embodies Narayan's patient disdain for the callous and inconsiderate treatment of the typical Indian husbands towards their docile and devoted wives. He had no definite principle or 'dharma' to follow. His remarks to Savitri:

I don't want you to dictate me.41.

or

I know better what I must do.42

represent a kind of manner or action divorced from 'dharma' or principle. Ramani's very philosophy of life is in opposition to the peaceful ordered universe of Malgudi. His seeming superiority and authority over his wife and other subordinates merely underline the fact that evil is often far more dynamic than forces of goodness.

THE MYTHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE - 'THE DARK ROOM'

Even the title of the novel 'THE DARK ROOM' involves mythological significance from the literary point of view. The dark room is typical of Narayan's own country. He adheres to the Indian classical tradition by mythicising the role of the dark room as the central theme of the novel. It refers to the age-old practice of Indian women who shut themselves in a dark room and refuse to eat or do anything in order to express their anger against their husbands and other senior members of the family. Such practice resembles...
that of Kaikai, the wife of Dasaratha, the king of Oudh as mentioned in the Ramayana. She is said to be taking shelter in a room shut out from the outside world in order to express her resentment against the behaviour of the King. It is therefore, hardly surprising that the novelist will be agile in perceiving parallels between legends and folktales and forging a link between the past and the present by comprehending the essential oneness of history. The practice of self-inflicted torture and passive resistance is intended to change the hearts of the callous members of the house. Similar was the motive of the women of the classical period. Whether this mute weapon is effective or not, it alone can be the last refuge of the helpless women in a rigid and conservative Hindu society which provides them no alternative to their husband's cruelty. Savitri herself resorts to this Satyagraha for expressing her grave resentment against Ramani when he beats their son Babu severely on the eve of Navaratri festival. There are numerous anecdotes and mythical references scattered all over Narayan's novels to reiterate the pattern and to illustrate how all the myths and legends point in one direction, and the general drift of the plot itself runs parallel to it. Diverse as the myths are they are not incidental; they have a basic underlying pattern which is repeated in the total design of the plot and this is apart of Narayan's world-view.

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In 'MR. SAMPATH', Srinivas, a typical Malgudi hero, graduate of Albert Mission College edits an idealistic magazine which he calls 'THE BANNER'. The publication and circulation of the magazine occupies his mind so completely that he is left with no time to think of anything else. This venture suddenly breaks down temporarily when the printer, Sampath, becomes involved in the production of a mythological film. Srinivas is involved in the new enterprise as its script writer with its lure of big money. The usual complications arise. Havi, an artist of talent falls in love with Shanti, the film star who plays Parvati. Sampath also falls in love with Shanti. Havi goes mad with jealousy and wrecks the film studios. At the end, Srinivas simply walks away from the film world and revives the publication of his weekly.

The central theme of 'MR. SAMPATH' is that of attachment as recorded in the Bhagavad Gita. The sequence describes that constant thinking about sense objects attaches human mind to sense objects and it leads to addiction, and then to anger which confuses mind and from confusion of mind follows ultimate destruction of life's great purpose:

Thinking about sense-objects, will attach you to sense objects; grow attached and you become addicted.
thwart your addiction, it turns to anger; be angry and you confuse your mind, you forget the lesson of experience; forget experience, you lose discrimination; lose discrimination and you miss life's only purpose.

Sampath and Ravi are the major victims of attachment. Sampath does not take anything seriously in life. He gambles with life. His attitude to money and sex is what makes him what he is. He has no strict moral sense. His conscience does not prevent him from making an illegal relation with Shanti. He does not mind a second marriage when his first wife is alive:

I have confidence that I will keep both of them happy and if necessary in separate houses.

Like the clever clown in 'TWELFTH NIGHT' he can also say:

Nay, I am for all waters.

Ravi's desire, infatuation and last of all his madness at the sight of his dearest sweetheart being embraced by Mr. Sampath - both of them playing the roles of Parvati and Shiva respectively in a film brings about his tragic catastrophes.

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Narayan uses the classical myth of the burning of Kama to bring out the comic implications of involvement. The plot reverses the myth: Kama tempts Shiva while he is in meditation at Mount Kailasa, unaware of the presence of Parvati. Shiva opens his third eye and burns up the God of love. The significant scene of the temptation of Shiva was planned as being central to the myth. Srinivas, the script writer thought it as appropriate and symbolic:

By externalizing emotion, by superimposing feeling in the shape of images, he hoped to express very clearly the substance of the episode of love and its purification, of austerity and peace. 46.

It was a holy and constructive idea to express the spiritual significance of eternal love. But the myth has been regretfully mishandled by the commercial-minded directors and its symbolical meaning dissipated. The directors:

give the film a vulgar and provocative slant; the central scene becomes the climax of Ravi's and Sampath's infatuation and jealousy. Their involvement is thus stylized by a scene which suggests the greatest physical and emotional confusion. 47.

Though Ravi's tragic catastrophe results from his callous deviations from the virtues of self-discipline,
self-control and self-respect and it may be judged as the inevitable result of his attachment to sense-object (Shanti), it is not seen as its conclusion. This cycle of events is put into wide perspective. Srinivas's commentary on the absolute consequences of attachment is true in all ages:

Dynasties rose and fell. Palaces and mansions appeared and disappeared. The entire country went down under the fire and sword of the invader and was washed clean when Sarayu overflowed its bounds. But it always had its rebirth and growth. And throughout the centuries, Srinivas felt, this group was always there: Ravi with his madness, his well-wishers with their panaceas and apparatus of cure. Half his madness was his own doing, his lack of self-knowledge, his treachery to himself as an artist, which made him a battle ground. Sooner or later he shook off his madness and realised his true identity - though not in one birth, at least in a series of them. 48.

Srinivas believes that self-knowledge may not take place in a single birth, but in a series of them; that is why people believe in a sequence of births.
Narayan properly executes for the first time in this novel his characteristic pattern of cyclical construction. The literary device that Narayan develops in this novel is really part of his material or theme: the study of an individual against the scheme of an inevitable determined cyclical order which includes the moral order. Man's attachment to things (that is, material objects, love, money, ambition) which get out of control reflects the relation between the unique individual experience and the mechanical repetition of the universe. Ravi, Sampath and to some extent Srinivas stand first outside the whirlpool of events and activities and then they are drawn into it for various reasons and in varying degrees - some by ambition, some by falling in love and some again by sheer accident. They are carried along the current of life and become the slaves of their strong desires and then they are thrown out of the whirlpool having achieved nothing, returning to the point where they began. Ravi returns to his home and sobers down later on, Srinivas to his Magazine and Sampath to his old press. Under this vision, order returns and even Sampath deviates no more.

