

# **MYTH OF INNOCENCE AND PURITY OF CHILDHOOD IN R.K.NARAYAN'S NOVEL SWAMI AND FRIENDS**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of  
**Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature**

by

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**SATHYABAMA**

**INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)**

**Accredited with Grade “A” by NAAC**

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## BONAFIDE CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this Project Report is the bonafide work of **LOGESHWARI (40010012)** who have done the Project work. she has carried out the project entitled **MYTH OF INNOCENCE AND PURITY OF CHILDHOOD IN R.K.NARAYANS NOVEL SWAMI AND FRIENDS** under our supervision from January 2023 TO May 2023.

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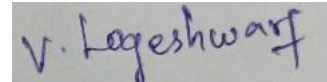
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## DECLARATION

I am **Logeshwari.V**, hereby declare that the project report entitled “**Myth of innocence and purity of childhood by R.K.Narayans novel swami and friends**” done by me, under the guidance of **Dr.V.LIZY MA M Ed M.phil PH.D** at **SATHYABAMA INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY** is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of **Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature**.



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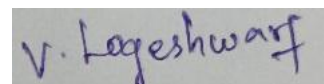
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis entitled “Myth of Innocence and Purity of Childhood in R. K. Narayan’s novel *Swami and friends*” examines how childhood not only embodies fun and laughter, purity and innocence but also equally self centeredness, snobbery, vanity, callousness, cruelty and jealousy that can be seen among adults. It also assesses the novel critically and brings the hidden realities of childhood days into light that children are also not free from vices. Narayan, with the skillful use of humour, tries to capture the world of children as reflected in the growing up of Swaminathan and his companions, and their adventure and misadventure in the mythical town of ‘Malgudi.’ By providing the realistic glimpse of childhood, Narayan shows that children also have contrary qualities and are not free from multiple human natures as can be found in grown up people. As Narayan himself writes in his autobiography - *My Days*, that children are capable of performing greater cunning activities than grown up and he beautifully puts this belief in *swami and friends*.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

RK Narayan (10 October 1906 – 13 May 2001) was a celebrated Indian writer, best known for his works of fiction set in the fictional town of Malgudi. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest Indian writers of the 20th century and is known for his unique writing style that blends humor, satire, and realism. Narayan was born in Madras (now Chennai) and spent most of his childhood in the town of Mysore. He completed his education in English literature and started his career as a journalist. However, his true passion was writing fiction, and he began writing novels and short stories in the 1930s. Narayan's first novel, "Swami and Friends," was published in 1935 and was an instant success. It introduced readers to the world of Malgudi, a fictional town that would become the setting for many of Narayan's subsequent works. Over the next several decades, Narayan wrote numerous novels and short stories, including "The Bachelor of Arts," "The English Teacher," and "The Guide." Narayan's works are known for their keen observations of everyday life in India, and he is considered a master of the genre of the novel. His characters are often ordinary people, such as clerks, teachers, and small business owners, and his stories explore their struggles, hopes, and dreams. His writing is marked by a dry wit and a gentle irony that often satirizes Indian society and its various customs and Traditions. Narayan's contributions to Indian literature have been widely recognized, and he has received numerous awards and honors, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, India's highest literary honor, and the Padma Vibhushan, one of India's highest civilian honors. He passed away in 2001, but his legacy lives on in his works, which continue to be celebrated around the world. RK Narayan's novel "Swami and Friends" is a poignant coming-of-age tale set in the fictional town of Malgudi, a place that would become synonymous with Narayan's literary universe. The novel was published in 1935 and was Narayan's first novel, introducing the readers to the world of Malgudi and its people. The story is centered around Swaminathan, a young boy who is a student at the Albert Mission School in Malgudi. The novel has been hailed as a classic of Indian literature and has been translated into several languages. One of the central themes of the novel is the myth of innocence and

purity of childhood. Narayan portrays childhood as a time of wonder, curiosity, and innocence, where children are free from the complexities and struggles of adult life. The novel challenges this notion by exploring the various challenges that Swaminathan and his friends face as they navigate the world around them. The novel is set in the pre-independence era, where India was undergoing immense social and political changes. The characters in the novel are representative of the various social classes and castes present in India at the time. Narayan explores these themes through the eyes of Swaminathan and his friends, highlighting the various contradictions and complexities of Indian society. Narayan's portrayal of childhood is both nostalgic and critical. He highlights the joys and pleasures of childhood, such as playing games, exploring the world around them, and forming strong bonds with friends. However, he also highlights the challenges that children face, such as the pressures of school, the expectations of parents and teachers, and the various social and political issues that impact their lives. One of the key aspects of the novel is the way in which Narayan portrays the relationship between Swaminathan and his father. Swaminathan's father is a strict disciplinarian who believes in the value of education and hard work. He is constantly pushing Swaminathan to study and excel in his studies, even though Swaminathan is more interested in playing and exploring the world around him. This tension between Swaminathan and his father highlights the conflict between tradition and modernity that was prevalent in Indian society at the time. Narayan's novel is a powerful exploration of childhood, identity, and the complexities of Indian society. It challenges the myth of innocence and purity of childhood, highlighting the various challenges and struggles that children face as they navigate the world around them. Through Swaminathan and his friends, Narayan provides a vivid portrait of India in the pre-independence era, highlighting the various social, political, and cultural issues that impacted the lives of ordinary people. The novel continues to be a timeless classic of Indian literature and a powerful exploration of childhood and identity. The fundamental theme of *Swami and Friends* is the 'innocence of youth'. Swami is not simply a boy, he is a child of around ten years. His friendships, squabbles, teachers, idleness, homework, examinations, running away from school and home, fascination towards toys, love for playing and loafing around are all a mark of innocence and simplicity of childhood. Swami has a definite set of four friends in school. Somu was the monitor of the class who was

very good in studies. Mani was the strongest boy of the class in terms of strength and aggressiveness. Sankar was the brilliant boy of the class, who always had the reputation of bordering 90% marks in the examination. Samuel was fondly called “Pea” on account of his little size by the children. Rajam was the new boy of the class and the son of a superintendent. Swami, Somu, Mani and Samuel belonged to a middle class background whereas Rajam is sketched, possessing a rich and influential background. Swami and his friends demonstrate the same childhood traits irrespective of their status. Their genuine invigorating tale transports us into the children’s world. The reader gets lost in the joys and sorrows of childhood and there lies the universal appeal of the novel. The novel is divided into nineteen chapters; each chapter displays a special attribute of childhood innocence.

## CHAPTER 2

### DUAL NATURE OF CHILDHOOD IN NARAYAN'S SWAMI AND FRIENDS

This project aims to examine the myth of innocence and purity of childhood in R.K. Narayan's fiction *swami and friends* (1935). This research tries to show how childhood not only includes excitement and amusement, purity and innocence but also self centeredness, coldness, vanity, pretentiousness, resentment and meanness. It can be seen in Swami's behavior in particular and his other friends in general. There is the presence of multiple nature in all of us and even children are not free from it. Human beings are basically evil by nature and being good is an occasional mask. In the novel *swami and friends* Narayan's portrayal of Swami gives a realistic and simple view on children who break the myth that children are innocent and pure. Swami is natural, impulsive, naughty and yet an innocent child.

