

**R.K. NARAYAN: AS A CREATOR OF MALGUDI****DIVYA BHADAURIYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*R.K. Narayan's novels are generally known as the Malgudi novels. The reason behind this is obvious. All the characters are rich and poor, farmers and feuds, teachers and students, old and young, dull and wise, good and bad, innocent and hypocrite- find their existence in Malgudi. It is only with great effort that R.K. Narayan presents human relationship within the Municipal limit of Malgudi. Malgudi is Narayan's imaginary locale like 'Lake District' of William Wordsworth, 'Border Countries' of Sir Walter Scott, 'the Wessex' of Thomas Hardy and 'The Five Towns' of Arnold Bennet. Malgudi is an imaginary town belonging to South India, it is situated between Madras and Tiruchirappalli.*

**Keywords:**

R.K. Narayan is widely regarded as India's greatest writer of the twentieth century. His literary career is exceptionally long-lasting encompassing seven decades. His literary creations are rich and varied, which includes fourteen novels and scores of short-stories, all exceptionally set in an imaginary town Malgudi. Besides novels and essays, travelogues, retelling of Indian epics and an acclaimed autobiography, *My Days*, published in 1974.

Though the locale is regional in character, Narayan's plots, based on the idea of characters as they are transcend the locale. He has no regard for poetic justice. His heroes do not belong to the conventional types and there is nothing heroic about them. The secret of R.K. Narayan's artistic vision is minute observation, subtle irony and a harmonious way of storytelling. His narration is superb and full of humour. His realistic pictures are not disturbed by fantasy. The mainspring of his inspiration is the angle from which he approaches the subject - matter. As a writer of social novels, Narayan has a light approach to life and as such he stirs no deep human emotions. He is generally realistic and photographic. The details are accurate, even photographic, but there is also an explanation of the souls of his characters. His characters, on their part, consist of college boys, teachers, schoolmasters, merchants, municipal members, tourists, guides and taxi drivers. They are from lower middle and poor classes of Malgudi. Narayan is the creator of unheroic heroes drawn on an unheroic scale and controlled by events. They are helpless creatures guided by the caprice of fortune. Mulk Raj Anand rightly remarks:

**"R.K. Narayan is a meticulous craftsman. He interprets to mood of his characters. He determines the pattern without overt intervention. And thus, he achieves organic composition as on canvas where composition and contrasts bring out the internal crisis of the human personality."**<sup>1</sup>

Malgudi is an imagery town belonging to South India, it is situated between Madras and Tiruchirappalli. Malgudi in the novels of R.K. Narayan has been the subject of importance because it provides the real force in the presentation of his characters. Though it does not have any geographical existence, yet it is always present in his novels as a real character of blood and flesh. As Ved Mehta, in his series of articles in *John is Easy to Please* presents how R.K. Narayan has come to present an imaginary town like Malgudi in his novels with great fictional effect. He quotes the words of R.K. Narayan:

**"I remember waling up with the name Malgudi on Vijaydashmi, the day on which the goddess of learning is celebrated. Malgudi was an earth-shaking discovery for me, because I had no mind for facts and things like that, which would be necessary in writing about Malgudi or any real place. I first pictured not my town but just the railway station, which was a small platform with a banyan tree, a station master and two trains a day, one coming and one going. On Vijaydashmi, I sat down and wrote the first sentence about my town: The train had just arrived at Malgudi station."**<sup>2</sup>

We find an interesting development in Narayan's narrative in the portrayal of Malgudi. Throughout his career, Narayan has presented Malgudi in his each and every novel and short-stories. From *Swami and Friends* to *The World of Nagaraj*, we find Malgudi in different manner. Narayan introduces his fictional town Malgudi from his novel *Swami and Friends* with great interest. Malgudi is situated in Tamil Nadu in the South India. Malgudi is situated between Madras and Tiruchirappalli, some three hundred and sixty miles away by road from Madras. The railway distance is shorter since Margayya in *The Financial Expert* catches the six o'clock train to Madras coming from Trichy and reaches at Madras Egmore station in the cold, morning light

probably on the next day. In his novel *The Dark Room*, R.K.Narayan has presented Cinema hall in Malgudi in the realistic manner:

**“Malgudi in 1935 suddenly came into line with the modern age by building a well-equipped theatre - the palace talkies -which simply brushed aside the cold correct corrugated sheet roofed variety hall, which from time immemorial had entertained the citizens of Malgudi with tattered silent film.”<sup>3</sup>**

Although Malgudi is a small town, but it is full of so many important places. The important public places of Malgudi are Malgudi Station, Bombay-Anand Bhawan, Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank, Lawley Extension, Kabir Street, the Regal Hair-cutting Saloon, the statue of Sir Frederick Lawley, the office of The Banner, the Saraju River, Nallappa's Groves, Mempi hills, hotels, cinema-halls and colleges, all these important places make a strong social as well as moral framework within which the juxtaposition of the age-old convention and tradition and the modern characters provides much of the comedy. Malgudi is not a flat town but it is developing town and it undergoes many changes from *Swami and Friends* to *The World of Nagaraj*.

