

Indian Village with Indian Life in “The Vendor of Sweets”

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ABSTRACT

R.K.Narayan created Malgudi an imaginative town in his novel and short stories. The attempt in this Research Paper is made to show, how Malgudi represents Indian village. Though Malgudi is an imaginative, it is alive. ‘The Vendor of Sweets’ represents the typical image of India’s customs and culture. The main character of the novel is Jagan. He represents Indian values in every sense of his life. Malgudi is depicted as a typical Indian village. Even the incidents are woven very artistically and realistically that we feel our presence over there. They are truly in manner of Indian life. It represents Indian village in a subtle form. Narayan has successfully portrayed Indian village life with the representation of Malgudi.

Key Words: Malgudi and its development, Malgudi as an Indian village, social customs and traditions, village life, social taboos.

Introduction:

The partition of India shows radical and lasting changes in Indian social and cultural life. We find many changes in literature. Particularly Indian writing in English shows the Indian social minds. Many Indian writers have changed their writing trends. Like many of Indian writing novelists, R.K.Narayan is a leading writer. Though he wrote in English, he had a great attachment to his mother tongue. Narayan depicted ‘Malgudi’ as an Indian village in his novel “The Vendor of Sweets”.

We find Malgudi – an imaginary region in each work of R.K.Narayan. We also find a quite realistic Indian village life in Malgudi. In “The Vendor of Sweets” Malgudi is represented with local traits and as a developing town. “The Vendor of Sweets” deals with background, people, trades, customs, habits, manners, traditions etc of a village life. In this way, the portrayal of Malgudi in “The Vendor of Sweets” represents Indian village and life.

Physical Features of Malgudi:

At the beginning of the novel, the readers are introduced with Malgudi town. On the Market road, Jagan has his sweet stall. There is high school near his sweet stall. On the way to his house, there is Krishna Dispensary and Truth printing press where Jagan’s book on nature cure is waiting to be published. There is Kabir Lane and Statue of Sir Frederick Lawly. Malgudi is expanding and it becomes clear from the developing extensions. There are Lawly extension, south extension and the New extension. All these are stretched out beyond the statue. Once upon a time they were outside the city but now they are the part of the city and quite modern. There are other streets as Kabir street, Anderson Lane, Vinayak Mudaliar street, Abu Lane and Hospital road. There is river Saryu and Mempi forest. There are hills, garden and pond.

Malgudi its Development and as an Indian Village:

Malgudi is developing. There are horse carriages, cycles, scooters and even cars. His own son Mali travels by scooter and car. There are possibilities of telephones, as Mali demands a phone for his purpose. Railways were introduced since long. Jagan had gone to see Ambika by a train. There is a high school, Albert Mission College. There are sweet mart, Anand Bhavan Restaurant and another developed restaurant where European food is available. There are dispensary, hospital, bus station, railway station, jail, police station etc. There are also District Magistrate, superintendent of police, lawyer etc. There are possibilities to establish even a factory and Mali thinks over it very positively. He has convinced many people to invest money in it. Modernization is going on in Malgudi. In 1935 the Palace Talkies was built in Malgudi. Even Gandhiji had visited this city for the freedom movement and people like Jagan had followed his ideals for lifetime.

Indian Village Life:

Social life presented in “The Vendor of Sweet” represents the Indian culture and Indian life. Description of Jagan’s house, his family, his childhood, happiness and sorrows of the family are typical Indian. The relationship of Jagan and Mali is universal and representing generation gap. The relationship of Jagan and Ambika also represents a mass. We are introduced here with the family of Jagan. He married Ambika and has only child Mali by the blessing of ‘Sanatana-Krishna’ after ten years of his married life.

Ambika died at the very early age and both the father and son remained alone in the world. Jagan always loved his son Mali deep heartedly. As after his wife's death Mali is only his emotional support. Jagan has performed both the duties of a mother and of a father. He used to cook breakfast for his son, placed it on the table with five-rupee note for his lunch and the other expenses. He was always worried about his eating. He has very high expectations from his son that he will do something praiseworthy someday but mali has no such kind of feelings for his father and he is not an obedient son. Both had not much conversation on any matter. Mali always kept himself away from his caring father.

Mali left his study, goes to America without his help, and breaks his every expectation as a father. He even steals ten thousand rupees from his own house. Even after years, he came with Grace and introduced her as his wife but at the end, Jagan came to know the reality that they were not married at all. This gives Jagan the greatest shock of his life. He also demands fifty thousand dollars for the factory but Jagan refused and went to retreat as both the person had spoiled his ancestral house and he decides to leave every worldly tension as solution of all difficulties. Thus, as a typical Indian village life, here also we can see that the father-son relationship is very much complex. One is caring while other is lacking of obedientness. One believes in old ideas while other believes in modernization. Jagan saw risk in establishing factory while Mali believes in adventure for progressive future. For him settled business of sweets is appropriate. For Mali, Jagan is ready to give but Mali says, "you expect me to do that?" I have better plans to be a Vendor of Sweets". Both father and son think according to their own viewpoint. On any matter, their understanding never meets. Both have different ideals. The emotional touch is lacking. The father is too caring while the son is too spoiled. It's also note worthy that Jagan never uses his right as a father should use. Even he never reveals his heart to his son just because of the fear of upsetting his son. Jagan never scolds his son or never becomes harsh to him. On the other hand Mali never becomes obedient or loving to his father. There are social customs and social problems also e.g. engagement, marriage, pilgrimage, death, conflicts in the family, money-oriented quarrels, breaking tradition, punishment for crimes etc. When Jagan reduces the price of sweets, the other merchants visit him and ask him to keep the normal prize, as it was a necessary decorum. Mali breaks the tradition and consequently suffers a lot. There are other relationships representing Indian life e.g. friendship, brother-brother, brother-sister, husband-wife, father-son etc. Even an American girl like Grace loves Indian life and tradition. She takes care of her house like an Indian house wife. She sweeps the floor, cleans the utensils, cooks food, draws 'rangoli' wears 'sari', fixes flower in her hair. She gives respect to Jagan as a daughter-in-law.

Social Custom:

Social customs are depicted very realistically. Jagan's family used to celebrate festivals very enthusiastically. Many lamps were lighted and the house looked beautiful. The customs of engagement, marriage, dowry, pilgrimage etc are depicted very nicely. The brides were proposed by family members. Jagan went to see Ambika with his brother for the same purpose. Staring to the girl was not allowed. So many relatives used to gather at the bride's place and welcomed proposed bridegroom. At Ambika's place same thing had happened to Jagan. He was forbidden to stare her by his brother. Ambika's family had served snacks and coffee but Jagan had not to eat everything. After selecting the girl, it was turn of marriage. Though Jagan was very much excited he had not to take part in all the ceremonies and preparations very enthusiastically. The custom of dowry was there. Ambika had to bring it. A gold waist belt had created problems. After ten years of marriage, Jagan had no children. The family members wanted a kid, so they had gone to the pilgrimiage of Santana Krishna and after that their wish was fulfilled and Mali was born. Ambika was given lots of gifts from her parents on that occasion. Mali broke all these traditions by bringing Grace with him and living with her without marriage. When Jagan comes to know this he is shocked. He feels that his pious house is tainted and he cannot live in it any more. He selects the way of 'Sanyasth-Ashram' – retirement. He wants to retire from his wordly worries. Thus through Jagan's story R.K.Narayan has depicted social customs very realistically.

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