As an Indian scholar Narayan was well aware of myths, legends and tales from Hinduism available in Indian sub-continent. Narayan wrote this novel with his deep learning and secured experience. The influence of the Vedic scripture becomes more distinct in Narayan's novel in order to show the content and the conflict between good and evil. He was aware of the dual nature of human beings- the innate positive and negative qualities. He tries to put forward this belief in *Swami and friends*. In doing so, he takes childhood as a medium to show that even children are not free from vices besides being innocent. According to Thomas A. Harris:

Throughout history one impression of human nature has been consistent: that man has a multiple nature. Most often it has been expressed as a dual nature. It has been expressed mythologically, philosophically, and religiously. Always it has been seen as a conflict: the conflict between good and evil, the lower nature and the higher nature, the inner man and the outer man.

This is to highlight wicked and destructive forces which are subdued within. In this sense, Fyodor Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment* says, 'man commits sin simply to remind himself that he is free.'

The concept of good and evil is a very broad one—good and evil always exists in human civilization from the beginning of creation, Behold, I set before you this day life and good, death and evil'. Religious Scriptures say that freedom is possible to those who are able to render absolute obedience to the law of god. But the heart of man is quite incapable of fulfilling the conditions because the heart of man is desperately wicked. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. The distinction between right and wrong, good and evil depend upon the arbitrary will of god. the divine law is the ultimate moral standard. Rightness and wrongness are creation of the will of god. What god's will is good; all that opposes the will of god is bad. God's will control absolutely everything. In this context,

*The Bible* explains: I believe in the remission of sins. when the lord god made the earth and the heavens, no shrubs of the field had yet appeared on the earth, the lord god formed a man from the dust of the ground. Now the lord god had planted a garden in the east, in Eden and there he put the man he had formed. And the god made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

The account in Genesis does not certify that Adam bears the entire responsibility for the evil in the world. He is perhaps not the source but only the first example of evil.

Similarly, *The Bhagavat Gita* explains: In this world there are two kinds of created beings: the divine and the demoniac... It further states Pride, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness and ignorance—these qualities belong to those of demoniac nature... They do everything whimsically, according to their own desire, and they do not recognize any authority. These demoniac qualities are taken on by them from the beginning of their bodies in the wombs of their mothers, and as they grow they manifest all these inauspicious qualities.

This judgment on evil in religious conviction shows that the whole cosmos is its dwelling place.

Thomas Hobbs gives his own view for good and evil. He says, "Good and evil are names that signify our appetites and aversions. Whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it which he, for his part, called good". He further says what is desired by him is good to him and what is desired by other cannot be so. Every man is enemy to every man in a sense that one's need

conflicts with others. Due to disagreement, conflict results, this is the major cause of war, the innate aggressive drive. As the desired object is same and people attempt to gain it for their benefit, evil takes place.

Similarly, Friedrich Nietzsche takes good as false security where one is held captive in the lies of the good. He writes: "The good taught you to believe in false shores and false security; you were born into and held captive in the lies of good. Everything has been twisted and wrapped down to its core by the good" .

Nevertheless, the ultimate power that rules seems to be that of evil. Man's life is not a simple struggle towards virtue and holiness: it is quite often a lapsing into vice and sin. Thus evil is not sought as evil, but put under a mask called good. He believes in the presence of opposite forces which work inside the individual. Each person, he says, has a "will to power". This "will"—or desire to control oneself, other people and the world around one—is "beyond good and evil". It is a force of nature. Likewise, Sigmund Freud's discovery shows "the warring factions existed in the unconscious" and argues that man's basic nature is primarily made up of instincts, which would, if permitted expression, results in crimes.

Thus evil has influenced human civilization since its origin. In modern times also, literary texts, mythical narratives historical episodes frequently remind us that evil is a very powerful phenomenon. It does exist in the very heart of human being. It has been abundantly used from various purposes: to thrill, to horrify, to satirize and so on. So evil exist in the world in its various forms.

In literary texts many writers have tried to show the presence of the opposite qualities in human beings through their imagination. One such writer is Robert Lewis Stevenson who in his novel *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* portrays the dual nature of man—as good and bad. Likewise, William Golding in his novel *Lord of the Flies* presents the innate evil in human beings, as when towards the end of the novel, the Lord of the Flies—pig's head, tells Simon, "You are a silly little boy. Why don't you run off and play with others. There's none to help you except me and I'm the beast. I am part of you". It suggests that the beast is human nature or evil is within every one of us and we cannot escape from it.

The concept of evil is very real and universal; it is that in which one's desires, wishes, expectations etc conflicts with others. People do not like the idea of their wishes, desires being unfulfilled. They may have a number of reasons to disagree with. It goes on and occurs at any places at any times. Good changes not only for

societies, but also for a person as his life experiences grow. A child's idea of happiness differs from that of an adult. A child could see a stern parent punishing him for leaving the room dirt. But the parent's intension is for correction and for training. Thus, evil becomes moving target that changes with each generation and culture and there is no standard against which to measure people's opinions of it.

Historically speaking, there are many evidence of wars and cruelty that can be taken as proofs to show how humanity as a whole has undergone the nightmarish experience of evil. The condition since the beginning of recorded history and the result of it are universally the same that every generation brings evil with them. The record of history is so consistently filled with war and evil that compels to change the mind of those who argue against the inherent nature of human to do wrong.

Whether a child or an adult, they are basically evil by nature. If some human have consciously become immoral, and if this is a hostile environment, then it is no wonder because evil was there even before Fall, it might have tortured Gods themselves—that is why he hates it too much. Jesus voluntary sacrifices himself shows the always-already existence of evil in the world. Serpent persuades Eve to eat an apple to “be as gods, knowing good and evil”. In this sense, Roman Paul writes: “There is none righteous, no, not one”. This point that the theology offers, is that man is a sinner by deliberateness, by inheritance, and by charge. Man chooses in his heart to follow the things he wants. So, according to the theology, this means everyone is born as a sinner.

R.K.Narayan from his secured knowledge and learning uses childhood as a medium to show the multiple nature of human being and to make us aware of the positive and negative qualities inside us. He is of the opinion that a child has a capacity for more cunning activities than an adult and he believes potential for evil is part of humanity. Narayan in his memoir- *My Days* writes, “I had started writing, mostly under the influence of events occurring around me”. The day to day life of ordinary people has influenced Narayan's literary life. He was very familiar with these things and thus grew to be a typical Indian. Commenting on Narayan critic Srinivasa Iyengar writes:

His art is resolved limitation like jane Austen, he too is content with his little bit of ivory just too many inches wide. He confuses himself to his own society and its surroundings with ordinary people and their lifestyle. He takes a small group of

character from narrow scene and brings them forth in their additives and angularities and explores the inner countries of their mind, heart and soul; catch the uniqueness in the ordinary, the tragic in the prosaic.

