

## PORTRAYAL OF REBELLIOUS ADOLESCENT SON IN R.K.NARAYAN'S THE FINANCIAL EXPERT

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### Abstract

R.K.Narayan's novel, 'The Financial Expert' conveys an important message to the parents and elders. Margayya's failure to understand his growing up son, Balu's psychology creates troubles for him. The boy always tries to avoid his father's presence because of clash between them. As it happens in many cases, the father forces his son to study sincerely and the son may not be interested in study at all. Sometimes, the father overestimates the son's capacity and fixes targets for career that are out of the capacity of the boy. Margayya constantly tries to educate the boy who is not interested in study. When the pressure increases, the boy runs away from home and after a lot of troubles he is brought back home. The root of the problem lies in the fact that Margayya always treats his son like his boss and not as a friend. The adolescents are highly egoistic. The kids can be controlled with such attitude not growing ups particularly boys. They are prepared to react. If pressurized more, they declare hunger strike, run away from home, shut themselves into room and take such unwanted steps. They begin to disobey elders. They feel that other forcibly want to keep them under control. It may make them rebellious.



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### Introduction:

Continuing a series of more or less successful novels, *The Financial Expert* is the 6<sup>th</sup> novel by R.K.Narayan. His every novel differs from the earlier one and has his own place in Indian Writing in English, though he tells the story of the same folk of Malgudi. He got a noteworthy break through with his first novel, *Swami and Friends*, highlighting school boys' world. Then, *Bachelor of Arts*, is a story of an adolescent boy, Chandran, falling and failing in love, running away and returning home. The next is *The Dark Room*, a moving tale of a tormented wife, Savitri. *The English Teacher* is his next fiction based much on his own domestic life. This fiction is followed by *Mr.Sampath*, the story of a clever and enterprising rogue Mr.Sampath. *The Financial Expert* is a new experiment by Narayan about the financial expertise of the hero Margayya. It is a fiction regarding the rise and fall of Margayya. As P.S.Sundaram points out:

The Financial Expert, first published by Methuen in 1952, is the story of the rise and fall of Margayya. Margayya has no surname, no initials. Actually it was given to him by

his admirers, and means the Path Finder and the Path Shower, the Guide. To poor people perpetually in need Margayya showed an easy way of making money, benefiting himself, of course, in the process. 1

**Portrayal of rebellious adolescent son:**

Apart from the story of Margayya's up and down of fortune, the novel peeps into father-son relationship, Margayya and his son Balu, an adolescent boy. From the childhood days, Balu proves to be a headache for his father Margayya. He throws his father's important red account book into street gutter page by page. The father loses his temper but helpless before the kid. He thinks his child has ruined his future by destroying his account book. But, in fact, it proves an important landmark in his life. He succeeds in amassing a lot of wealth by changing his profession of simply giving loan forms and guidance to the farmers and begins another business of publication first and then collecting money from people offering them higher rate of interest, 20 percent. He becomes rich; his life style changes with the passing of time but remains a strict father for his growing up son Balu. Narayan narrates:

"I have a son studying in high school," said Margayya. He liked the feel of the word. Studying in High School. He felt very proud of Balu for the moment, but at the same time he felt a tinge of pity at heart. He had been too severe with him during the day. 2

R.K.Narayan highlights the conflict between an ambitious father Margayya and a poor student, his son Balu. The father dreams bright future for his son. But, on the contrary, the son is dull enough not to clear matriculation exams after three attempts. This kind of struggle is found in many Indian families. The father is a symbol of authority in Indian family system. He takes most of the decisions on behalf of children regarding education, job, marriage and many other matters. However, some children like Mali, the son of Jagan in Narayan's other novel *The Vendor of Sweets*, and Balu of this novel prove to be disobedient. The father tries to impose his authority upon them and interferes the life of the son. Consequently, rebel takes place. Balu, runs away from home, Mali ignores his father and does whatever he likes. Ultimately, the father has to compromise or withdraw from imposing the parental authority.