A conflict of values of traditional Hindu thought runs all through the book. Dharma or right action, artha or worldly interest and Kama or pleasure form the hierarchy...
of values of Hindu life and thought. Such beliefs are common places of Indian thought and these most closely affect the novelist in his interpretation of human character and human action. Not all Hindus would hold these beliefs in their scriptural form to the same extent; nor would they apply them to all situations, yet they are constantly referred to and they are taken for granted in many Hindu institutions and rituals. However, Narayan and many major novelists in India felt they had something to say about the direction that religious and moral ideas and appropriate social action should take. This accounts for the intense moral preoccupations which characterise their work and which is very different from the kind of moral preoccupations which distinguish the Eighteenth Century novel in England. David Daiches says that the English novel in England began at a time when the moral norms of society were taken for granted both by the writers and readers:

......changes in social or economic position, or in marital situation were obvious and agreed indication of a significant alteration in a character's state, and such changes marked the crises of virtually all Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century plots ..... The correlation between internal and external, between moral or intellectual development and appropriate social action or inaction

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Such an agreed framework of norms makes it possible for Jane Austen to pursue her particular theme: the relation between private will and public status; between individual and social good; between reason and romance.

- THE LOGICAL CONSEQUENCE OF ATTACHMENT LEADING TO A MORAL CRISIS IN THE CYCLICAL ORDER OF LIFE -

Preceding in 'THE DARK ROOM' and at present in 'MR. SAMPATH' and in a few later novels the conflict of values which is the logical consequence of attachment leads to some perennial problems of Hindu thought. It seems to be a crisis - a moral crisis that disturbs the eternal cyclical order of life. This right order is profoundly disturbed in 'THE DARK ROOM' where Savitri has to fight at the risk of her life against the working forces of evil and this is used to the same comic effect as the reversal of the myth of Kama in 'MR. SAMPATH'. Sampath is mad with Shanti. He plays tricks to snatch away her from Ravi's company. He calls Shanti his second cousin and plans to make her his second wife.

I am doing nothing illegal, to feel apologetic; after all, our religion permits us to marry many wives. 50.

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His acts of debauchery, cupidity and stupidity cross all limits of decency. The frantic shooting of the picture, 'The Burning of Kama' is a step to the fulfilment of his desires:

Shiva went forward, step by step; Parvati advanced, step by step. He was still in a trance with his eyes shut, but his arms were open to receive her. Shanti's brassiere could be seen straining under her thin clothes. She bent back to fit herself into the other's arms...

In no other novel is Narayan's satire so bitter as in this one. The gradual degradation of the moral standard of life and its naked expression in every sphere of our society is sure to bring about an explosion at last. Here he expresses his earnest denunciation of a common Indian film production in which the stories taken from real life are declared as worthless and the artistic tales are massacred by the unintellectual and inartistic investor's craze for cheap entertainment and comedy, and in which the sex appeal of the picture is increased by managing to make the beautiful heroine's clothes unnecessary by the No.10 light which shoots up a beam of illumination from behind her at ground level:

'What ingenuity!' he commented to himself. Her body stood out as if X-rayed, her necklace and...
daiden glittered and shone and seemed to be
the only apparel she wore. 52.

There is little room in this world for sheer dharma or
right action. It is a world peopled with cranks, crooks
and eccentrics who have lost sight of limits and goals.
Harayan sees the new Malgudi and the new world as a field
of unpredictable and uncontrollable forces where anarchy
reigns supreme.

The black waters of crisis of values demolishes
human relationships. Sampath promises to find the girl that
Ravi is looking for; Ravi in return promises to paint a
portrait of Sampath's son. But none of them intends to keep
his promise, while each is given a temporary goal. All the
characters in 'Mr. SAMPATH' impinge on each other in this
way. Sampath promises to publish Srinivas' journal from his
so-called press. Srinivas, an innocent idealist takes him
in good faith. Naturally the breach of Sampath's promise
comes to Srinivas as a great shock. He learns to look at
Sampath from a different angle after that incident. All the
characters in the novel, big or small who form the network
of relationships in the novel chase endlessly round and
round the studios. All of them have certain interests and
so they come to satisfy them. For example, there is a very

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complicated financial arrangement between the partners, Somu, Sampath and Sohanlal. They invest money for the film but their relationships stand on treacherous quicksands:

Sohanlal was dogging his (Sampath's) footsteps, and he dogged the steps of Sohanlal, and Somu went round and round these two, hoping for the completion of the dance act, when he too, hoped to get various payments made to him. It was on the whole, a very intricate mechanism of human relationships.

Srinivas voices his own sentiments when he reflects:

He felt he had been involved in a chaos of human relationships and activities.

Or again,

I am searching for something, trying to make a meaning out of things.

Srinivas, in 'Mr. Sampath' is very much aware both of his own social concerns and also of a repetitive universe, in which he personally can do little. He is a man who thinks in antitheses. He puts his problem in his way - life is passing - why bother about anything? The perfect and the imperfect are all the same. There is no difference between the opposites - good and evil. Srinivas.
believes that the opposites balance each other. He finds an intellectual answer in the goal of self-knowledge and this is why 'THE BANNER' is so important to him:

This was going to help him in his search for an unknown stabilizing factor in life, for an unchanging value, a knowledge of the self, a piece of knowledge which would support as on a rock the faith of Man and his search; a knowledge of his true identity, which would bring no depression at the coming of age, nor puzzle the mind with conundrums and antitheses. 56.

Narayan like his own Srinivas notes with grave concern how people shrink away from the goal of self-knowledge in modern world. He sees the world as a

- complicated system of checks and counterchecks, the net result being the enthronement of the absurd. 57.