He is at his best in depicting human drama centered in a sensibility that is true all over the world. All of his principal characters including Swaminathan of swami and friends bear the human traits. His novels express different dimensions of life that he has gone through in the process of living. Narayan takes his material from, hindu scriptures, myth, legends, and folktales. His orientation to it has been reflected in this writings . In this context, commenting on Narayan, Machiwe writes: “There are the straight narratives and stories without any philosophical complexity which takes the Hindu psychosis for granted like R.K. Narayan novels” .The cause of this Hindu psychology is the Hindu upbringing of Narayan. His Grandmother during his early education family supervised his lessons. She told him many tales from Hindu myths and epics. And the Grandmother is the repository of oral tradition in all the works of Narayan including *Swami and Friends*.

Narayan typically highlights the peculiarities of human relationship and ironies of Indian daily life. Narayan through his novels expresses that the values of life preached in Hindu scriptures are still relevent to human life in the present context. Narayan’s primary focus is in character. He says “I value human relationship very much, very intensely”. The family is the immediate context in which his sensibility operates and his novels are remarkable for the subtlety with which this relationship is treated. Another faceted of his writing shows that Narayan’s heroes are constantly struggling to achieve maturity and each one of his novels is a depiction of this struggle. But Narayan’s heroes accept life as it is, and this is a measure of their spiritual maturity and this maturity is achieved with in the accepted religious and social framework. So is the case with Swaminathan in swami and friends.

Swami and friends created and recreated for the first time the now famous ‘Malgudi’. Malgudi is the mythical town with which Narayan’s name is inextricably associated. Narayan returns to its setting again and again and uses its eccentric citizens to mediate upon the human conditions to a global context. The place becomes the backdrop of the customs, beliefs and way of life. Malgudi

operate in two levels, the human and topographical on one level, Malgudi appears to enclose the grand humanity like grandmothers and grandaunts with their oral tradition and religious rituals; while on the other there are hotels, cricket clubs, and railway line—in fact all modern amenities. Readers become familiar with the human world rather than with the human topography. Narayan seems more interested in human world than in the vast expanse of nature. In this context, William Walsh correctly points out: “The Physical geography of Malgudi is never dealt with as a set piece but allowed to reveal itself beneath events”. In *Swami and Friends* we should be equally attentive to the wider universal quality of Malgudi as whatever happens in Malgudi happens everywhere. Commenting on this, Shrinivasa Iyengar in his book, *Indian Writing in English* writes: “the inhabitants of Malgudi – although they may have their recognizable local trappings – are essentially human, and hence, have their kinship with all humanity”.

The story of *Swami and Friends* revolves around a young boy named Swaminathan and his different activities with his friends. Life for Swami consists mainly of having escapade with his friends, avoiding the misery of homework, and coping as best as he can with the teachers and other adults he encounters. His greatest passion is the MCC—the Malgudi Cricket Club which he founds together with his friends, his greatest day is when the examination are over and school breaks- up- a time to celebrations and cheerful riotous. With the growing up of the main character, Narayan beautifully shows the delicate use of detail sympathetically observed he establishes for us the child’s world as the child himself see it: and beyond the adult community he will one day belongs to in Swami’s case.

The novel describes the rainbow world of childhood and early boyhood of boys of the likes of Swami growing up in the interior of Malgudi. It seems that Narayan’s personal experience as a child and at school has gone into the making of the novel. We get a vivid portrayal of the thoughts, emotions and activities of school boys. It is as though everyday reality has taken over Narayan’s pen and written this universal classic of all our boyhood days. This novel is remarkable for the author’s understanding of child psychology, for depiction of the carefree, cheerful world of a school boy. Some writers have the tendency to convert their childhood into shrines and further to mystify their own boyhood. Narayan has consciously avoided that because he never wrote anymore tales of boyhood after *Swami and Friends*.

Narayan provides a keen insight into human psychology through the reactions of the children. He tries to explore the inner human nature through them. He understands his people so completely that every gesture they make is in their character and adds to our knowledge of them. One of the critics Graham Greene sees a strange mixture of humor, sadness and beauty in Narayan's novel. He comments on Narayan's "Complete objectivity, complete freedom from comments". He also paints life as it is, without caring for any immediate or remote aims. Like a detached artist he never identifies himself with his characters, never loses his sympathy for them. He presents them as what they are without condemnation and praise. In this respect Narayan's novels are more universal in nature than others.

Narayan's presentation of Childhood life is realistic. His writings basically reflect the "Indian soil and way of existence". Without being didactic, Narayan reveals a deep vision in his novel. The structure of *Swami and Friends* is episodic in nature, which is exactly what the life of a young boy or child tends to be. Children on the whole do not have long-term plan; they live for the moment, act on impulse, they follow new enthusiasms and abandon old. Boyhood friendship, though, can persist, even if they may be violent and aggressive. Narayan is also a realist because of his presentation of minute details regarding the ways of people, their like, dislikes without glorification. Narayan provides real life situation in his writing by drawing widely from the real ordinary life of people, their hope, passions and emotion.

The present research on R.K.Narayan's *Swami and Friends* is prepared to study on 'myth and innocence and purity of childhood' in the text. The writer's main motto behind writing the text is to arouse the presence of dual nature in humans. In other words, Narayan is trying to show that even children carry contrary qualities besides being innocent. He is of the opinion that both good and evil is a part of us all. Good and evil is the inherent human nature which the writer tries to portray and in doing so he takes children as a medium. Narayan's message through this novel is that the moment the child is born evil influence him/her and is also prone to evil. He believes that the criminal behaviour is already there from the start and good is an occasional mask. Therefore, the

basis of analysis of this thesis is the text itself which will be critically analysed citing evidences from the text to prove the hypothesis.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **MYTH OF INNOCENCE AND PURITY OF CHILDHOOD IN SWAMI AND FRIENDS**

This research focuses how R.K.Narayan in swami and friends exposes the myth of childhood's innocence and purity. In doing so he dramatizes the problem of child's own joys and sorrows, their fears and terrors, deep anguish, hopes and expectation that may seem small as seen through an adult eye. He presents with telling vividness the realistic picture of a child's world. He makes his characters stand as an impulsive and mischievous, though they look deceptively good and innocent. There are no good and bad characters in Narayan's novel. Human nature is presented veraciously and interestingly and there is no overt condemnation or praise.

This dissertation tries to show that Children are not innocent and pure as they are generally supposed to be, rather they are also not free from evil and opposite qualities; children carry contrary qualities within them as can be seen among adults. Traditional view regards children as innocent and pure and the poet and critic William Blake is one among them that takes children as symbols of purity and innocence. Blake's collective poems, 'songs of innocence' "expresses the sharp quality of innocence, simplicity and naturality of the child with that lamb as both share the qualities of meekness, mildness and innocence.

This belief is further highlighted and demonstrated in Blake's poem, "The Lamb":  
He is meek, and he is mild ; He becomes a child. I am child and thou a lamb; We are called by his name. Little lamb God bless thee! Little lamb God bless thee!

