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The Financial Expert: A Study in Material Consciousness

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The Financial Expert was first published in 1952 by Methuen, London. *The Financial Expert* is a novel depicting man's persistent preoccupation with mammon and his rapid ascent to wealth in the modern jungle of financial speculation and acquisitiveness. Margayya, the chief protagonist of the novel is the product of inferiority complex. He wants to acquire and accumulate wealth to relive himself from the sense of inferiority due to his lower status in the society. He thinks that only with wealth he can attain a respectable position in the society. All his efforts are concentrated to become a part of bourgeois society. He has ever been a status conscious person who stakes everything for the sake of higher status in the society. For him, man can not become civilized without money.

The Financial Expert is the story of the rise and fall of Margayya, the financial wizard. His name was Krishna, but he is popularly known as Margayya. He himself seems to have forgotten his original name, for he signs his name 'Margayya' in legal documents. Explaining the meaning of the term, Narayan informs us that it is derived from the compound of 'Marga' and 'Ayya', 'Marga' means the way and 'Ayya' is the honorific suffix. Taken together it denotes who shows the way. Margayya, in fact, first finds his own way to financial prosperity, and thereafter he shows the way out to those in financial trouble.

Margayya, the financial expert, is an obscure middleman who earns his living by guiding the villagers in obtaining loans from the Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank. Margayya makes a modest beginning of his business under a banyan tree:

His tin box, a grey, discolored, knobby affair, which was small enough to be carried under his arm, contained practically his entire equipment a bottle of ink, a pen and a blotter, a small register whose pages carried an assortment of names and figures and above all the most important items-loan application forms of the Co-operative Bank (Narayan 2).

People under stress come to Margayya because he is so accommodating and unfussy about formalities in advancing cash which he does very easily and promptly. Margayya strikes a humanitarian concern for his brethren: "I want to do so much for you fellows, do you know why? ... it is because I want you all to get over your money worries and improve your lives. You must adopt all civilized ways. That's why I am trying to help you to get money from that bastard office" (Narayan 20).

However, this is only one side of his face. The other one is far more vicious. He charges interest in so subtle a way and compounds it so deftly that any one who has signed on his bond is more or less finished. Margayya blends cunning with kind and raps the knuckles of his customers. William Walsh observes: "*The Financial Expert* is an exact account of village usury and city deceit and a controlled probing into the motives of money making" (72)

It was the insult and the threat by the secretary of the Co-operative Bank that has caused turmoil in the sensitive mind of Margayya. He at once drew the conclusion that the world treated him with contempt because he had no money. He reflected:

I look like a wayside barber with this little miserable box under my arm. People probably expect me to open the lid and take out soap and brush. No wonder that secretary feels he can treat me as he likes. If I looked like him, would he have dared to snatch the papers from my box? I can't look like him. I am destined to look like a wayside barber and that is my fate? (Narayan 15)

These lines explore the mental tension of Margayya. He feels very much disgusted and frustrated with his lower social and financial status. He is thoroughly vexed with himself and the lot that he has fared for centuries together. Now it appears he has come out of it, and resolves to look like the secretary of the Co-operative Bank, so that people in society may not treat him with contempt. The secretary of the Co-operative Bank is the representative of bourgeois society who becomes instrumental for Margayya to think and raise his social status.

Margayya is basically the product of modern bourgeois society where accumulation of personal wealth is considered to be the highest goal of life.

In the novel *The Financial Expert*, Malgudi is depicted as a society the entire fabric of which is woven of self-destructive and self-immolating factors like exploitation, hoarding and cut-throat competition. A collision of these against the traditional values of co-operation, thrift and equality causes great strain and tension in the life of individual who aspires for a respectable living. In such condition, no wonder Margayya, who showed the way to others, loses his own way in his *mrigayya* for money. Like a brooding philosopher, he generalizes his feeling about role of money in life: "Money alone is important in the world. Everything else will come to us naturally if we have money in our purse" (Narayan 17).

Obsessed with the thoughts of money, Margayya wonders how people could do what they wanted to do with money. Man, he thinks, would not have been civilized but for the presence of money in this world: "If money was absent men came near being beasts" (Narayan 22).

