

## MARGAYYA, THE IRONY: A STUDY OF THE PROTAGONIST IN *THE FINANCIAL EXPERT*

**V. Premkumar**

Ph. D English Part time Research Scholar  
Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai

**Dr. R. Chakkaravarthy**

Associate Professor  
P G & Research Department of English  
G T N Arts College, Dindigul

### Abstract

Margayya is called so as he shows the way to people to overcome their financial issues that happen to be the root cause for all problems. His life goes on well till he is evicted from his place under the banyan tree opposite the cooperative bank as he carried out its operations illegally. Knowing not what to do for his livelihood, having no “marga” (way), he seeks help from a priest who cheats him. As he was searching for lotus to perform pooja, he comes across Dr. Pal who gives him the book *Bed Life*. Margayya renames it as *Domestic Harmony* and markets it. This makes him rich. His son Balu falls into wrong ways, fails in studies, throws his school certificate book into the gutters as he did with Margayya’s account book and absconds. Margayya starts taking deposits from people, promoted and recommended by Dr. pal, and starts lending again. He goes to Chennai in search of his son and brings him back. Again, with the help of Dr. Pal, he gets his son married. He comes to know that Balu leads a wrong life with the company of Dr. Pal, accosts him one night and beats him with chappals. The enraged Dr. Pal insinuates the depositors to get back their money. As all ask for their deposits to be paid back at the same time, Margayya crumbles. He loses all the money and is all set to go back to the place under the same Banyan tree in search of some “marga” again.

**Keywords:** Margayya, the name - interference in bank operations- unceremoniously evicted-consulting priest-

penance- meeting Dr. Pal-bed life or domestic harmony- publication of the book- suddenly rich-problems with his son- Balu absconds - investment banking- heaps money- antagonises Dr. Pal-loses credibility- all money lost-back to the beginning.

A person named Krishna becomes Margayya. He is the saviour of all the people, especially illiterate and half-literate villagers within a hundred miles radius of Malgudi, which only denotes that he is a financial wizard! The name “Margayya is purely derivative: “Marga” meant the way and “Ayya” was a honorific suffix: taken together it denoted one who showed the way.” (P.1) Margayya positioned himself under the banyan tree right near the Central cooperative Land Mortgage Bank that was formed to help the rural poor and Margayya thwarted the very purpose and ideals of it. He, with no investment from his pocket, juggled the bank’s money and thrived. He was running a parallel bank under the tree with all bank forms that he managed to obtain using his wits and bribing the bank peon Aruldoss. Margayya cashed in on the difficulties of the villagers in following the bank procedures and coaxed them to take more and more loan from the bank. He thrived on the commission he got for his services. His operations could be described thus:

It is impossible to describe more clearly than this Margayya’s activity under the tree. He advanced a little loan (for interest) so that the little loan might wedge out another loan from the cooperative bank; which in turn was passed on to someone in need

for a higher interest. Margayya kept himself as the centre of all the complex transactions, and made all the parties concerned pay him for his services, the bank opposite him involved in it willy-nilly. (P.16)

At home Margayya is a loving husband and a doting father who pampers and spoils his son Balu, a small boy. As Balu is a late issue (Margayya is forty-two now!). Margayya's sister-in-law rightly remarks, "This is the worst of begetting son's late in life! They pet them and spoil them and make them little monsters." (P.15) It is this Balu who is going to make Margayya's ruin complete.

The matters take a turn when Margayya was summoned by the Secretary of the bank one day. Margayya reacts very impetuously. He speaks to Aruldoss thus "Look here Aruldoss... Tell your secretary that if he is a secretary, I'm really the proprietor of a bank, and that he can come here and meet me if he has any business." (P.24) It is reported as such and the Secretary comes to the spot and pulls out all the forms of the bank that Margayya had in his trunk and demands, "How did you come by these? These are our application forms!" (P.27) Margayya's arrogance in responding lands him up in further trouble and the Secretary threatens to hand over Margayya to the police and packs him off from under the tree where Margayya was running the parallel bank. Thus ends Margayya's career as a banker.

Margayya walks back home dejected. His wife senses that something has gone wrong. He wakes up his wife who is about to sleep and tells her about the day's events. He speaks about how he was threatened by the Secretary and reasons it out thus:

He has every right because he has more money, authority, dress, looks- above all, more money. Its money which gives people all this. Money alone is important in this world. Everything else will come to us naturally if we have money in our purse." (P.32)

It is this revelation that transforms Margayya. Margayya dressed up himself as if going to a wedding and appeared in front of the bank the next day. He transacted business standing with more authority. On his

way back home, he was waylaid by a priest who dragged Margayya with him till late at night. The next day, when Margayya was checking what was remaining in his balance, the unexpected happened.

Balu shot out his little leg and kicked away the register petulantly, and in the process the ink well upset beside it and emptied on the page. Then the child stamped his heel on the ink and it splashed over Margayya's face and spoiled the entire book". (P.53)

Margayya got wild and thrashed the little brat. He made such a hue and cry that a crowd gathered in front of Margayya's house. He turned aside and suddenly pounced on the book, grabbed it and dashed off. Margayya tried to catch him but could not. The little brat ran into the street in spite of many trying to stop him. The scene ends thus in utter catastrophe.