This line presents us a very attractive and simple description of lamb, together with a child's natural affection for it. Here, both the lamb and the child share the qualities of meekness and mildness and are the symbols of purity, innocence

and joy. Similarly, William Wordsworth is another poet that views childhood as a stage free from the miseries of adult and worldly life. He considers children as pure and immortal and very close to god, nature. Nature and innocence are always synonymous in the sense of purity as well as in vision of mystery.

As regards the concept of the innocence of childhood, some thinkers like William Golding and Freud argue about the presence of inherent evil in humans and requires some careful re-definition, and if such innocence means innate goodness. It is probably a mistaken view of human nature. The innocence of childhood results rather from lack of time and opportunity to realize the inborn potential wickedness. The potential for rebellion is evidently there from the start. According to Christian belief all humans have a potential for wickedness. Thus humans could be sinners. Nevertheless, it is equally true that some have more indignation towards committing sin than others do not. There is an inherent element of criminal behaviour inside all humans.

Sigmund Freud challenges the preconceived notion that human being is guided by rationality. According to him, human beings are in fact irrational by nature. Human personality is shaped by the unconscious factors rather than consciousness. Human life is not a simple struggle towards virtue and holiness: it is quite often a lapsing into vice and sin. Thus, evil is not sought as evil, but put under a mask called good. Different psychoanalysts have studied this complexity in depth. Erich Fromm says, "Freud has broken through the fiction of rational purposeful character of the human mind, and opened a path that allows a view into the abyss of human passions". Kenneth Walker puts this matter in this way:

Freud's investigation of the contents of the submerged parts of the mind showed that these were of a very primitive nature. According to him, we are white sepulchres and are only outwardly decent and cultured. We all carry evil within us, locked in some dark cellar of the mind, not a comparatively respectable skeleton, but a full-bodied and lascivious savage. In spite of our efforts to isolate this unwelcome guest in his cellar, he sells our thoughts and actions.

Another critic Friedrich Nietzsche also believes that human being has two opposite qualities: Apollonian and Dionysian. According to him, Apollonian qualities are those qualities which basically focus on good things whereas Dionysian incorporates evil and bad aspects. For the betterment of human life,

these two qualities must be balanced. Nietzsche delves deep into this cultural ocean and sees, “Only the jungles, where animals’ eye glowers, yellow, with hunger and malice ... the violent turbulence of the ocean, churning storm fronts, and hurricanes. Everything is at-sea”. Nietzsche shows the relation between sin, guilt and good.

If the idea of god is eradicated so too must also be the ruling of sin as a transgression against divine precepts, as a contamination of a creature consecrated to God. What remains after this has gone is probably very closely entwined in and related to the fear of punishment by a secular justice, or fear of men’s disdain, but discontent caused by a pang of experience, the sharpest sting of all is the experience of guilt. Similarly, in the bhagawat gita, the holy scriptures of the Hindus also, Bhagawan SriKrishna says:

There are two types of created beings in this world: one is called Divine’ and other ‘Demoniac’ ... the demoniac does not know the way of ‘Prakriti’ – action and the way of ‘nivriti’ – renunciation. Neither purity, nor good conduct, nor truth is found in them. Taking shelter of insatiable lust and filled with pride, false prestige and arrogance holding wrong views due to delusion, they work with impure resolves... the demon says, ‘I have obtained this today; I will attain this desire as well. This much wealth is mine and this much wealth, likewise, shall be mined in the future. I have killed this enemy, and others will also be killed by me. I am the God. I am the enjoyer. I am the Perfect one. I am endowed with power, and I am happy’. This emphasis on evil is in all religion, including Bhagawata Gita and the Bible, which shows that is pervasive not only in human, but the whole universe is its residence.

Therefore, based on the above mentioned points that good and evil are the two sides of a coin. This text is analyzed, throwing light on how children also carry contrary qualities like jealousy, fear, anger, cruelty, vanity etc.

Swami and friends is a delightful account of a school boy, Swaminathan, whose name, abridged as ‘Swami’ gives a characteristically Narayanesque ironic flavor to the title as the word Swami raises the expectations of bearded and aged figure and his friends could naturally be expected to be either his disciples or of same age which the actual narrative neatly demolishes. Swami’s story is that of the average schoolboy with its usual rounds of pranks and punishments, but Narayan

tells it with skillful use of humour and understandings of a boy's will that he recaptures all the freshness of boyhood days. It seems that Narayan has caught the spirit of the schoolboy no matter what his race is. The portrayal of childhood adventure in the novel proves that the quality of childhood is universal. The central theme of the novel is the exploration of childhood as reflected in the growing up of young Swami. He is a spontaneous, impulsive, mischievous and yet an innocent child. Narayan delves deep into the psyche of a child and tries to recreate a child's perception of the World.

In his autobiography—my days, Narayan writes, "In Childhood fears and secrecies and furtive acts happen to be the natural state of life, adopted instinctively for survival in a world dominated by adults. As a result, I believe a child is capable of practicing greater cunning than a grown-up". In Swami and friends, Narayan echoes out this belief. Swami's childhood has its share of anxieties and secret perils, mixed in with happier experiences. Narayan does not hesitate to portray the real child nor does he hesitate to say something in words to express his views. The novel therefore becomes, unpretentious and extremely charming because we see in it the quality of life of children that everyone of us has come across. He gives us a realistic view on childhood and its particular way of behaving.

Childhood is rightly reflected in the novel by Narayan through his deftly etched characters, his uniquely stylized language and his long sense of humor. What one misses is the sense of pathos and pain that one unmistakably gets in a much more complex chronicle of childhood.

To Narayan, Childhood not only includes fun and laughter, purity and innocence; he also highlights childish self-centeredness, vanity, snobbery, insensitivity, callousness and cruelty at several places. At the beginning of the novel itself, we find Swami being brutally frank in reacting to his teacher's appearance:

While the teacher was scrutinizing the sums, Swaminathan was gazing on his face, which seemed so tame at close quarters. His criticism of the teacher's face was that his eyes were too near each other, that there was more hair on his chin than one saw from the bench, and that he was very-very bad looking.

In this extract, we are left in utter shock to hear such merciless remarks from a young child. Swami does not like the "fire-eyed Vedanayagam" and when the

class teacher is examining the home exercise, he begins to think of the teacher's face and concludes that he is very bad looking.

In this last chapter, Narayan stresses the difference between the thoughtless Rajam and his two devoted friends, Swami and Mani. Rajam is "dressed like a European boy" his very appearance is alien to them: "Rajam was unapproachable". To Narayan, Rajam's ways and thinking are different. Rajam, in his superiority does not feel he owes anybody explanation or farewell. Here, Narayan tries to convey to us the truth that every 'innocent' child can harbor unforgiveness within it. They can be as insensitive to the feelings of others as adults can be. There is as much vanity and snobbery in them as can be seen in adults. They are not immune to such vices. All these activities have come to describe the self-centeredness, snobbery and cruelty associated with childhood as can be seen through the protagonist-Swami's behavior. On the basis of this, subject to mimic, is common in children by adopting the habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather, the result is blurred copies that can be threatened. And that threat germinates on the side of Swami from his other friends; therefore locates a crack in the certainty of friendship and relationships because of an uncertainty in its control of the behavior of Swami.