Chandran and Srinivas believe that every good or evil deed or purpose is balanced by another and form a total picture which may not be perceived by man. By inviting clashes and collisions and interfering into others' lives people

Contd. . . . P/340.
disarrange the picture and sometimes destroy it. Chandran and Srinivas attempt to maintain some sort of balance between their experience and the deterministic universe. At one level they look at this problem of the relation between the experience and the cyclical deterministic universe as a tension that is a constant source of comedy and at another level they see it as a profound dilemma:

His (Srinavas) mind perceived a balance of power in human relationships. He marvelled at the invisible forces of the universe which maintained this subtle balance in all matters: it was so perfect that it seemed to be unnecessary for anybody to do anything. For a moment it seemed to him a futile and presumptuous occupation to analyse, criticise and attempt to set things right anywhere. If only one could get a comprehensive view of all humanity, one would get a correct view of the world: things being neither particularly wrong nor right, but just balancing themselves. Just the required number of wrongdoers as there are people who deserved wrong deeds, just as many policemen to bring them to their senses, if possible, and just as many wrongdoers again to keep the police employed, and so on and on in an infinite concentric circle. 58.

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Mr. Sampath ends on a note of compromise and with a completed cycle of events. But the end of the novel gives a clear indication that the cycle may repeat itself. In the last page we find Sampath walking rather forlornly to the Railway Station. Srinivas comments:

He might probably have his family with him. He might have abandoned them; he might after all still have Shanti with him and he planning further adventures, or he might disappear or still dangle a carrot for Somu and Co. (the other directors) to pursue. But whatever it was, he felt he was once again in danger on getting involved with him if he asked too many questions. 59.

'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT' FOLLOWS A SCHEME LIKE THAT OF ____________MR. SAMPATH__________

As in 'MR. SAMPATH' and some other early novels the theme of 'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT' develops technically towards the same characteristic pattern: eccentricity or violence or both breaks in upon the illusory peace of Malgudi providing a comic disorder followed by the restoration of order. As in 'MR. SAMPATH' the theme of the novel is the catastrophe that results from the deviations of the hero Margayya who is tempted by the burning desire of earning money by foul or fair means. Thus the man enters

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the wicked world of financial speculation, money-lending and pornography and other corrupt practices. It is naturally therefore he is to meet the same consequence as that of Sampath. Margayya loses everything and is about to return to the banyan tree where he started.

'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT' is worth a comprehensive study for its literary and thematic virtues. It is a meritorious work of creation though it has its shortcomings. It is in this novel one can see the author's progressive control of the medium with which he is working. It is comparatively more ambitious in conception and more effective in execution. The uneven mixture of fantasy and realism is still present but both qualities are so well manipulated that they can be accepted as a characteristic of Narayan's writing that it is not always detrimental to the total effect.

'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT' shows greater development in structure than that in 'MR. SAMPATH'. Narayan's experiences in the treatment of theme in 'MR. SAMPATH' have given him a wider and deeper insight into human nature and thus brought about an improvement in his skill as a craftsman in 'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT'. The plot of the novel has natural growth and in the narration of the story Narayan shows remarkable precision. His earlier novels lacked natural growth and precision. Even in 'MR. SAMPATH' the author makes an

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unnecessary assimilation of events - most of them faintly connected with one another. But in this novel we notice the absence of various episodes. Here events centre round one personality. The novel relates the comic ups and downs in the life of an eccentric man who is Margayya. His attachment to money and to his only son which brings about the logical consequence of his fall constitute the inner structure of the novel. Margayya's attitude to money is what makes him what he is. His fondness for money and excessive paternal love are carried to the point of imprudence. At the outset of the novel we see Margayya as a small scale financier with a grey and discoloured tin box sitting under the old banyan tree. His only other diversion in life is his excessive love for his son:

His mind gloated over visions of his son. 60.

At the end of the novel when Margayya draws his son's attention to the old grey and discoloured tin box lying in a corner of the house and calls his grandson for his recreation, the old scene comes again before our eyes. Harish Raizada appreciates the natural growth of the plot:

And the journey from one end to the other is a movement of incidents in their natural sequence. The characters and plot move together towards the inevitable catastrophe. 61.

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There is truth in the statement. With the exception of 'The Dusk Road' and 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi' of the later period there is no other novel which is so compact and so closely knit among Narayan's works. The author takes care of every event that takes place and tries to connect by weaving them around the principal character of Margayya. The threadwork is solid enough to transmute the novel into a well-made one.

A Narayan plot is not a temple to the tragic or even to the comic muse, but rather resembles a series of kiosks most artfully placed among wooded slopes, which his people reach by their own impetus and from which they emerge with altered aspect. Incident springs out of character and having occurred it alters that character. People and events are closely connected in the novels of Narayan and he does it by means of these contrivances. They are often delightful sometimes touching but always refreshingly simple and real. The first part of 'The Financial Expert' is a realistic portrayal of the experience of fatherhood. Balu, though pampered and spoilt is a lovable little boy and all the scenes that take place between father and son are very realistic. Balu's overwhelming reception of his father every evening demanding toys and this and that-

a tiny engine, tiny cows, tiny tables tiny everything of the maximum size of a mustard seed.

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his cunning blackmail of his parents when he is hurt, his engaging prattle and his over-indulgence in all other things than education are realistically and sincerely described. Margayya's affection, anxiety and high hopes for his only son are expressed in the following lines:

His mind gloated over visions of his son. He would grow into an aristocrat. He would study, not in a corporation school but in the convent, and hobnob with the sons of the District Collector or the Superintendent of Police or Mangal Seth, the biggest mill-owner in the town. He would promise him a car all for himself when he came to the college. He would go to America and obtain degrees... He would buy another bungalow in Lawley Road for his son, and then his vision went on to the next generation of aristocrats.

THE EXECUTION OF THE MYTH OF KAMA AND THE DISTURBANCE OF THE ETHERAL HINDU VIEW OF LIFE

The second part of the novel describes Margayya's history of success in acquiring money through the publication of 'Bed Life'. Here his parental love for his son is carried to the point of excess. His father and son relationship is described most humorously. In the third part of the novel

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the bond breaks up as it must with all that over-indulgence. Balu fails in the S.S.L.C. examination. He leaves his parent­tal roof and disappears. The alienation between father and son is rather hastily scanned. He tells people that Balu has gone to Bombay and Madras to see the outside world. He says:

What is there in Matriculation? I have no faith in our education. Who wants all this nonsense about \( A^2 + B^2 \) ... Boys must learn things in the rough school of life.