Margayya thinks that only money can help in maintaining and retaining domestic harmony. Money plays big role in keeping household happy. In case of Margayya, the proverb goes: "He that hath not is spurned even by his wife" (Narayan 17).

So, the novel abounds in serious outpouring of Margayya on the necessity of money in life. Margayya's obsession with wealth reminds one of Barabbus, the Jew in Marlow's *The Jew of Malta* where the hero is all out for wealth and gold. Ben Jonson in *Volpone* depicts the infinite power of money and its ability to bring about the worst felonies and crime in human life. In *The Financial Expert*, thoughts of money and interest have their full sway over Margayya's mind.

Status of man in modern bourgeoisie society is very much linked up with his financial position. No one shows respect or even cares for poor man, however righteous and virtuous he may be in his life. He cuts a sorry figure in company of rich. Obviously Margayya considers the acquisition of wealth as pre-requisite for due status and honour in society. Marx explains this sort of ideology as: "The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital..." (Marx 24).

When Margayya is hard-pressed for money, he feels: "If I have money, I need not dodge that spectacle dealer. I need not cringe before that stores man. I could give those medicines to my wife. The doctor would look at her with more interest, and she might look like other woman. That son of mine that Balu I could give him everything" (Narayan 23).

When insulted and threatened by the secretary of the bank for illegally possessing the loan application forms, Margayya feels humiliated and curses himself for his low economic position. Margayya feels that the world treats him with contempt because he has no money. While relating to his wife his quarrel with the secretary of the Co-operative Bank, Margayya points out: "He has every right because he has money, authority, dress, looks..., above all, more money. It is money which gives people all this" (Narayan 21).

His mind remains busy in his solitary musings and to catalogue all the good things money has done as far as he could remember. Besides low economic position, Margayya has a strong social inferiority complex because his ancestors were once lowly corpse bearers and the family had to struggle for two or three generation to wash off this stigma. But Margayya was insulted by the secretary of Co-operative Bank only because of his low economic

position. Marx has explained in *The Communist Manifesto* that with the emergence of new classes, new forms of oppression also emerge: "The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonism. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of old ones" (Marx 2).

Margayya's ancestors were oppressed due to caste discrimination and he himself is oppressed due to his poverty. Here, we can see that class antagonism is present and prevails in new form and also struggle to overcome such antagonism continues in a different way.

Margayya is an ambitious and clever financial expert, who has genius for tackling minor transactions successfully. As he shows way out to those in financial trouble, he first practices his trade as financier in a small way by advising peasants how to extract loans from the Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank in the small South Indian town of Malgudi. He is such a financial wizard that he keeps the accounts of his numerous clients on the tips of his fingers and help them to draw unlimited loans from the bank to which he refers with different sobriquets though a brush with the Secretary of the bank makes him feel disgusted with his position as small financier and he gives it up finally when his pampered son Balu in one of his fatal fleeful moods throws his account book in neighboring gutter.

Margayya's anxiety for money outruns his interest in his family welfare. R.K. Narayan slyly observes:

There was probably no other person in the whole country who had meditated so much on the question of interest. Margayya's mind was full of it. Night and day he sat and brooded over it. The more he thought of it the more it seemed to him the greatest wonder of creation. It combined in the mystery of birth and multiplication (Narayan 94).

Margayya's preoccupation with monetary gains hardly leaves him with time for anything else in life. He cannot pass even a single peaceful moment without thinking of it: "He suddenly felt that he had kept away too long from the thought of money" (Narayan 164). While talking to his wife he says; "if you want to please me, tell me to put up the interest, and I at once feel I am being spoken to by my friend and well-wisher" (Narayan 116).

He is incapable of doing a good turn to anyone except a sort of investment. Little and unintentional pieces of villainy do not matter to him only if they can help him in the realization of his designs. Luckily, God has gifted him with a very fertile brain because his mind is always overflowing with new and practicable schemes of collecting money:

He knew that he had a scheme some where at the back of his mind, a scheme which would place him among that elect in the society, which would make people flock to him and look to him for guidance, advice and management. He could not yet say what the scheme would be but he sensed its presence, being a financial mystic. Whatever it was, it was going to revolutionize his life and life of his fellow-men. He felt that he ought to wait on that inspiration with reverence and watchfulness (Narayan 124).