Similarly, Narayan further examines the role jealousy has in a child's life in the incident where Swami's other friends jealously call him "The tail — Rajam's Tail". From the very beginning of the novel, it is crystal clear that there emerge a close friendship between Rajam and Swami. And this closeness brings some misunderstanding between Swami and his other friends. For instance, Swami does not get any response from his friends and return to their game. Something seems to be wrong somewhere. Swaminathan could "comprehend very little" except that in the course of playing pronounce "tail" and the rest laugh at this. Somu later precisely informs him that Swami has earned a new name — 'The Tail'. This is probably Swami's first shock in life. It paralyses all his mental process when his mind started working again, he faintly wondered if he has been dreaming. It surprises him more. What wrong in liking and going about with Rajam? Does it make them angry? They even stop talking to Swami. At this the poor boy-Swami becomes wretched, insulted and isolated. And from this time onward,

Swami gets“ accustomed to his position as the enemy of his company”. The arrival of Rajam in Malgudi marks the blooming friendship between Rajam and Swami, who initially creates a tense linkage with his other friends and people. All the same, now and then, Swami has "an irresistible desire to talk to his old friends. He feels a momentary ecstasy, as if he realizes that he is willing to be friendly again . "Again, this jealousy is further highlighted in the character of Swaminathan when Mani tells him of Rajam leaving Malgudi the next morning, ten days after Swami's return. Swami then asks Mani to call him at five tomorrow morning so that they could go to the station together to bid farewell to Rajam. But Mani says that he is going to sleep in Rajam's house, and go with him to the station:

No, I am going to sleep in Rajam's house, and go with him to the station'. For a moment, Swaminathan was filled with the darkest jealousy. Mani to sleep in Rajam's house, keep him company until the last moment, talk and laugh till midnight, and he to be excluded! He wanted to cling to Mani desperately and stop his going.

Here, Narayan shows how jealousy poison the heart of the child- Swami, who after discovering Mani going to spend the night in Rajam's company tries to prevent his going and wishes to be there too, but his “dearest friend Rajam” is heartbroken and don't want to speak with him because they have lost the match to Y.M.U as Swami keeps himself absent on the day of the match.

While we are introduced with the Malgudi world for the first time in

*Swami and Friends*, we are also introduced to the typical Narayan character, Swami. *Swami and Friends* is a story of Swami and his circle of friends and their mischiefs, envies ,anxieties, fears, wishes and wishful thoughts. Narayan evokes male adolescent psychology through an authentic presentation of the bright boys and the indifferent, ever-playful lot, who come across perhaps most colorfully and vividly due to the novelist secret predilection for them. The description of the enormous non academic preparation for the examination provides an ample opportunity for Narayan's humorand gentle irony. Here is an inventory of stationary items listed by Swami to behanded over to his father:

Unruled White papers 20 sheets  
Ruled white paper 10 sheets  
Black ink 1 bottle  
Clips 3-6-12  
Pins 6-12

In the given extract, we see Swami in full of tension associated with the fear of the approaching exam. Swami seeks to deflect his rising trepidation by making a list of his exam stationary requirements, but sees his hope of going out shopping with coin in his pocket dashed by an insensitive, ill-tempered father. While Narayan makes fun of the misplaced enthusiasm and easy-to-afford devotion of Swami and his group, he brings out the wisdom of innocence in the boys when, for example, Swaminathan is worried about the ripeness and sweetness of mangos that figure in an arithmetic problem. It is only an adult mind that indulges in the maze of figures and numbers to arrive at a meaningless situation. What does Swami care if one get ten mangoes for fifteen annas or ten annas for fifteen mangoes? The crucial thing is whether they are ripe and sweet at all. In this context Cynthia Vanden Driesen writes: "Often it is through the presentation of the exaggerated working of Swami's over active imagination that the comic effect is created". Swami's imaginative involvement with Rama and Krishna prevents him from working out a problem in arithmetic.

The excitement and tension that influence the world of boys are realistically portrayed by Narayan when we see Swami's group itching to start a cricket club and debate over the choice of a name for it, like " "Friends Eleven" . . . "Jumping Stars" . . . "Friends Union" . . . "Excelsior's" . . . "Champion Eleven" " and finally Malgudi Cricket Club because of its irresistible magical association with M.C.C. Then these nonentities called "M.C.C. Malgudi" write to the sports dealers in Madras in a language and any easy confidence behind which there is neither cash nor credit prompting the dealer to honor the letter.

Dear Sir, Please send to our team two junior Willard bats, six balls, wickets and others quick. It is very urgent. We shall send your money afterwards . Don't fear. Please be urgent. Yours obediently Captain Rajam(CAPTAIN)

In this extract, we see the tension associated with the fear among Swami and his friends and their right to the sports dealer where there is neither cash nor credit asking the dealer to honour their letter. Here, we see the easy to afford devotion of the boys whom their demand will be accepted, and they will have all the goods supplied and they can start practicing the game—"the king of game.

Narayan uses the comic-ironic mode when dealing with the limits of common man's world and sees ample scope of recognition of the source of all these adult fears and anxieties, aspiration and actions in the world of boyhood here

reveal both the pervading human folly and his own comic sense in probing deep into the less explored regions of human consciousness. The way Narayan presents human folly makes one begin to wonder whether by shedding it one is not depriving oneself of the 'naivete of human', to use Walsh's phrase.

As always, grandmother is the key figure in all Narayan's writings. She is the storehouse of the oral tradition and a symbol of traditional India. In this novel too, Swami commands his granny to tell endless tales, after the night's meal "with his head on his granny's lap, nestling close to her Swaminathan felt snug and safe". One can hardly help but laugh at the relation between Swami and his grandmother and the conversations they share. Swami tells her of his friend-Rajam, and she goes on telling him of Harishchandra, a story of a mythical king who loses his throne, wife and child as a consequence of his desire to be true to himself. Narayan had, however, begun to tell this story much earlier in his writing career. Swami's grandmother – "as always in Narayan the grandmother is a repository of the oral tradition" tries to tell him this tale, only to find her grandson, who is all together more interested in the exploits of his classmates, falling asleep half way through. The Grandmother's tale seems to speak to a larger "experience of south Indian grandmothers, as well as evoking a particular genre of south Indian oral narrative". And this typifies the weighting of the balance of the "two elements in Swami: the Hindu fable effectively ousted by the English-best school boy narrative. The latter is subtly subverted and the inherent irony of employing such a convention to encapsulate Malgudi experience is inescapable".