Margayya is blissfully happy in his profession right from his banyan tree days to his financial wizardry. He is a very practical businessman as his deft manipulations show, especially the astuteness with which he divests himself of the notoriety of 'Domestic Harmony' with a thundering profit to boot; he does not sell his partnership out of any sudden moral awakening but on account of three very practical reasons:

He detested his office and the furniture ...
He liked to keep his knees folded and tucked - that alone gave him a feeling of being on solid ground ......
'Well, to let you into a secret, there is not much of that either; the figures are falling off; sales are not as good as they used to be'.

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And then it hurt his dignity to be called the publisher of 'Domestic Harmony'.

These are the real reason, and the rest—about 'Domestic Harmony's' harmful influence and his wish to keep Balu pure—is sheer rationalisation. But the man can not save himself. Narayan believes in the Hindu view of Karma or destiny that every man is born to play a specific, preordained role. Karma is an action and it will have a reaction. If one indulges in wrong deeds, he becomes a degenerate personality. Margayya works his own ruin. Like a boomerang, the curve of Margayya's career comes full circle in the end. The story of Margayya's ups and downs and the story of his son run almost parallel side by side, shoulder to shoulder towards the inevitable end. At a deeper level it is a tragi-comic revelation of the folly of human plans.

'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT' follows a scheme very like that of 'MR. SAMPATH'. The right order of Hindu values which is used to the comic effect as the reversal of the myth of Kama in 'MR. SAMPATH' is profoundly disturbed in 'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT'. In the beginning of the novel, Margayya believes that wealth comes by propitiating the Goddess who grants her grace to the chosen few who can use their wits. Margayya's ruminations and obiter dicta on money set the tone of the book and offer a clue to the extraordinary

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career of this Malgudi Napoleon of finance. Margayya points out to his wife:

Money alone is important in this world. Everything else will come to us naturally if we have money in our purse. 66.

He is not ready to ruin the opportunities for making money. He knows that the man, Mr. Pal whom he has appointed as an agent to collect clients is an evil and immoral man; but his so-called strict moral sense does not prevent him from allowing corruption in the making of money. He reminds his wife proudly of the old saying:

He that hath not is spurned even by his wife; even the mother that bore him spurns him.67.

Haydn Moore Williams remarks:

The novel can be said to be a moral fable on the illusion of 'get-rich-quick' schemes. Margayya's scheme of life is clear from his words and activities. He is characterised by a passion for money. He publishes Dr. Pal's pornographic masterpiece in the name of 'Domestic Harmony' in order to hoard money. The irony is that Margayya has taken recourse to corruption but he is not ready

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to shoulder the responsibility.

When the priest of the temple asks him if he will propitiate the Goddess of wealth or the Goddess of knowledge Margayya replies:

A man whom the Goddess of wealth favours need not worry much. He can buy all the knowledge he requires. Saraswati holds in her palm.

Margayya considers everything in terms of money. Money will give him both a meaning in life and a place in the world.

His habit of metaphysical speculation arises only from the mystic feeling that money engendered and from no other experience.

Pal has the talent, but Margayya knows how to convert it into money. Margayya has the money but Pal knows how he came by it, and thus holds the key to Margayya's respectability.

The book is richly comic with the touches of extravagance we have seen in 'MR. SAMPATH'. The satire is rather stronger and keener here in the present novel. Much of the comedy is ironical -

contrasting Margayya's financial acumen and modernity with his performance of the most outrageous superstitious rituals.

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His mad excitement in reciting Mantras, his looking for horoscopes in the dead of night and searching for a red lotus to mix into milk drawn from a smoke-coloured cow seem to be ridiculous and unrelated to the logic of life. At a deeper level the novel is a tragi-comic revelation of the folly and stupidity of human plans. Margayya's world is a strange combination of financial speculation, pornography and money-lending. All his thoughts and activities are governed by the sole motive of accumulating money. The various ups and downs that come in his life are born out of his lust for wealth. Loose discrimination and you miss life's only purpose, says the verse in 'THE SONG OF GOD' describing the cycle of events arising out of attachment. Margayya's fate like that of Sampath is pre-ordained. The central theme of both the novels as we have seen is the inevitable sequence of events following upon attachment. Not only Sampath or Margayya but many others also participate with them in the mad race to amass riches. In Narayan's novels a great number of people are involved in attachment to sense objects and they are meeting the same old goal in life. The people who deposit their money in the bank of Margayya under the temptation of doubling their amount in five years are all haunted by the same passion for hoarding fabulous wealth. Narayan's description of them is satirical in his novel:

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He knew the rich merchant in a certain back street who hoarded rice in a secret godown whose frontage was stuffed with innocent looking rag and old paper collected for the paper mills, who sold rice at about a rupee for half a seer to needy people, and made an enormous quantity of money each day. Dr. Pal knew the man who supplied office glue to the army and hoarded enough cash by showing a joint stock firm with imaginary partners; another merchant who supplied screws in cartons only half-filled; the contractor who built huts and got enormous bills passed easily by bribing the Garrison Engineer. He was a rich man because his huts, meant to stand for three years, would stand only for a couple of months - till the bills were passed by the friendly Garrison Engineer. It was this margin that gave him real wealth. There were drug stockists who did not show their stock, but bargained when it was a matter of life and death to a customer; there were militarymen with pensions, and go-betweens and busy bodies who could secure contracts at New Delhi for a consideration, people who could manage export and import priority. All these people had a lot of money - the town was reeking with it. 72.

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This was the picture not only of Malgudi but of entire India under the impact of world war II and independence. Margayya and Dr. Pal are the philandering members of these vicious groups of people. But Narayan holds an uncompromising attitude to this evil trend of life. None of these social enemies go unpunished - not even Margayya and Pal.

'MR. SAMPATH' AND 'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT' - SIMILAR IN CONSTRUCTION AND END WITH A COMPLETED CYCLE OF EVENTS.