God doesn't give everything to everyone. He gives certain permanent problems or weakness to everyone may be the Prime Minister or peon. The poor human being struggles throughout his life on account of that defect. This problem may be in the form of physical defect, financial crises, disobedient children and many more. Margayya achieves in amassing enormous wealth but his worries for his son Balu increases day by day.

Margayya tries to overcome this problem by providing every comfort for his son's education. He engages three home tutors, one for every two subjects, and it cost him quite a lot in salaries. Balu's mother also provides nutritive food during his exams. They even speak slowly in the house in order to maintain peaceful environment for study. But, the result is the same, Balu fails again and again. It is found in many cases that the sincere students study despite being denied some of basic facilities perform excellently in study while sometimes the rich people provide every possible comfort to their children for study but they do not respond well. As it is said: 'You can take the cattle to water but cannot make it drink it.', similarly, Margayya facilitates his best for Balu's study but of no use. P.S.Sundaram comments in this respect:

But in spite of Margayya's influence in the school as Honorary Secretary, the many private tutors he engages, and his constant advice, promises and threats, the boy proves a sad failure and cannot pass the S.S.L.C. examination even in his third attempt. How can Margayya show his face to the world, he asks his son, when every little idiot passes the examination but Balu cannot? To which the boy replies, logically enough, what business is it of the world? When the father brings home the S.S.L.C. register and confronts his son with it, the latter in a rage tears it up into four quarters and throws it into the street gutter. The dark waters close over the fragments as inexorably as they did

earlier over Margayya's red account book  
similarly consigned to them by his son. 3

The best product is made out of best raw material. Margayya's expectations from his son are more than his capacity. He is poor as a student and not interested at all in academic field. Therefore every attempt made by the father, tutors and teachers fail. The father fails to notice this lack of interest in his son. He thinks about his prestige as an academician of a reputed high school. Generally, the people of Malgudi are simple and righteous. Narayan indicates the sense of morality here in Margayya. He can use his influence to help his son in exams but he doesn't nor does Balu try to misuse his father's higher authority in his school. Today the situation is different. People of high influence can apply any malpractice for their children during exams. Ultimately it spoils child's healthy growth. Such children find short cut for success everywhere. Moreover, Margayya feels ashamed for his son who cannot pass in matriculation exams. While in recent days the parents do not feel ashamed for their children even if they are in jail. With the passing of time the norms of morality change in society and it influences the development of children.

Mother is the central figure in Indian family. She maintains every household responsibility and balances of relationship among family members. She finds herself sometimes in critical role when there is clash between her husband and her son. She cannot favor or oppose any of the either. In the present novel, Balu's mother faces such situation. She is helpless witness to a terrific struggle between two positive minded men, for she no longer has any doubt that her son is now a grown up man. She Balu's smoking habit but she keeps this secret to herself since she doesn't like to set up her husband against him. Balu tells her to shut up when she advises him to be more sincere and polite towards his father. She leaves him alone. On the other hand, she doesn't want to make her husband worried about their son as he feels tired when he returns home at evening. Like a wise woman she avoids conflict in the house and leaves problem resolves itself.

Adolescence is an odd phase for a boy as he doesn't fear like a child or doesn't understand like an adult. This may create tension for parents. Children are controlled by force or temptation or promises. Swami's father has full control on the boy in *Swami and Friends*. His mother informs his father if he plays any mischief. Throughout this novel, it can be observed that the boy remains disciplined in the presence of his father in the home. An adult behaves like a mature man. But, a growing up boy may prove to be a problem. More use of

force may make him aggressive and intense feeling may spoil him. Margayya accuses his wife for spoiling the boy with extreme love. While the wife notices that harsh behavior of her husband has made the boy aggressive and indisciplined. Both may be right. When Margayya scolds his son on his constant failures, the boy replies "Don't talk nonsense, father." The father is stupefied. He can't believe that the boy can speak so much. He is offended by the boy's aggressive manner. He says to his wife, "It's all your doing. You have been too lenient. You have spoilt him beyond redemption. You with your--". When Balu runs away and his family receives a message (false one) of his death, his mother sobs. She moves towards Margayya and cries, "It's all your doing. You ruined him. You and your schools!" She arraigns him. "But for your obsession and tyranny--". The father seems more responsible for the boy's escape from home. The school boy dreams for free life. Excess interference in his life tortures him. He wishes to live in his way. More insistence for any particular activity may force him to rebel.