Narayan beautifully brings out the humour of childhood mischief when one day Mani, "the Mighty Good-For-Nothing" after being worried takes every opportunity to pass the exam goes to the school clerk's house with a neat bundle containing fresh brinjals that cost him four annas, and feverishly opens the topic of question papers:

I am much worried about my examination. He tried to look pathetic and butted in 'there is only a week more for the examination, Sir . . .' He asks bluntly, 'Please tell me, Sir, what questions we are getting for our examination. 'You see, sir, I am so worried, I don't sleep at night, thinking of the examination . . . If you could possibly tell me

something important . . . I have such a lot to study-don't want to study unnecessary things that may not be necessary for the examination. He meandered thus.

Here, we see the easy to afford devotion of the child –Mani who goes to the school clerk and asks him gives some important questions that are coming in the exam. Mani thinks the clerk has all the knowledge of the question paper as there is a general belief in the school that the clerk is omniscient and knows all the question papers of all the classes. But the little more of the same judicious flattery the clerk is moved to give what Mani believes to be valuable hints in spite of the fact that the clerk did not know what the First Form texts were, the clerk ventured to advice, you must pay particular attention to geography and read all the important lessons again. These answers greatly satisfy Mani on his way home, as he is smiling the cost of the brinjals is not a waste after all .

This childhood mischief is further highlighted when Swami joins the other boys including Mani on the last day of exams in destroying ink-pots and books and other stationery as the boys come out of the school:

Mani did some brisk work at the school gate, snatching from all sorts of people ink-bottles and pens and destroying them. Around him was a crowd seething with excitement and joy. Ecstatic shrieks went up as each article of stationary was destroyed. One or two little boys feebly protested. But Mani wrenched the ink-bottles from their hands, tore their caps and poured ink over their clothes. He had small band of assistance, among whom Swaminathan was prominent. Overcome by the mood of the hour, he spontaneously emptied his ink-bottle over his own head and had drawn frightful dark circle under his eyes with the dripping ink.

In this extract, we see Swami as a spontaneous child who acts at the spur of the moment, being naughty enjoys and joins with joy in the company of his friends. Here, Narayan portrays the world of children in a mock heroic fashion. The above line is the description of the fight with ink bottles between Swami and his friends.

while dealing with the life of children in the fictional town of Malgudi Narayan does not hesitate to show the real life in school that is entirely natural and convincing. The softly of idyllic childhood when life for some lucky kids consists entirely of avoiding the homework and playing all the time in the street with friends. At school, Mani is Swami's friends who sits on the last bench

and takes more than one year to clear some classes. Together Swami and Mani lord over the class and just barely manage to scrape pass exams. They live for summer vacations.

Besides, the joys and happiness of the school children, Narayan also deals with the pretty quarrels of the boys for domination in the class:

When Swaminathan entered the class, a giggle went around the benches. He walked to his sit hoping that he might not be the cause of the giggling. But it continued. He looked about. His eyes travelled up to the blackboard. His face burnt red... he turned and saw Sankar's head bent over his note book, and the Pea was busy unpacking his satchel. Without a word Swaminathan approached the Pea and gave him a fierce slap on the cheek. The Pea burst into tears and swore that he did not do it. He cast a sly look at Sankar, who was absorbed in some work. Swaminathan turn to him and slapped his face also. Soon there was a pandemonium: Sankar, Swaminathan and the Pea rolling over, tearing, scratching and kicking one another.

The above lines give the glimpse that is entirely natural and this is a true representation of the nature of children and of their behavior to be on top even among the circle of friends. As when Mani—the strongest boy in the class in trying to stop the fighters from fighting gets into the clash himself. Somu gets into his head challenges his strength with a contemptuous smile calling him, “for a long time I have been waiting to tell you this: You think of too much of yourself and your powers”. This is a strong statement for Mani who in reply swings his hands and brings it down on Somu's nape. Somu steps aside and delivers one himself which nearly bends Mani and “the three youngsters could hardly believe their eyes. Somu and Mani fighting! They lost their heads”, and looked accusingly at one another trying to kill each other fighting and rolling everywhere in the field.

In the incident when Swami the child that he is, yearns for a hoop:“ Swaminathan's one consuming passion in life now was to get a hoop. He dreamt of it day and night”. Swami goes to the coachman who is believed to have magic powers that could turn certain amount of paisa into a larger amount, and is easily be fooled by a coachman who says that if he gives him only six paisa he would easily make them into six rupees and with this amount a hoop can be easily be purchased. He only wants six paisa to start with. Swaminathan crings and begs him to grant him

six hours and runs home. He first tries Granny but she almost shed tears that she has no money and holds her wooden box upside down to prove how hard up she is. "I know, Granny, you have lot of coins under your pillows". Swami orders Granny to leave the belt and make a thorough search under the pillows and the carpets Swami makes all the desperate attempts to get six paisa but nobody is prepared to oblige Swami. His father dismisses the request in less than a second which makes Swami wonder what he does with all the money that he takes from his clients. In the course of trying a last desperate chance Swami is insensitive to this Granny when she asks why he wants money. Swami replies in anger: "If you have what I want, have the goodness to oblige me. If not, why asked futile questions?" .

Here we see Swami who very badly wants a hoop and can go to any extend to achieve it, as we see how he replies to his granny in anger as can be seen among the children of his age. As when Swami pleads to Mani: Give me- urgent- six paisa got to have it- coachman goes away for weeks- may not get the chance again- don't know what to do without hoop . Swami is so impulsive and stubborn that he continues: "My life depends on it. If you don't give it. I am undone. Quick, get the money.

Again we see, Swami opens the subject of how the coachman cheats him of some money. Instead of six paisa the coachman makes Swami pay twelve paisa and then refuses even to recognize him. In desperation Swami turns to Rajam for help. It is planned that Swami will show to Mani the coachman's son and Mani would decoy and kidnap him by pretending to be an enemy to Swami. But the Plea misfires and Swami is abused and beaten to deceive the coachman's son, who is more than a match for them and runs away with a top which Mani uses to tempt him to come away with him. The two friends have to run for their lives as some dogs are set upon them by the coachman and his neighbors. This shows in child's small territory they think they are the hero.

Here Narayan tries to show the childhood adventure of Swami and his friends crossing every barrier in trying to get back swami's money in doing so they get themselves in trouble and have to run for their life.

We can also see childhood innocence in swami when the district forest officer—M.P.S. Nair rescues him from the Mempi forest road and brings home

safely to his family. Swami feels indebted to the forest officer for being kind and bringing him back in time for the match. Swami owes him so much for his kindness. However, when Mani relates to Swaminathan the day's encounter with the Y.M.U and the depressing results, liberally explaining what Swaminathan share is in the collapse of the M.C.C. Swami who plans to write a letter to the forest officer to thank him is full of anger after he comes to know of the outcome of the match, he recalls the forest officer's lie and his words: "No. No. This is Saturday. See the calendar if you like". Swami remained in silence and says, "I won't write him that letter. He has deceived me". Here Swami forgets his words and dislikes everything about the forest officer and his kindness to him. Instead, Swami becomes angry and calls him a blockhead.