'MR. SAMPATH' and 'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT' are very similar in their construction. Both the novels confine themselves to the exploration of the cycle of events within a man's life and contains the more detailed observation of the main character and his relationships. Both the novels end with a completed cycle of events but also with a clear indication that there is a possibility of the repetition of the cycle. At the end of the novel Margayya tells his son:

You asked for my property. There it is, take it; have an early meal to-morrow and go to the banyan tree in front of the co-operative Bank. I hope the tree is still there. So there, that is all I can say, and anything can happen thereafter. Well, what do you say. I am showing you way. Will you follow it?
The boy stood ruminating. He was looking crushed: 'How can I go there? what will people think?

"Very well then, if you are not going, I am going on with it as soon as I am able to leave the bed" said Margayya.73.

Narayan's study of human relationship in 'The FINANCIAL EXPERT' is more complicated and more vulnerable than that in 'MA. SAMPATH'. In the latter the relationships are precariously held in balance but in 'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT' the network is unfurled and disturbed. The crisis in the relationships between the characters originates from the financial crisis of Margayya. Because of a personal difference with Margayya, Pal persuades all the people who deposited money with Margayya to demand it immediately. The deterioration of his relation with Pal actually brings him the crash and he is ruined. He had no longer the moral strength to save the situation and stand with renewed vigour. The relation of Margayya with his son is in a more precarious stage. Balu grows up a completely spoilt child. He grows up into an insensitive and stupid boy. He will enjoy his father's money but not entertain his whims. He fails his high school examinations several times but he seems to be little concerned about it. Margayya, despite every effort at sympathetic communication, is rebuffed by his son. He is stupid and obstinate.
his stubborn tantrums which result in Margayya's account books literally going down the drain are vividly and humorously described:

He turned aside and suddenly pounced on the book, grabbed it and dashed off. His father ran after him with war cries. The boy dodged him here and there, going into this corner and darting into that. His tears had by now dried, he was enjoying the chase, and with hysterical laughter he was running hither and thither clutching the precious red note book in his hand. It was a small space within which he ran, but somehow Margayya was unable to seize him. Margayya panted with the effort. He cried: 'If you don't stop I will flay you'.

'What is the matter with you? What has come over you?' asked the wife.

'I am all right,' Margayya replied proudly. 'You'll see what I will do to that little monkey, that devil you have begotten'. His wife gave him some appropriate reply, and tried to help in the chase. She pretended to look away and suddenly darted across to seize the toy. He was too swift even for her calculations. She only collided against her husband which irritated him more;

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and it allowed the child to dash into the street with his prize, with his father at his heels. He cried impatiently to his wife, 'Get out of the way - you - ' at which she turned and went back to the kitchen murmuring: 'What do I care ?. I only let the rice overboil watching this tomfoolery'. The boy dashed down the front steps, with his father following him. Margayya was blind to all his surroundings - all he could see was the little boy with his curly hair and the small red-bound book which was in his hand. Some passers-by in Vinayak Mudali Street stopped to watch the scene. Margayya cried shamelessly: 'Hold him! Hold him! ' At which they tried to encircle the boy. It was evident that by now he had become completely intoxicated with the chase. Presently he found that he was being outnumbered and cornered. As a circle of hunters hemmed in, he did an entirely unexpected thing - he turned back as if coming into his father's arms, and as he was just about to grasp him, darted side ways to the edge of the gutter and flung the red book into it. 74.

This excitingly entertaining incident worthy of a Dickens or a Henry Fielding hints at the prospect of the

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future relationships between the father and the son. This act of throwing Margayya's account book into the Vinyak Mudali street sewer echoes Balu's throwing his high school transcripts into the same gutter. This closes an ambitious chapter in the life of Margayya. Along with the growth of the boy from obstinate and innocent childhood to spoilt frustrated manhood the alienation between the father and the son becomes quicker and clearer. Margayya has got the reward arising out of his excessive attachment to his only son born in his old age. He has now every reason to give up his ambition to see his son -

freed from his dubious corpse-bearing ancestry, and settled in Lawley Extension among the most respected citizens of Malgudi.75.

It is really irony of fate that the boy whom the father wanted to make a respected citizen of Malgudi takes a menial job in a cinema in Madras and later on takes to drinking and whore-keeping in Dr. Pal's company and finally brings about the downfall of his father and the ruin of his family as a stubborn rebel. The relationship between Margayya and Dr. Pal is a careful study of Narayan's insight into human psychology. His appearance in the scene with his book on sex at once sows the seeds of Margayya's harvest and the ruin of his son simultaneously. Dr. Pal is to a great extent responsible for the ruin of Balu. His 'Domestic Harmony' shows the
avenues of immoral life to the virtually spoilt youngman.
Margayya does not find any solid reason to question the apparent honesty of Dr. Pal. It is perhaps due to the fact that like the greatmen the dishonest also always think alike, do alike and live alike. Anyway, both of them are interesting creatures - a parallel to each other. Margayya exploits Pal as much as Pal exploits him. Pal's involvement in the family of Margayya does not arise any ray of suspicion in anybody's mind. Margayya publishes Pal's Bed-life, finds rooms in Market Road for banking operations. Later Pal touts for depositors when Margayya starts a new line in his banking business, proves Balu's evil genius and it is he who finally brings down Margayya's financial house of cards to the ground.

'There is a certain chain of nemesis in the interesting relationships between Dr. Pal and Margayya, the apostles respectively of sex and money.76.'

Dr. Pal's later and more sinister appearance in the life of Margayya succeeds in arousing Balu's insatiate greed for his father's rapidly acquired wealth and leading him to the forbidden world of drinking and prostitutes. This evil practice of Dr. Pal enrages Margayya, hurts his paternal sentiments. The man whom -

'the could neither keep in sight nor let him out of sight.'77

on business grounds now turns his bitterest enemy, his destroyer.

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He beats him with his sandals and wrecks vengeance upon him. In return Pal does something more; he reduces him to a beggar.

'MR. SAMPATH' and 'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT' are similar in construction and scheme, in the description of individual characters and in the way these characters interact. 'MR. SAMPATH' is the more ambitious work in its use of myth, and its indication not only of the cycle of events brought about by attachment, but also the myth of birth and rebirth and the time-cycle of the Gods which finally resolves good and evil. 'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT' is the more objective work. It confines itself to the exploration of the cycle of events within a man's life and contains the more detailed observation of the main character and his relationships. The theme of the cyclical universe in which opposites are reconciled is implied rather than stated.