Presently he found that he was being outnumbered and cornered. As a circle of hunters hemmed in, he did an entirely unexpected thing- he turned back as if coming into his father's arms, and as he was about to grasp him, darted sideways to the edge of the gutter and flung the red book into it. The gutter ran in front of the houses: roaring waters went down the drain, God knew where. It was well known that any object which fell into it was lost for ever, it sank and went out of sight, sank deeper and deeper into a black mass, and was hopelessly gone. (P.55)

Without the book he could not carry out his business transactions any more. All he could salvage was a meagre two hundred rupees. He ran into the temple priest again who suggested him to perform poojas to Goddess Lakshmi and to overcome the influence of Saturn. Margayya assiduously started it and went in search of lotus flowers and a grey cow whose milk is required. As he was in search of lotus and grey cow in a forlorn and ancient temple premises at dusk, he came across a solitary figure roaming there. He came to Margayya and introduced himself, "I'm Dr. Pal, journalist, correspondent and author. (P. 83) This is the most pivotal event in the course of the novel, the leitmotif of

Narayan. The introduction of an outsider in the plot changes and propels the course of the story. Dr. Pal claims to have authored four books on Sociology.

After the forty-six-day pooja, Margayya is left with no more money and he wanders the streets contemplating various business ventures including selling "monkey brand" tooth powder. Again, he runs into Dr. Pal. Dr. Pal offers his book *Bed- Life or the Science of Marital Happiness* to Margayya for a pittance of twenty-five rupees just in exchange for what is left in Margayya's pocket.

From now on, Margayya swiftly acts. He goes to meet the printer Madan Lal and sells it to him for a handsome price. He starts his money lending business again as the good old villager Kandan comes back to him. His son proves to be good for nothing. All the efforts he takes educate him and make him a doctor go in vain. Balu ends all the dreams of Margayya as he tears his School certificate book into pieces and throws it into the same old gutters where he sent his father's account book. To escape Margayya's wrath, he flees home. Margayya, unable to withstand his wife's nagging, goes in search of Balu. He locates him in Madras and brings back the prodigal son home. He seeks alliance for Balu and as the horoscopes do not match, Dr. Pal helps Margayya to find a different astrologer who rearranges the stars of Balu to suit the circumstances. Margayya does not meet the astrologer in person. "Dr. Pal took the task upon himself". (P.236) Thus Dr. Pal helps not only Margayya but also his son Balu to settle comfortably in life.

Margayya is tempted to grow big and when consulted, Dr. Pal encourages him. Margayya tells Dr. Pal, "This is the time when I wish to attract deposits rather than lend ...and I look to you to get me a few contacts. (P.241) Margayya and Dr Pal collected as much money as possible from not only ordinary people but also from fraudsters who had a lot of black money. He offered to pay twenty per cent interest when the banks offered three per cent. Margayya grew up enormously rich and became a celebrity in Malgudi. The way he

collected money and stored it in his house are described thus:

In the course of time, at the end of a day, he brought home not one bag, but quite a number of them. It was no longer possible to count the currency notes individually. He could not only count and check-up the bundles –and even that took him beyond midnight. For now, his fame had spread far and wide and it was not only the deposits of well-to-do people that arrived at his counter, but also those of smaller tradesmen and clerks and workers—who brought in their life's savings. (P.249)

**Interestingly, Dr. Pal became both the cause of Margayya's success. Pal involves Balu in immoral activities which infuriated Margayya and this prompted him to attack Dr. Pal. Later, Margayya came to know that Dr. Pal was Balu's companion in playing cards, drinking alcohol, womanizing and all sorts of such nefarious activities. Margayya knew of Dr. Pal's intelligence and powers. So, he was planning to send Dr. Pal to another city on some pretext to protect his son from his bad company but the plan did not take off.**

**Dr. Pal! Dr. Pal! What shall I do with him?" he reflected. He was torn between caution and an impossible rage. God knew where it would lead if he alienated Pal's sympathies: the fellow might do anything. (P.252)**

**Ultimately, Margayya's friendship with Dr. Pal ended up with disastrous consequences for Margayya that made Margayya a pauper and get back to his life of cringing.**

Margayya moves on from one level to the other relentlessly, ably guided and assisted by Dr. Pal. One is not given to understand the ulterior motive of Dr. Pal in helping Margayya. He becomes a close associate of Balu, Margayya's son, as they both share their common philistine interests. Margayya has no right or reason to beat up Dr. Pal. This act of indiscretion costs Margayya heavily. Wounded both in body and mind, Dr. Pal, being intelligent, finishes off Margayya in just one single stroke

- he just induces one to withdraw his deposit with Margayya that creates a chain reaction. All rush to Margayya asking for their money back and Margayya escapes alive filing insolvency.

Life has come to a full circle. This suggests the eternal truth that the will of God and destiny of an individual are inextricable. It is the individual who is ultimately responsible for his fate, as in the case of Margayya. The following passage illustrates this idea clearly:

Balu approached him and sat beside him. Margayya put his arms round him: "You see that box there. I have managed to get it out again." He pointed to a corner where his old knobby trunk was kept. "Its contents are intact as I left them years ago – a pen and an ink bottle. You asked for my property. There it is, take it: have an early meal tomorrow and go to the banyan tree in front of the Co – operative bank. I hope the tree is still there. Go there, that is all I can say: and anything may happen thereafter. Well, what do you say? I am showing you a way. Will you follow it? (FE,272)

Margayya, the one who showed the way to people to come out of their problems and embark on life again is left with no new way to set right his predicament but back to the same old way! Thus, the name itself becomes the theme as it turns out to be ironical.

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