Margayya realizes that money is the only answer for all the sorrows in life. He cannot attain money in dealing with villagers. Immediately he begins to assume the vestments of someone devoted to mysterious god of money. He threw away his old cotton dhoti for a lace-edged one which he had always kept in a box of camphor. He himself takes the offensive with Arul Das the next time they meet. He began to see himself a kind of savior of the villagers and, indeed, of man-kind.

Margayya is a man of divided personality. His aims are worldly though the means are spiritual. On being asked by the priest of the temple if he will propitiate the Goddess of wealth or the goddess of knowledge, Margayya says: "A man whom the goddess of wealth favours need not worry much. He can buy all the knowledge he requires. Saraswathi holds in his palm" (Narayan 51).

Margayya is much obsessed by the power and importance of money in human life that every little humiliation he faces, reminds him of his own lack of money. When snubbed by a

new priest of the temple, he thinks: "It is quite clear that he has been told to snub me ... see how warm and effusive he is to those people! It is because he hopes to get money out of them. Money is everything, dignity, self-respect ... (Narayan 77).

But he is quite religious as he worships the Goddess Lakshmi with fruit flowers and special offerings. As advised by the temple priest he arranges a red lotus, camphor, deerskin, honey and ghee made of milk drawn from the smoke coloured cow. The elaborate arrangements before the commencement of the ritual reveal his faith in traditions and customs of Hindu Culture:

Margayya drew up several tubs of water from the well and splashed the water about. He then commended his wife to decorate the floor with white flour designs, a decoration necessary for all auspicious occasions. He had a string of mango leaves tied across the door way. He took from a nail in the hall the picture of Goddess Lakshmi, put up a short pedestal and placed the picture on it: the four armed Goddess, who presides over wealth, bravery, enterprise, and all the good things in life (Narayan 46-47).

In his performance of the worship, he wears a real silk dhoti and smears his forehead and body with sacred ash, sits before the image of a god or goddess, and chants prayers for sometime every morning. However, all his religiosity and piety remains only skin-deep as it is inspired by his worldly ambitions of acquiring wealth. In between his prayers and meditation, his thoughts drift sometimes into obscenity of Pal's book and sometimes into the jewellery which he will buy for his wife on having become rich and prosperous.

Margayya's *japa* and his high expectation from it exposes the real motives of man's spiritual pursuits in the modern world of commerce and industry. In case of Margayya, it is evident that he does not worship gods and goddess out of religious piety. Nor is the religious discipline imposed on the self for the purpose of renouncing the worldly ties but to strengthen his grip over them with greater force. The focus of penance in Margayya's ritual shifts from selflessness to an aggrandizement and augmentation of pride by accumulating wealth as to dislodge his brother from his position of the house. Margayya contemplates his precious plan even when he is seated in meditative posture before goddess:

He (Margayya) visualized his future. How was wealth going to flow in when he became rich, suppose he brought from his brother the next house too, tempting him with a handsome cash offer.... He realized that this was his major concern in life. He would be a victorious man if he could bring his brother to knees and make him part with his portion of the house; and then he would knock down the partition wall ... (Narayan 56).

Spirituality is shown becoming just a means, a tool for the attainment of mundane mammon. It is reduced to status of a handmaid serving sordid worldliness. The materialistic pursuit evinces a complete reversal of value; the end becomes means and means the end. In terms of Marxism: "It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour ...of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egoistical calculations" (Marx 6).

The priest to whom Margayya turns for advice on financial success and is told that he should follow Lakshmi. He can afford to neglect everything else:

(...) A devotee of Goddess Lakshmi need care for nothing, not even the fact that he is in a temple where certain decorum is to be observed. It's the question of only self assurance. (...) It's only the protégé of Goddess Saraswati (The deity presiding over knowledge and enlightenment) who has to mind such things (Narayan 50).