RELEVANCE OF THE CLASSICAL MYTHS TO MODERN LIFE IN 'THE GUIDE'-

THE THEME OF ATTACHMENT AND THAT OF RELEASE FROM THE WHEEL OF EXISTENCE

Narayan has said:
with the impact of modern literature we began to look at our gods, demons and sages, not as some remote concoctions but as types and symbols possessing psychological validity, even when seen against the contemporary background. 

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The relevance of the classical myths to modern life is apparent in Narayan's most complex novel 'The Guide', which is also about a man of mythical proportions, good or evil, who make a link between normal life as we know it and the cyclically ordered universe with which it is continuous. As in 'The Man-Eater of Malgudi' so in 'The Guide' the use of classical myth is structural. It is relevant to the total concept of the plot where the theme of attachment and its inevitable consequence is the focal point towards which all incidents and episodes move. But this theme becomes subsidiary to another theme, the progress towards realising one's true nature. This theme again leads to the idea of release from the wheel of existence and Narayan uses the idealised role of the mythical sage to explore it.

Two cycles of events operate in the story of 'The Guide'. The first one is Raju's rise and fall within the world of normal experience and the other is Raju's life outside the world of normalcy beginning as the unknown prisoner and ending as the unknown Swami where the faith of hundreds of people transformed even a shady character like Raju into an agent of divine grace.

Within the world of normal experience Raju's attachment to Basie and money sows the seeds of his own destruction. Narayan makes us believe that Raju's fate is inevitable. His passion for Basie blinds him to the smouldering

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menace in Marco's character. He elopes with her and spends all his savings on helping her to become a great classical dancer. This 'Pygmalion' situation, Ajju's transformation of Rosie turns into a reverse when Ajju, obsessed and ultimately ruined by the coldhearted Rosie, is accused of forgery by Marco, goes to prison, deserted by his mistress and despised by his relatives and friends. His ambitious adventures bring out his downfall. It is the inevitable law of life which has been hinted in Marayan's other novels also. It is the bent of Ajju's character and Marco and Rosie are only the means by which he proceeds to self-destruction as Dr. Pali with his erotic manuscript 'Bed Life' are the only means of Margayya's tragic fall in 'The Financial Expert'.

The second cycle of event describes the role of Ajju as a convict. Even this role he performed with enthusiasm becoming an ideal prisoner. Ajju did not drift into jail; he was taken there for a deliberate act of forgery. This was the one act that he did voluntarily and deliberately. But he was surprised to see that such a trivial action should bring down such dreadful consequences on his head. Again out of jail he retires to an old temple by the river where he comes to be revered as a holy man. Thus his life is a series of improvisations. His quick adjustment to the role of a saint falls in line with similar improvisations done throughout his life. His life is thus a long story of errors and

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self-deception. Raju accepts the role of Sanyasi for the very reasons that Chandran, in 'THE BACHELOR OF ARTS' rejects it. It provides him with an adequate living for which he doles out a counterfeit form of spiritual guidance. But while Raju's intentions of utilising the role are perfectly clear, the role itself has a certain power. He is 'hypnotised by his own voice', 'impressed by his own grandeur' and he imagines himself 'growing in stature'. Part of his success so long was his ability to identify himself completely with whatever role he is playing. But now in his part of a saint he has at last reached a stage when the situation is no longer familiar. When the shadow of famine stalks the countryside and people came to him for help, Raju for the first time in his life confronts a situation in which he does not know how to act:

Something was happening on a different level over which he had no control or choice and where a philosophical attitude made no difference. 79.

His confession to Velan -
'I am no saint' 80
reveals his helplessness and conscience of guilt.

The theme of release is also used with irony. Raju sacrifices his life in the river believing that draught
is over and rains have come. The miracle that happens is not that the rains have come but that the bogus holy man changes into a dying God by sacrificing himself for his own people. The qualities that he always recognised as his nature - to be involved with people, to anticipate their needs and to provide for them - are heightened to a mythic level. Identifying with his true role, Raju also releases himself from it and from the wheel of existence. Though up to a certain point Raju was at par with Vasu in the 'MAN-EATER OF MALSUDI', Margayya in 'THE FINANCIAL EXPERT', Mr. Srinivas in 'MR. SAMPATH'; that he like many of them crossed the limits of life by drifting himself into the ambitious abnormal adventures of life and tasted the bitter fruits of life as inevitable consequences of Karma, but he raises himself far above the other people by releasing himself eternally from the bond of life and from the wheel of existence.

THE SAINTHOOD MOTIF TREATED ON A MYTHICAL LEVEL

The entire structure of the novel is on a mythical level. It does not have the limited aim of the exposure of comic absurdity in the lives of the characters. It seems to aim much higher to deal with a moral dilemma in the life of its propagandist - a dilemma which illustrates the all-pervading irony of life itself, by raising overwhelming

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questions about all human motives and thereby highlighting the essential ambiguities of the human condition. For Raju, sainthood is the final and irrevocable destiny for which his entire career seems to have been a long preparation. The sainthood motif is thematically not peripheral in 'THE GUIDE'. Raju felt within himself:

for the first time in his life he was making an earnest effort, for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application, outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested. He felt suddenly so enthusiastic that it gave him a new strength to go through with the ordeal. The fourth day of his fast found him quite sprightly. He went down to the river, stood facing up stream with his eyes shut, and repeated the litany. It was no more than a supplication to the heavens to send down rain and save humanity. It was set in a certain rhythmic chant, which lulled his senses and awareness, so that as he went on saying it over and over again, the world around him became blank. He nearly lost all sensation.

It sums up in one word the tremendous significance of the strange transformation of the nero from a hypocrite.

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to a Swami. The transformation is presented as a highly complex process. As a tourist guide it had been Raju's business to solve the problems of his clients:

It was his nature to get involved in other people's interests and activities. 82.

By sheer force of habit, Raju agrees to advise Velan and when the latter gratefully tries to touch his feet, the author's comment underscores the ironic import of this development.