As it happens in many fictions about adolescents, Balu runs away from home at the climax of his tolerance. He is tired of daily clash with his father. After tearing the S.S.L.C. Register- a very important document of his school, the boy leaves home in anger. Then he is found missing. His father searches for him late at night. The reason for this silent search is his reputation. Margayya is a well-known man in the city. Still he thinks his prestige more than his own child. Narayan comments here on such hard hearted fathers. Margayya doesn't inform the police. He can't announce a reward for anyone who traces him. For several days there is no news for the missing son. His mother loses the taste for food. Margayya behaves wildly whenever he is reminded of the missing son. He declares before his wife dramatically that Balu is not his son. He further tells that a boy who has an utter disregard for his father's feelings is no son. He considers the son as a curse for them sent by God. It is really a serious and sensitive responsibility to be parent of growing up child.

Narayan's satire on the hypocrisy of reputed people can be noticed here. Margayya declares that his son has gone on a holiday to Bombay or Madras, and lightly adds: "Young boys of his age must certainly go out by themselves and see a bit of the world: I think that's the best education." Like a politician he handles the inquiries of people regarding his missing son. People are waiting to comment on your weakness. Someone remarks about his son's failure in matriculation and tells that boys must have at least S.S.L.C. The same person as is responsible for his son's missing replies this remark in strange way:

Margayya dismissed it as a foolish notion. “What is there in Matriculation? People can learn nothing in schools. I have no faith in our education. Who wants all this nonsense about A squared plus B squared. If a boy does not learn these, so much the better. To be frank, I have got on without learning the A squared and B squared business, and what is wrong with me? Boys must learn things in rough school of life.” 4

This kind of double standard of parents may create erroneous impression on the mind of growing up children. The young now begin to develop the sense of morality. They can judge the adults from moral point of view. Margayya applies every possible way to get his son pass the matriculation exam. He has a great value of study. He feels ashamed to be the father of a dull boy who can't clear this exam after three attempts. But the boy's result shows little improvement which creates a hope for him that the boy is perhaps destined to be a doctor. He imagines the wonderful future for Balu, Doctor Balu. But, when the son fails, he considers the education system useless. A dramatic change can be observed in his ideology.

An important incident takes place in the story in the form of a nameless post-card from Madras received by the family informing that Balu is no more in the world. The letter creates panic for the family. Margayya is advised to go to Madras to find out more about it. Perhaps, there is still some chance of his being alive. His trouble is where to go in the big city. He has no any address or name mentioned in the post-card. Like Narayan's other novels, the father of Swami in *Swami and friends*, and Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts*, Margayya has a challenge to find out the missing son. Luckily, an inspector of police guides him for searching the boy during the train journey towards Madras. He visits the man who had written the post card. He is mentally retired man and sends post cards of such news who ask him for help. Ultimately, he succeeds to find out the boy working in a cinema. The reunion of father and son is a touching scene. The father feels embarrassed for himself and repents to see Balu in a pitiable condition. His face is wet with tears. However, Balu is not happy to be found. He fears his free life is disturbed again. He asks his father: “Why couldn't you have

given me up for dead? I was quite happy, seeing pictures every day. I want to be in Madras. I like this place. What are you going to do with me? Make me read for exams I suppose.”