Then Margayya encounters Dr. Pal in the promising heterotopian setting of a lotus pond located beside a ruined temple beyond the River Saryu. Dr. Pal, a journalist, correspondent and author becomes his new friend holds before him a bright vision of fabulous wealth emanating from the publication work and persuaded him to buy his own manuscript of '*Bed Life*' for the small sum of twenty rupee. Accidentally when the book published under amended title '*Domestic Harmony*' proves great success and makes Margayya one of the richest men of the town. But soon he concludes that "Books publishing is no business at all"

(Narayan 118). He is ill at ease in Madan Lal's Printery and eventually concludes: "Money was not in its right place here amidst all the roar of printing machinery, ugly streaming proof sheets, and the childish debits and credits that arose from book sales with book sellers and book buyers, who carried endless correspondence over trivialities" (Narayan 117).

Though already very rich, Margayya is still not satisfied with his position. His calculating brain plans a new scheme of starting a bank of his own and making the most of the inflated currency of war time. He draws clients by paying them the exorbitant interest of twenty percent. Dr. Pal who failed in his career as a journalist also joins him and procures numerous clients for him from amongst the people who have made money by foul means during war time. Margayya now turns fabulously rich. In terms of Marx, Margayya is undergoing through the gradual revolution in his mode of production: "We see, therefore, how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange" (Marx 4).

The various changes and developments in the financial career of Margayya from a small financier to the richest banker of Malgudi show his tendency for constant revolutionizing the instruments of production and relations of production. It shows bourgeoisie class has some peculiarities about its own origin:

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of old modes of production in unaltered form was, on the contrary, the first condition of all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeoisie epoch from all earlier ones (Marx 7).

But there is only one dark patch in the bright sky of Margayya's life. His only son, Balu, whom he wants to develop into highly educated man, shows no signs of crossing even the early stage of matriculation. Margayya's excessive attachment to Balu is understandable because Balu is his only child, born late in his life, in answer to a prayer and a vow to the lord of Tirupati. He allows such reckless freedom to his little son that he does not leave him in peace or does not allow him to work. Strangely he does not mind it and feels proud of it.

But this very freedom given to Balu leads to the undoing of both. The red book episode is one of the several instances in the novel which shows how Margayya's life and his changing fortunes are all involved in his son.

On the home front one of the first things he does is to think of his son's schooling. A great irony of his life is that this very commendable desire creates a major crisis in his domestic life. He begins in right earnest to turn into a reality his dreams about his son. The relationship between Margayya, the traditional father, and Balu the freedom loving lad, has been dealt with, in order to highlight their different ways of living and thinking.

Margayya is a typical Indian father who is highly ambitious about his son's education, while Balu is extremely careless and sparing in them. Margayya's dreams for Balu reveal his own status consciousness. He dreams that his son would grow into an aristocrat. He would study in the convent school, not in corporation school, and hobnob with the district collector or the superintendent of police or Mangla Seth, the biggest mill-owner in the town.

Margayya's greed for wealth is responsible for transformation of Balu from obstinate and innocent child to spoilt frustrated man.

Margayya and his son both are totally incompatible with each other. Margayya longs for the fruit of his son's success, but his ambition is thwarted by the undisciplined Balu. In a fit of anger and disappointment at his son's mental bankruptcy, Margayya even thinks of teaching the boy a lesson by manhandling him but restrains himself at least for the fear of reprisal by the son: "Then he feels like striking his son, but restrained himself for the son was four inches taller as he stood hanging his head with his back to the wall, and Margayya feared that he might retaliate" (Narayan 56).

Thus, Margayya's high hopes from his intellectually mediocre son are the first cause of bickering between the two. Secondly, the tradition-ridden father considers higher education to be a mark of social distinction and status.

He represents the bourgeoisie class, who has enough wealth and property but suffer from an inferiority complex on account of their lack of higher education. With Margayya, it has been a cherished desire to belong to the distinguished class of educated people. But Balu's failure in the Matriculation examination for the third time shocks him so much that he regards it as a public insult. The sense of shame and dishonour brings in his mind queer thoughts often shared by the bourgeoisie class parents. He questions the boy thus: "How am I to hold my head in public? What will they think of me? What will they say of my son?" (Narayan 112).

And, again, he reprimands his son for his having failed in the examination: "You are not son of mine. I cannot tolerate such son who brings such disgrace on the family" (Narayan 112).