Childhood mischief and cruelty are further highlighted by Swami when he hits upon a brilliant idea. He pretends illness – "delirium" and visits their family doctor T.Kesavan, at a time when he is alone and requests him for a medical certificate so that he may be exempted for a week from the drill and scout classes and join his friends. The doctor expresses his inability to issue a false certificate, but promises to speak to the Headmaster and secure for him the desired exemption. From that very day, Swami stops going to the drill and scout classes. Unfortunately, the doctor does not keep his promise. Next day, the Headmaster takes Swami to task and he is very severe with him:

Swaminathan realized that the doctor had deceived him. He remembered the genial smile with which the doctor had said that he would see the headmaster. Swaminathan shuddered as he realized what a deep-dyed villain Dr Kesavan was behind that genial smile. He would teach that villain a lesson, put a snake into his table-drawer; he would not allow that villain to feel his pulse even if he should be dying of fever.

Swami plans to revenge the doctor who has cheated him with his promise. He is full of hatred, resentment and rage for the doctor. Here we see that children can harbor revenge and are sensitive to the feeling that can be seen in adults.

We still have Indian grandmothers as our Swami who entertain and instruct their grandsons by telling them the stories from the legends and folktales and from Hindu mythologies. Narayan, perhaps, stands unique among those who have made a sustained use of myth in their writings. His work expresses a

genuine formal as well as contextual continuity with the best efforts of Indian literature, which, elsewhere in the world, achieves its typical formulation in a classical period by using not only the literary myths. The imaginative reaction of mythological incidents and situations in Narayan is discernible in this novel too. The main character of the novel, Swaminathan, is modern in the sense that he does not lay any claim to heroism nor does he controls the events—rather he is controlled by them as Swami launches a paper boat with an ant seated in it in a gutter and watches the boat float away;

He watched in rapture its quick motion . . . the boat made a beautiful swerve to the right and avoided destruction. It went on and on. It neared a fatal spot where the waters were swirling round in eddies . . . The boat and its cargo were wrecked beyond recovery. He took a pinch of earth, uttered a prayer for the soul of the ant and dropped it into the gutter.

The imagination of the child is conditioned by the memory of the fairy tales and the myths narrated to him by his grandmother. Gods and demons inhabit the mental world of the child to be propitiated or feared .

The incident is narrated in the folk and on the basis of the Indian folk tale and that is why it holds a considerable promise of the hidden poetry and subtle laughter in which Narayan may be said to have succeeded in locating the truth. Though the western influence is evident in Narayan's art, especially in the parodying the forms and patterns, it is not as significant as the artist's actual observation of Indian life delving into the archetypal myths, characters and folklores, which abound in the Malgudi cycle and help us a great deal in deepening our awareness of the timelessness of Malgudi.

In *Swami and Friends*, Narayan offers the reader a pure escape into irresponsible boyhood. With *Swami and Friends* we are in a different atmosphere—an atmosphere at once less sophisticated and more poetically true. There is not a single dull page in the entire novel, and the simple effortless method of the telling harmonizes perfectly with the theme of childhood. Swami and his friends are just ordinary schoolboys. Narayan gives us a realistic and simple view on children. Unlike Kipling's *Stalky & Co*, where the boys are a set of completely self-possessed rebels, showing wisdom beyond their years, the boys in Narayan's fiction are ordinary, real and lifelike. Narayan does break the myth that children are

innocent and pure, but he does it with a very creative and skillful use of humor and irony. He is not as brutally harsh as William Golding is in portraying boyhood in *Lord of the Flies*. Golding depicts children as brutal, heinous, cruel savages who could go to any extent if they are left unrestrained. However, we do not find such heavy indications of violence and hatred in Narayan's novel of boyhood. He describes the life and adventures of a child with accuracy and a constant sense of humour. In short, it is fitting to point out that Narayan has done justice in his portrayal of childhood in *Swami and Friends*.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CHILD ABUSE AND THE MYTH OF INNOCENCE**

Child abuse is a form of maltreatment that can take many different forms, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Unfortunately, there is a widespread myth in our society that children are innocent, pure, and incapable of engaging in sexual behavior or initiating sexual contact. This myth of innocence not only contributes to a culture of victim-blaming and disbelief, but also makes it difficult to identify and prevent child abuse.

The myth of innocence is deeply ingrained in our cultural and legal systems. It is reflected in laws that criminalize sexual behavior between minors, even when both parties are willing and consenting. It is also evident in the way that child victims of sexual abuse are often portrayed as passive and helpless, while their abusers are seen as powerful and predatory. This myth perpetuates the idea that children are not sexual beings, and therefore cannot experience sexual desire or consent to sexual activity.

The reality is that children are sexual beings, and that sexual behavior and exploration are a normal part of human development. However, this does not mean that children are capable of making informed decisions about sexual activity or consenting to sexual contact with adults. Children are vulnerable and easily

manipulated, and adults who engage in sexual behavior with minors are engaging in a form of abuse and exploitation.

The myth of innocence can make it difficult for child victims of sexual abuse to come forward and seek help. Children who have been sexually abused may feel ashamed or guilty about what has happened to them, and may fear that they will not be believed or taken seriously if they speak out. This can be especially true if the abuser is someone they know and trust, such as a family member or teacher.

In addition, the myth of innocence can contribute to victim-blaming and disbelief when child abuse cases do come to light. People may assume that the child must have done something to provoke the abuse, or that they must be lying or exaggerating about what happened. This can make it difficult for child victims to get the support and justice they need and deserve.

To combat the myth of innocence and prevent child abuse, it is important to educate people about the realities of child sexuality and the dynamics of abuse. This includes teaching children about healthy boundaries, consent, and how to recognize and report abuse. It also involves challenging societal attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate the myth of innocence and make it difficult for victims to come forward.

One example of child abuse and the myth of innocence is the case of Mary Kay Letourneau. Letourneau was a 34-year-old teacher in Seattle, Washington, who had a sexual relationship with her 12-year-old student, Vili Fualaau. The relationship began when Fualaau was in sixth grade and continued until Letourneau was arrested when Fualaau was 14 years old. Letourneau was eventually convicted of two counts of second-degree child rape and sentenced to seven years in prison.

Despite the fact that Letourneau had engaged in sexual behavior with a minor and had been convicted of child rape, the case was often framed in the media as a love story or a romantic relationship. This narrative perpetuated the myth of innocence and suggested that Fualaau was a willing participant in the relationship, rather than a victim of abuse.

However, the reality of the situation was much different. Fualaau was just 12 years old when the relationship began, and Letourneau was in a position of authority over him as his teacher. The power dynamic between them made it impossible for Fualaau to give informed consent to the relationship. Letourneau's actions were not only illegal, but also abusive and exploitative.