He felt he was attaining the stature of a saint. 83. From this point onwards, in keeping with the logic of irony, nothing that Raju does becomes futile. Every action of his furthers the grand design which is finally complete only when he is compelled to attain a saint's martyrdom. For example, he starts pontifically telling Velan an ancient religious tale but suddenly he realises that he does not remember -

either its course or its purport 84

and suddenly stops telling the story. But this does not upset Velan at all. Again, as he sits deeply thinking as to where he should go next and what should be his next venture, the villagers think that Swami is lost in deep meditation. In the primary stage, thus, Raju is transformed

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into a holyman without any conscious effort on his part.
The irony here reveals in a flash the deep-seated complexities of human nature. Raju had to pay heavy penalty for this. He takes the full advantage of the innocence of the villagers. Their devotion is so pronounced that the unsuspecting Raju, swept off his feet, feels that his -

personality radiated a glory

and

he had created a giant with his puny self.

The baffling complexity of human motives is revealed in Raju's reactions to his plight. He is afraid of getting exposed but he cannot escape from the present situation. He is not even conscious that he has transgressed the limits of 'matra'. The central theme is thus concerned with the sense of 'matra' and man's transgression of it. People gather round Raju for 'darshan', and brought him food and their heart-felt reverence. This game of deception went for long. When the villagers talk about the crocodile in the river, Raju says in an air of wisdom welling from the depths of his being:

What can a crocodile do if your mind is clear and your conscience is untroubled.

Narayan has shown himself to be a master of the device of verbal irony to highlight comic absurdity but in this novel

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he subordinates sporadic verbal irony to the complex and deep-seated irony inherent in the theme of enforced sainthood. By far the most memorable of Narayan's ironic externalisations in 'The GUIDE' is couched not in words but in the memorable symbol - the crocodile which infests the river by the side of haju's sanctuary. The crocodile, an archetypal symbol of hypocrisy provides an apt parallel to the fake saint. Appropriately enough, no one in the village seems to have actually seen the crocodile, though they all know it is there. It is a myth, which even like Aaju's sainthood, becomes a reality only in death, for it is seen for the first time when the draught, which is to kill Aaju, also kills it. Furthermore, in its death it enriches the villagers, who find quite a treasure in its belly, just as Aaju's death brings fame and perhaps rain too in the village.

Anyway, Aaju's mystifying utterances of the crocodile and series of improvisations bring about his own destruction. Saintood has become a prison from which there is no escape for the victim. It is at this point that the penance of purification through fasting was thrust upon him. Aaju now realises that he has worked himself into a position from which he cannot get out. In their zeal, the disciples of Aaju kept a twenty four vigil with their famished Swami. It is irony of fate how the man of earthly

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passions was transformed into a swami against his will because he had forgotten his matra.

Among the various shuttlings back and forth in time, and among the numerous episodes, the story that emerges in the novel is that of Raju who is too confident of himself, too sure of his superiority over others and too quick to befoul other people. He gets into trouble by trying to do things beyond his power and eliminate his life. According to Indian tradition men who transgress their natural limits are punished for it. Ravana over-stepped his matra in 'THE MAHYANA' by stealing away Sita. He was punished and destroyed. Satan in 'THE PARADISE LOST' was thrown out of heaven for the same reason. There are innumerable examples in the classical stories which appear to have contained this common underlying pattern. The use of myth in R.K.Narayan is not arbitrary but done with the definite purpose of delimiting his total scope and imposing a deeper concern on the literal level of his narration.

- RAJU: MORE A VICTIM OF AVARICE OR KARMA THAN OF NEMESIS -

In this connection the role of Nemesis, a Goddess of retribution deserves mention. Raju's tragedy is not circumstantial. It happens not because of some divine agency or the utter vagary of the providence, but as a logical...
result of deviation from the moral duty. First, he violates the social behest and commits adultery while getting involved with the wife of another person. He is fated to be lost because he deviates from the morals. But here is a point to ponder over, the fact is that the nemesis falls on him not because he is immoral from the sexual point of view but because he is immoral from the point of view of avarice. He may be a moral wreck, but no one bothers about it, but he has a tendency to stick to material values of life. At first he grabs the wife of another person, and then he grabs the money, the first unsettles him socially, and the second sees him clapped into prison. His over-emphasis on the material values is the cause of the stirring of fate. Raaju is not a victim of an implacable Destiny. His doom is not decreed beforehand. He brings his fate down on himself by some error of his own arising from an inherent flaw in his nature. He embarks upon a course by which his ruin is eventually assured. Whatever he does in the novel is the part of his own will, and not that of the providence. Hence fate stands within the confines of his own doing and will.

But fate baffles Raaju. It comes to him as nemesis but it has a different form. It's activity begins with the coming of the half-wit who informs the villagers of Mangal that he would not eat till things were properly

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mended. Fate manipulates the arrival of the victim to a pre-destined spot as it happens in 'MACBETH'. Shakespeare brings Duncan to the house of Macbeth where he is killed by him. Here Raju settles down as an ex-convict in a sanctuary where the villagers would out of sheer ignorance of course put him in a mortally serious situation. So fate lurks about the hero as something sinister behind the life of Raju in 'THE GUIDE'. Nataraj in 'THE MAN-SHAPED OF MALGJDI' is conscious of the sinister element before hand. He is overwhelmed by the unexpected turn of events which demands an effective response:

A new set of circumstances seemed to approach me in an enveloping movement..... What a mighty problem was coming onto me ! The enormity of it oppressed me. 88.

Nataraj is unable like Raju to extricate himself from involvement. Raju is destined to meet his end like the tragic mythical heroes. Narayan does not differ from the classical authors in revealing his mythical purpose at the very end. The narrative sequence is important not only because it brings into relief the gap in Narayan between action and consequence but, more to the literary point, because it illustrates the extent of divergence between the involvement of the characters and the development of the story.
RAJU'S ACT OF SELF-IMMOLATION AS AN ATTEMPT OF RELEASE FROM THE WHEELS OF EXISTENCE

It is almost in the denouement that Narayan's motions of characterisation and plot are brought clearly into focus. The conflict between Raju and Rosie as considered from the Puranic point of view is insoluble. Raju's values are just external; serious thought and ethical morality do not modify this evil whereas Rosie upholds a strongly moralistic stand in her prospective dancing career. The clash of ideology between Raju and Marco in the beginning and between Raju and Rosie in the end may be considered as a parable, the characters as types. But the incompatibility of the two persons, Raju and Rosie is as much a function of ancient Indian ideas of reality: different levels of existence imply different aims, modalities, conditions of existence; the reconciliation of levels must come about as a transcendent act, an unexpected infusion of events with a new or renewed sense of relevance and coherence. Raju, the transformed Swami finds coherence and relevance in his act of self-immolation. What he has done to release himself from the wheels of existence has been very appropriate to the norms of ancient Indian tradition which seems always unattainable in the logic of actions.