Balu, on the other hand, having an unconventional mind, does not share his father's anxiety. A child of Balu's type is bound to become a big headache to his teachers when he grows up. It is not very surprising that even the toughest teacher like Murti who is a terror in the school finds in Balu more than a match for himself. He has to accede to many of his demands, since his father, who is the Secretary of the school, wants to see him:

He sounded melodramatic, and Balu started bargaining, 'I couldn't do any sums this morning'. The teacher assured him that he would condone the lapse. And then Balu went on to next bargaining point by which the teacher himself should do the sums and not bother Balu except to the extent of showing him what marks he had obtained for them. When it was granted, Balu demanded: "You promised me burfi. I must have it this afternoon, Sir" (Narayan 114).

Balu even darts his father's disgust at him: "Don't talk nonsense, father" (Narayan 112). Margayya is stunned to hear such a revolting speech of his son whom he has hitherto considered "taciturn and grim" (Narayan 115). He is stupefied to hear the insulting and humiliating words from his own son. For a short while they enter into "a sort of live and let live philosophy" (Narayan 115). Later on Margayya's attempts to persuade Balu to pass the examination are opposed by the latter tooth and nail with words like these: "Father, if you hate me and want to make me miserable, you will bother me with examination and studies. I hate them" (Narayan 116).

Margayya, having already seen Balu's attitude of challenge, keeps equanimity and most amicably produces before him the S.S.L.C register, which is the Headmaster's record of Balu's success and failures, his omissions and commissions. The very sight of it makes the son mad with anger because: "It symbolized for him all the wrongs that he had suffered in his life: it was a chronicle of all the insults that had been heaped upon him by an ungracious world- a world of school, studies and examinations" (Narayan 117-118). Balu snatches the register from his father's hands and tearing it throws into the gutter in which, as a child, he had thrown his father's accounts book. The sweeping away of Margayya's accounts book and school register by gutter is symbolic of passing away of tentacles of tradition with arrival of fresh air of unconventional thoughts and actions.

R.K. Narayan has given a very realistic picture of the boy as he grows up into full-fledged man. Balu is grown up as a spoilt man, son of newly grown rich man, has no concern for value of wealth and social norms. Balu refuses to pass S.S.L.C Examination, becomes addicted to smoking, runs away from his house and on being traced out devotes himself to the art of cultivating leisure, takes to drinking and whore keeping in Dr. Pal's company and finally brings about the downfall of his father and ruin of his family.

But meanwhile, it can be observed that status conscious Margayya tries his every best effort to make his son's life comfortable. As when he admitted his son in school, he made a great performance of it and reached school in the form of procession.

He maneuvers his way to the position of School Secretary, which is something like the Chairman of Governors. His higher status in the society proves that: "Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class" (Marx 4-5). He bullied the nervous teachers and even hired one of them to give his son special tuition and favorable treatment. Margayya is thoroughly utilizing his moneyed power for converting his dreams, which, in fact, are related to his son. The exploitation of school teacher by Margayya shows that the bourgeoisie: "... has left remaining no other bond between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous cash payment" (Marx 5-6).

Margayya had great plans for his son that his son might become a great government official or something of the kind, or indeed anything in ten years. But the boy hates school and turns out to be wretched, glowering misfit. His incessant troubles with his son naturally have their effect on his relations with his wife.

But Margayya is mean, servile bullying man who will do anything for money. Margayya had a kind of theology of wealth. He drew distinctions between people who were wealthy and those who were merely rich. He was specialist in money and his mind always ran on lines of scientific enquiry whenever money came in questions. He made a subtle difference in between money, riches, wealth and fortune.

Money enables him to live in an ecstatic daze, so that his insupportable behaviour becomes tolerable except in moments of extreme irritation and tension.

Margayya is totally drunk with money. His affluence, his bank balance buoyed him up and made him bear the loss of his son. He lived in a sort of radiance which made it possible for him to put up with everything.