River Saraju is the sacred river of Malgudi and it is the epitome of the Ganga at the same time. The important characteristic feature of the landscape of Malgudi is its river Saraju which flows.

Malgudian people consider Saraju as the holy river. They also believe that the river is born of a scratch made by Rama's arrow when he was on his way to Lanka and its source again is mentioned in the mythological stories of Goddess Parvati jumping into the fire and water arising from the spot. Saraju is the symbol of pride for the people of Malgudi. It is on the bank of Saraju that Mani waits for Rajam and plans to bundle up and throw him into the river in *Swami and Friends*. It is on the bank of Saraju that Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts* steals a glance of the beautiful Malathi and he falls at once in passionate love with her. It is on the bank of Saraju that Mahatma Gandhi addressed the public meeting in which so many freedom fighters assembled. Here, Sriram also became the follower of Gandhi just only to receive the attention of Bharati in *Waiting for the Mahatma*. In *The Dark Room*, Savitri, the devoted and submissive wife of Ramani tries to drown herself in Saraju after disgusted from her husband's rude behaviour. In *The English Teacher*, Krishna and Susila always walk on the banks of Saraju to make everything easy. In *The Guide*, Raju and Rosie talk about their future plans and Rosie also tells Raju about her broken marriage pathetically on the banks of the holy river. In *The Painter of Signs*, the heroine of the novel, Daisy tells an account of her early struggles to her beloved Raman. In this way, we find that the river Saraju is the symbol of life force itself.

In Malgudi, Lawley Extension is perhaps the well-known place. The Lawley Extension consists of about fifty bungalows and these bungalows are mostly occupied by the government officials as described in *Swami and Friends*. In the earlier novels of R.K. Narayan, Malgudi has been in the process of development. The psychological realism of the novelist provides new dimensions to the City of imagination which remains as the representative of India.

Narayan created Malgudi in 1930s, but on that time also, there were a number of educational institutions present in Malgudi. The presence of educational institution marked the intellectual development in pre-independence South Indian society. In *Swami and Friends*, we find the description of almost thirty primary schools. In *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Sriram studies in higher Elementary School near Kabir Street.

R.K. Narayan has presented the beautiful description of Mempi hills in his all novels. The Mempi hills which are the symbol of stateliness and grandeur for Malgudi, are situated towards the north of the town. Mempi hills are surrounded by the Mempi forests. We find the ample description of Mempi Hills in his two novels- *The Guide* and *The Man-eater of Malgudi*. In *The Guide*, Raju, the central and the most fascinating character, takes the visitors to the Mempi hills and shows them the sources of the Saraju river.

The society of Malgudi is traditional and its inhabitants are the follower of age-old customs and conventions set by their elders. We find the description of a large number of temples in the novels of R.K. Narayan. This description is not futile because the temples are the representative of religious sentiment and it checks the distortions, oddities and angularities in the society. Malgudian people worship in the temple to get peace and retain harmony in the society.

The town-hall tower is the symbol of economic activity where so many persons become fortunate or unfortunate within minutes. Margayyais fond of visiting the town-hall tower for his financial dealings. In *The Painter of Signs*, Raman meets Daisy at the Market Road and he at once falls in love with her.

The presence of a number of printing presses in Malgudi cannotes the emergence of a large number of readers as well as writers. In *Mr. Sampath*, the relationship between Srinivas and Sampath completely depends on the existence of Press. Srinivas is in search of the Printing Press and on the other hand, Sampath is in search of the suitable and talented writer. The owner of Truth Printing Press is Mr. Sampath himself.

R.K. Narayan's Malgudi presents a strong sense of values. Malgudian values of life are closely associated with Narayan's world of values. A number of Narayan's characters belonging to different age, religion and group are bound to follow the Malgudian tradition.

Thus, Malgudi signifies the true and traditional Indian life and society. Narayan's novels are the meeting point of the old and the new culture and the Malgudian people have done the Justice. The beauty of Malgudi lies in its balanced eyeview. Narayan touches both the tragic and the comic, fair and foul, old and new, moral and Immoral, easy and serious themes, events and characters in lively manner. All the human aspects, human problems, human triumph and human weaknesses are present in Malgudi and that is why Malgudi is the real locale, not the imaginative plight or fantasy of the writer.

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