Balu’s words indicate that an adolescent boy longs for freedom. He is happy with simple but free life without more facility like at home. He doesn’t like to go home with his father. Sometimes parents may prove a great hurdle in the free life of the young. As a father like Margayya considers his son a curse, in a school boy’s mind the father may seem a villain. The boy thinks that his father doesn’t let him live in his own way. Ruskin Bond’s *Rusty in the Room on the Roof* hits his guardian Mr.Harrison. The boy no longer tolerates his physical and mental torturing and declares rebel.

Finding Balu in pitiable condition, Margayya realizes his mistake. There is a dramatic change in his behavior with Balu. He makes a great compromise with circumstances and his son. In reply to the boy’s hesitation for not returning home again, he says:

“You need not go near books: you can do just as you please,” said Margayya indulgently. He was filled with love for his son. He felt an indescribable pity as he saw the dirty, greasy dress and the famished appearance the boy had acquired. He became absolutely blind to all the dozen persons packed into the compartment. He hugged his shoulders and whispered: “ You eat, rest, and grow fat— that is all you are expected to do, and take as much money as you like.” 5

Parents realize their mistake of handling the adolescents so strictly but too late. They do not learn any lesson from others. Luckily, Balu, and Swami, the school boys return home without any harm. But all boys do not have the same story. News papers report that every year hundreds of children are found missing. Such stories of school boys should be a lesson for other parents. Reading literature is fruitful for so many reasons and this is a significant one: ‘Learning from other’s experience’. For example, the failure of Shakespeare’s Othello, Hamlet and other characters teaches what to do and what not to do. Similarly, the fiction about adolescents serves as an important document for the parents of growing ups.

Each novel of Narayan has its own identity and introduces a different group of characters, plot construction and other novelty. In his first novel *Swami and Friends*, the story of school boys, he shows the boys spend most of time together. The title itself suggests that this is a story of not only Swami, the hero but also of his friends', Mani, Rajam, Somu and Sankar. Here, Narayan focuses on the feature of friendship naturally among the school boys. Chandran in *Bachelor of Arts*, has fast friend, Mohan But, Balu's story in *The Financial Expert* is different from this point of view. This boy doesn't have any friend he can share his feelings with. Perhaps, Narayan has deliberately not shown Balu with friends to point out something. Had Balu some good friends, his story would have been different. They might have helped the boy in study and made it easy and interesting for him. It happens in many cases a scholar student inspires his friends to study sincerely. He solves the doubts of his weak or average friends who sometimes hesitate to consult the teacher for guidance. Balu is in high school. Moreover, his father occupies a higher position in the school trust. Yet he is friendless. He could have many friends, classmates from elementary level to high school. He spends more time with Dr. Pal, an adult, his father's business partner. Dr. Pal plays a significant role in his life. He arranges Balu's marriage, puts ideas into his head regarding his father's fortune, and sets son against father. He is also responsible for taking Balu out every night to drink, gamble and associates with loose women. Margayya, on seeing Brinda, Balu's wife, in tears, and then his son in the company of Dr. Pal and the prostitutes of the town, loses his control. He pulls the doctor out of his car to beat him. This incident takes him on the path of ruin. Dr. Pal proves to be the villain in well set business of Margayya. He spreads rumor about Margayya's inability to return the money he has collected on higher interest. The next day there is a long queue of the creditors to collect their money. Margayya finds himself in the same condition as he had been in some years ago.

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Pal turns to the devil for both Balu and his father. Balu develops the addiction of wine and women under the influence of Dr. Pal, an elderly person and friend of his father. This relationship between an adolescent and adult indicates that an adult may spoil or ruin the future of a growing up. As a pre-mature young boy Balu doesn't know what he is doing. But, Dr. Pal knows very well about the consequences of his action. An adolescent may easily be trapped. Here, Balu becomes the victim of bad habits of an elderly person like



uncle for him. *Swami and Friends*, *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Lord of the Flies* and many such novels highlight the world of youngsters which is fully or partially governed by them. There is no role or little role of adults in these fictions. In *The Financial Expert* Narayan focuses on the growth of a school boy in the world dominated by the adults and shows that how his development is influenced by elderly authority.

### References

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