When he received the false tragic news announcing death of vanished Balu, in the midst of his shattering despair, distracting thoughts, the product of his nature comes out through Margayya's mind. He had got used to a life in which feud with his brother and his family was a natural circumstance of existence. Now they are consoling him. He wished he had the nerve to tell them not to let this tragedy become an excuse to change their current relationship. When his brother offers to accompany him to Madras, Margayya reflects that his brother is wangling a free journey to Madras. Margayya's such thoughts and behaviour towards his family shows that: "The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation into mere money relation" (Marx 6).

R.K.Narayan successfully presents the shaking of the traditional joint family system as a result of growing individualism and lure of money. Margayya and his brother are next door neighbours, but they are not on speaking terms since long. Mutual visits between two families are confined only to unusual situations of either joy or sorrow. It is "relationship essentially thriving on crisis" (Narayan 143). The growing individualism has also put strain on the relationship between father and the son; the family is broken. Balu and his "up to-date" (Narayan 156) bride do not find it "very comfortable" to live with old Mrs. Margayya, who is thoroughly steeped into tradition. A separate bungalow is arranged for them before the boy should himself "open the subject and ask for this and that" (Narayan 156). As a result of free and independent life, Balu becomes a victim of the evils of drinking and philandering. He takes to flippant ways and lives a loose living in the debauch company of Dr. Pal, and becomes a problem for his wife Brinda and father Margayya. Narayan has tried to show that one can ignore the values of traditional living and woo unconventionality only at the grave risk of self-debasement and deterioration just like that of Margayya and his son Balu.

Rich Margayya even doesn't care for the custom of tallying horoscope as a preliminary to marriage. He called in a pundit to match his son's horoscope; he gave him sufficient hint that the horoscopes be matched according to his own wishes. But when he

found that the pundit failed to match favourably, the horoscope of his son with that of the daughter of a rich-estate owner, he just handed him one rupee note and unceremoniously saw him off.

Margayya now “no longer believed that man was a victim of circumstances or fate but man was a creature who could make his own present and future provided he worked hard and remained watchful” (Narayan 152). Later Dr. Pal helped Margayya to find a different astrologer who rearranged the stars of Balu to suit the circumstances. And he paid him Rs. Seventy five towards his fee as was suggested by Dr. Pal.

How Margayya arranged and hired services of teachers for his son’s education and astrologer for his son’s marriage by paying money shows that bourgeoisie: “has resolved personal worth into exchange value and in place of numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, single unconscionable freedom, free trade” (Marx 6).

For Margayya: “To be a capitalist is to have not only a purely personal but social status in production” (Marx 28). Margayya, being materialistically rich, has converted the services of teachers and astrologers... “into its paid wage-labourers.” (Marx 6)

While looking critically at his relationships with his wife, son and brother, it is obvious that familial relations of people like Margayya are not based on personal love and affection but on money: “On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie” (Marx 33).

We see, at the end, that Margayya himself was largely responsible for his ruin, though Dr. Pal’s contribution to the rise and fall of Margayya’s financial empire could not be overlooked. His contact with Dr. Pal was a sheer co-incidence which immensely helped him to establish his financial edifice largely based on credit. Where he went wrong, was putting away bags of currency notes in the hastily cleared rooms of his house instead of starting productive enterprise with them. It would have yielded him a higher rate of interest than what he has promised his creditors. Secondly, he was so obsessed with money that he has lost his food and sleep, and neglects his family and son so much so this affluence, his bank balance made to bear the loss of his son when he ran away from the home. He now forgot his own self. The Margayya of former days when he used to help the poor peasants in acquiring loans from the bank, was gone, we have now the Margayya, eccentric, overambitious and completely obsessed with money. But at the same time, Margayya is unable to handle his wealth properly. For him: “the conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise wealth created by them” (12).

Had he been in constant touch with his son and not been much worried about Mr. Pal’s free contact with him, the end would have been different. On a sudden impulse, Margayya assaulted Dr. Pal so savagely that the latter had no choice but to report the matter against him. Dr. Pal’s role in the rise and downfall of Margayya’s financial empire shows: “It has been first to show what man’s activity can bring about” (Marx 6).

Due to Dr. Pal, in no time the entire financial empire crashed like a pack of cards. The creditors, who deposited their amount in Margayya’s bank, come rushing to him to take back their money. Margayya “... is at last compelled to face with sober senses and his real conditions of life, and his relation with his kind” (Marx 7).