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APPLICATION OF GANDHIAN MYTH IN 'THE WAITING FOR THE MAHATMA'

In the novel 'WAITING FOR THE MAHATMA', Narayan attempted to show the epic order represented by Gandhi and his associates impinging on the normal order of life in Malgudi. The Gandhian myth has been the inescapable substance of many contemporary Indo-Anglian novels in which Gandhi appears either as a character or as a pervasive influence on the social and political scene. The Gandhian epoch in the history of Modern India is not only the most tumultuous politically, but also the most regenerative culturally. Narayan's task is precisely to individualise the national pilgrimage to the Gandhian shrine in 'THE WAITING FOR THE MAHATMA'.

The moment is the eve of the world war with a tremendous destructive potentiality; the milieu is the placid Malgudi society; the nation at large is seething with discontent and frustration. Such is the stuff waiting for the magical touch of the Mahatma, whose only means are spiritual - truth and non-violence. Within the historical framework of the novel Narayan suggests a certain inevitability. Gandhi's ideals inevitably take him to martyrdom. Bharati, his true disciple and Satyagrahi is honourably imprisoned, then she works in a riot area, and finally makes her home among refugee children. This is fitting. Bharati herself has known no home apart from the Sevak

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Sangn. The cycle of Sriram's activities ought to end in Malgudi when he comes out of prison. This is suggested when he walks past Kabir lane:

He was himself, grandson of a grand old lady, with no worries in life, shuttling between a free reading room, the market place and Kanni's shop, living a world with well defined boundaries, with set activities, no surprises or worries, everything calculable and capable of anticipation.

But this is a momentary illusion. Sriram is propelled forward again to a way of life whose grandeur he sees but is not fitted to. When he rejoins Bharati, he reflects, 'My jail seems on my back the whole time'. This is vividly put. Sriram ought to be a tragic character caught between the epic order and normal life, but in the novel he is too naive, too much lacking in self-awareness to bring out the implications of this theme.

It is the archetypal image of the Mahatma, the universal man that Narayan seriously projects in this novel, with a rare perspicacity and respect for historical experience. The image remains mainly historical and objective, depriving the novel of its mythical meaning.

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which is so compelling in Raja Rao's 'KAanthapura'.

'KAanthapura' is the history of a revolution where the different characters are not important as individuals but as parts of a greater whole. The movement destroys their homes and ultimately the Kanthapura, the uprooted and impoverished in an alien village. There is sadness at the end, when Moorthy departs from the Mahatma's path to become a socialist. Yet there is very little lasting regret because people look forward to 'Ram Rajya', modelled on the kingdom of Ramnandra as narrated in 'THI RAMAYANA', the Indian epic. The hope is collective while the loss has been individual. On the other hand, at the end of 'THE WAITING FOR THE MAHATMA', there is loss at the national level in the death of the Mahatma, but there is a sense of fulfilment in Sriram's personal life.

Again, the historicity of the Gandhian image in Narayan's '...WAITING FOR THE MAHATMA' is certainly unimpeachable, but lacks the religiosity of a literary myth like 'KAanthapura'. This artistic desideratum in Narayan's novel does result in a certain diffusiveness and lack of concentration. As Iyengar observes:

"Since the stress is not merely on Gandhi's influence but on Gandhi himself .... the novel develops a duality of interest which is"
Narayan's canvas is big; but the image is bigger still, for while the canvas is time, the image is eternity.

-SINGLE SUSTAINED MYTH-

Narayan insists on a single sustained myth. His novels are constructed on the same pattern of rise and fall in life. It is a pattern of going round and round in a circle like:

bulls yoked to an oil-crusher. 91.

Narayan like W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot and James Joyce has thus made myth meaningful in the modern world. Where the stories are more psychological the use of myths suit more the taste and purpose and temperament of the literary artists. The legends and myths to them are not simply part of the characterisation but also integral to the progress of events. Raja Rao's concept of myth is merely philosophical. He fails to accept the all-embracing significance of myth. His myth and legends in 'THE SERPENT AND THE ROPES' are part of the characterisation of Ramaswami and Savitri but not integral to the progress of events as it is in Narayan. Raja Rao describes the coronation of the queen of England where she is seen as the matrishakti that makes the universe move.  

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To Mitra she is Varuna, to Indra she is Agni,
to Rama she is Sita, to Krishna she is Radha.

She is Savitri for Satyavan as well as for Ramaswamy.
She is the Prakriti that makes Purush manifest. The matri-
shakti of Hindu mythology thus gains a universal signifi-
cance through Raja Rao's Savitri and Ramaswamy. The
mythical Radha-Krishna legend forms the dominant motif
in the relationship between Ramaswamy and Savitri. This
is an archetypal relation between the seeker and the
sought, the woman and her beloved that has been used in
India from time immemorial in devotional songs and the
Vaishnava love lyrics. Savitri washes Ramaswamy's feet,
performs arathi three times, places her head on his feet
and sobs. He also touches her head with Kum Kum. She says:

I have known my lord for a thousand lives, from
janam to janam I have known my Krishna.

This relationship between Savitri and Ramaswamy symbolises
Radha's adoration of Krishna. Such incidental reflections
are not however integral part of the play. Raja Rao has
explored the mythical legends as part of a digressional
technique whereas in Narayan a mythical situation under-
lies the whole or part of a novel.

Narayan's comedy is not a mere sprightly allegory
anymore than it is a mere anthropological anecdote: it is
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classical art. Narayan's position as an interpreter of the contemporary Indian socio-cultural scene is to be examined and realised in terms of his observation of the ancient Indian cultural values. His art and technique convey a genuine contextual continuity with the contents and themes of classical Indian literature and its myths and legends. Narayan's essential 'Indianness' formulates his art and makes it classical. He speaks, perhaps alone with Tagore, with a literary genuineness that transcends cultural boundaries of space and time. Narayan, like the best Indian writers of the past, has an immense perspective. It is this ability to bridge the gap between the person and his universe that links Narayan with the glorious past of Indian literature.

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