The media's portrayal of Letourneau's relationship with Fualaau as a consensual romance perpetuated the myth of innocence and minimized the seriousness of Letourneau's crimes. This made it more difficult for Fualaau to come forward and seek help, and also contributed to a culture of victim-blaming and disbelief when it came to cases of child sexual abuse

the case of Mary Kay Letourneau is an example of how the myth of innocence can contribute to the normalization and justification of child sexual abuse. Despite being convicted of child rape, Letourneau was often portrayed in the media as a victim of her own desires, rather than as an adult who had engaged in abusive and illegal behavior. It is important to recognize the reality of child sexual abuse and to support victims in getting the help and justice they need, rather than perpetuating harmful myths and stereotypes that can make it difficult for victims to come forward.

#### THE IMPACT OF THE MYTH OF INNOCENCE ON CHILDREN

The myth of innocence can have a significant impact on children, particularly those who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing abuse. This harmful belief perpetuates the idea that children are pure, innocent, and incapable of sexual behavior or initiating sexual contact. However, this belief is not only untrue, but it can also be damaging to children in several ways.

First, the myth of innocence can make it difficult for children who have experienced abuse to come forward and seek help. Children who have been sexually abused may feel ashamed, guilty, or confused about what has happened to them. They may also fear that they will not be believed or taken seriously if they speak out. The myth of innocence reinforces the idea that children are not capable of experiencing sexual desire or consenting to sexual activity, which can make it

even more difficult for child victims to understand and acknowledge what has happened to them.

Second, the myth of innocence can contribute to victim-blaming and disbelief when child abuse cases do come to light. People may assume that the child must have done something to provoke the abuse, or that they must be lying or exaggerating about what happened. This can make it difficult for child victims to get the support and justice they need and deserve. Additionally, the myth of innocence can create a culture of silence around child sexual abuse, as adults may be hesitant to discuss these issues openly or take appropriate action to protect children.

Third, the myth of innocence can also impact how children view themselves and their bodies. Children who are taught to believe that sexuality is something dirty, shameful, or taboo may struggle with feelings of guilt, anxiety, or confusion around their own sexual development. This can lead to poor body image, low self-esteem, and difficulty forming healthy relationships later in life.

Finally, the myth of innocence can perpetuate harmful stereotypes about gender and sexuality. The idea that children are pure and innocent reinforces traditional gender roles and expectations, and can limit children's understanding of themselves and others. Additionally, the myth of innocence can contribute to homophobia and transphobia, as children who do not conform to traditional gender norms may be seen as "deviant" or "abnormal".

the myth of innocence can have a significant impact on children's lives, both in terms of their own sexual development and their ability to seek help and support when needed. It is important to challenge this harmful belief and to educate ourselves and others about the realities of child sexual abuse and the importance of supporting child victims. By doing so, we can create a safer, more supportive environment for all children to grow and thrive.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **NARAYANAN MALGUDI**

On the basis of preceding analysis we can conclude that *Swami and Friends* is a story of a school boy – Swami, who lives in a world of adults which he thinks interfering, be they parents or teachers and his friends and enemies at school. His life is fairly difficult and he has a hard job to do to please both his demanding friends and the stern world of adults around him. He manages his tough balancing act and in doing so he shows his true human nature. Narayan beautifully presents how children also carry negative qualities like hatred, anger, fear, jealousy, cruelty, vanity etc as can be seen among adults, besides being innocent. These are inborn human qualities and children are also not free from it.

Narayan dramatizes the word ‘Swami’ which means grown-up and aged man who is supposed to be more matured and disciplined but Narayan’s Swami is a rash and naughty child throughout the narration. R. K. Narayan does a wonderful job in bringing out the emotional psyche of childhood as well as the opposite qualities in humans through his medium of storytelling. He is of the opinion that a child has a potential for more wickedness and is capable of performing more

cunning activities than a grown up. While Swami sincerely and innocently believes in the purity of his friendship with Rajam, he remains detached and remote. Swami tries to impress his friends and his parents. He acts impulsively and loses control of himself more than one occasion. School is a place where life is tough for him. Constant pressure from all directions finally tells Swami and he bends and ultimately decides to leave Malgudi to return as someone whose response is more patterned and disciplined. Narayan also gently laughs at the world in which Swami lives. Despite the alternating aloof and passionate nature of the people of Malgudi and the confusions that contain the mind of a child in such a transient environment; all those things are brought out beautifully. In the final analysis, Narayan gives insight into the different expressions and quirks of childhood and its moments of crisis and the emotional fallout. To Narayan, childhood is not only about enjoyment, laughter, purity and innocence but it is also equally about pride, arrogance, thoughtlessness, and meanness that we have come across in the preceding chapters through Narayan's characterization. Through the critical analysis of Swami's behavior we find the different nature of child. Swami is, therefore seen as an impulsive, mischievous yet an innocent child who tends to act impulsively at the spur of the of the moment without thinking what the consequence will be. Narayan passes no judgment on anybody. He presents Swami for what he is and also the world around him for what it is. His style is smooth and simple. His sentences are crisp, yet unconventional. The apparent discontinuity of narration at places serves to enhance, rather than dispel the overall effect. Throughout the novel Swami acts impulsively and tries to escape from his difficulties but he always finds himself in trouble because of his own actions. In giving last attention to Swami, he appears as a lurking pendulum. In the course of the novel, Swami is seen to be as pontaneous, impulsive, mischievous and yet an innocent child.

Narayan has done justice in his portrayal of childhood in

*Swami and Friends*. Narayan's psychological insight gives rare genuineness to his depiction of life and character. We feel that quality of life presented in the novel is also the quality of life in all places and everywhere, that childhood is motivated by the same passions and impulses in all countries and places.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, The theme of the myth of innocence and purity of childhood is a prevalent one in R.K. Narayan's novel, "Swami and Friends." The novel presents a nostalgic view of childhood as a time of innocence and carefree joy, untainted by the complexities and hardships of adult life. However, as the novel progresses, this myth is gradually dispelled as the harsh realities of the adult world begin to intrude on Swami and his friends' lives.

One of the key ways in which Narayan challenges the myth of childhood innocence is by portraying the children as imperfect and flawed individuals, just like adults. Swami and his friends are shown to be capable of deceit, cruelty, and selfishness, and they are not immune to the corrupting influences of power and money. This is particularly evident in the character of Rajam, who starts off as a

charming and charismatic leader but becomes increasingly arrogant and dictatorial as he gains more power.

Moreover, the novel shows how the children are affected by the social and political tensions of the time, such as the Indian independence movement and the caste system. Swami and his friends may not fully understand these issues, but they are still impacted by them, whether it's through their interactions with the British or the discrimination faced by their Dalit classmate.

As the novel draws to a close, it becomes clear that the myth of childhood innocence is unsustainable in the face of the challenges and complexities of adult life. Swami and his friends are forced to confront the harsh realities of the world around them, and their childhood innocence is shattered. However, this is not necessarily a negative thing, as it is through these experiences that they are able to grow and mature as individuals.

The myth of innocence and purity of childhood is a central theme in "Swami and Friends," but it is one that is ultimately challenged and dispelled by the harsh realities of the world. Through its portrayal of flawed and imperfect children and the impact of social and political tensions, the novel highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of childhood and the importance of confronting the challenges of the world head-on.

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