Margayya’s passion for money, for essential platonic cash, became an obsession and then a mania. His life was spent in gathering it, parceling it, carrying it at home, counting it. But at one moment in a burst of honest indignation he makes an enemy of baffling Dr. Pal who has corrupted his son. As suddenly as money comes, as suddenly it goes, again through the intervention of Dr. Pal who sets about rumors to damage Margayya’s credit, producing a run on the bank which ruins him. Margayya is not converted or refined by his reduction to penury, just as he was not improved or profoundly altered by his elevation to wealth. In fact,

his last act to rehearse his son in the art of luring peasants into borrowing outside the Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank shows his strong desire to fight again.

But at one point Margayya regrets his action of suddenly insulting Dr. Pal. He reflected later:

What would have become of him, if he had started back home after speaking to his daughter-in-law a little earlier and missed Dr. Pal Austin that night, or if had remained in the shadows and had allowed Pal to go off after dropping Balu, when he might preferably have tackling with more circumspection and diplomacy: he might have even shared his property with him as he demanded : that should have saved him at least the rest of it-and prevented the doctor from doing what he did (Narayan 173-174).

At the end, materialistic Margayya advises his son Balu to restart their previous business: "Have an early meal tomorrow, and go to the banyan tree in front of the Co-operative Bank Go there, that is all I can say: and anything may happen thereafter.... If you are not going, I am going on with it, as soon as 'I am able to leave this bed'" (Narayan 178).

It clearly shows that in spite of his traumatic experience, Margayya remains unchanged. He is still hopeful that the next turn of wheel of fortune will restore his dreams. This only underscores the fundamental irony of human nature that one learns little from experience.

Besides exposing the character of money- minded Margayya, the novel also offers an interesting glimpse of Indian social life, impaired by demoralizing effect of materialistic civilization. Hoarding, black-marketing and corruption in every walk of life are rampant in the society. The rice merchant hoarding rice in a secret go down, and the contractor building a small hut and getting enormous bills passed easily by bribing the Garrison Engineer are familiar sights in the present-day society, and then there are drug stokists, actors and politicians etc. Narayan comments: "... all these people had lot of money- the town was racking with it. Only a part of it came out in income-tax return, and the balance remained hidden in bundled up currency notes in dark boxes" (158).

Narayan highlights that the essential condition for the existence and for the sway of bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital.

People have sold out their souls and do not hesitate to make money out of collections for the disposal of an unclaimed dead body. Narayan writes; they even haggled with the grave digger and were left with as much money at the end of it all that they drank and made merry for three or four days and gave up temporarily their normal jobs" (22).

The above mentioned incidents clearly give indications of the effects of money; money has made people emotionless, senseless and insensitive that they are ready to exploit people in the name of religion, politics and culture. Marx exposes such an aspect of bourgeoisie as: "In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation" (Marx 6).

The novel has shown that ultimately it is the peasants who become the target and prey of every type of exploitation whether through Margayya who by his nefarious plan of fleecing people of their unaccounted money on the pretext of giving them the exorbitant twenty percent rate of interest or the rich merchant who sells rice at a rupee for half a seer to the needy people.

Narayan has castigated the tendency of neo bourgeoisies to exploit poor people. Marx has described such scene as: "But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products that is based on class antagonism, on the exploitation of many by the few"(Marx 27).

But with the downfall and ruin of Margayya's business through Dr. Pal, we learn at the end that modern bourgeois society with gigantic means of production is like the sorcerer. In such a society, bourgeois class becomes helpless and unfit in the same world which is

created by it: “Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the power of neither world whom he has called up by his spells” (Marx 11).

Last stage of Margayya’s life shows him penny less. He is shown as person who has learnt nothing from his previous experiences. At the end though, after Margayya’s economic collapse, some kind of restitution of an older social order seems to occur. But he is a man who is not able to understand that in bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality. Margayya’s life in the novel *The Financial Expert* shows that in bourgeois society, the past dominates the present and existence of materialistic bourgeoisie class is no longer compatible with society. People like Margayya are the products of class- antagonism based on social status of a person due to his economic position.

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