



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Malgudi Milieu in R.K.Narayan's Novels

C. Gopal Reddy

Assistant professor of English
Government first Grade College
Chikkaballapur, Karnataka

Narayan's Malgudi with its little railway station, swan in to views, all readymade..... His Malgudi has become a part of Indian consciousness now "Malgudi has become a kind of ancestral village for the whole literate world, a timeless and quintessential Indian Place paintstakingly built from, memory, philosophy and Narayan's peculiar wit. A small town filled with even smaller lives. This paper seeks to explore Malgudi is Narayan's monument to Indianess, a creation that is true, subtle and enormously funny".

Key words: Malgudi-Milieu, Ancestral village, Microcosm, Modernism

As the social scenario witnesses, inter-personal economic and political changes heralding alterations in individual social ties, Malgudi feels on thrust and Narayan seems to be at pains to maintain its native image as a repository of traditional Indian culture. "It looks as through Narayan, in his recent novels, can neither be satisfied with familiar Malgudi nor quite do without it". It means that there is a great scope for Malgudi to develop, because it is not as domineering and invincible a presence as Hardy's Wessex or Faulkner's Yoknapatwapha. The movement from these two fictional locals to Malgudi sounds like a move "from a tropical jungle to a Municipal park".

One may be tempted to feel it as "The soul of the place" since the human profiles are silhouetted against this revealing identity. **Piyali Majumdar** finds Malgudi encouraging for its "quaintness and exoticism" and for her it emerges "Less an actual town than a stereotypical our town" as there is the absence of poverty horror of war, communal tensions that is that part of Indian life which is "nasty brutish and short". The life style of Malgudians has its local trappings but this world is as volatile and human as that of Dickens. It is essentially this human character

which makes it a microcosm of the universe and we feel that “Malgudi is everywhere”. It is a vast expanding town which experiences the strains of complex life of the era of Science and technology while and it also preserves the much adored pastoral simplicity of the yester years. We come across votaries of the old and advocates of the new light and life who are prepared to venture into forbidden territories. It seems “Narayan writes not mere lip with an intense social awareness of his own age but with the past of Indian in his bones”.

The special flavour of the place assumes its marked character with the blend of the oriental and the present situation. It is a realistic picture of the changing social scene in India which is ringing in the new, without ringing out the old. Thus “what happens in India happens in Malgudi, and whatever happens in Malgudi happens every where” Narayan’s Malgudi is, in fact, a place inhabited by the Malgudi classes as it is a slowly flourishing town where the enterprising middle classes are trying to find their roots while poor people have not yet thronged to it in the form of factory labour necessitating the presence of slums and the urban poor.

Malgudi changes materially and in relief, contours in the background of the new role taken of the middle classes. These classes consist of competent professionals and technocrats who have taken up the leading role with the coming up of tertiary industry and allied technology. Malgudi was a small place where small men ran small business employing self labour although they tried to keep up appearances as big and respectable men. There is rajū’s father running “a small shop built of deal planks and gunny sack” with his son as his helper. It was their personal investment which brought them a small profit or there were rack- renters like the old landlord in Mr. Sampath who changed high renters for their dilapidated buildings having walls with uneven and globular surface and boasted that “modern cement cannot stand comparison” (Sampath 16) with the superior one used to build those houses of Mohanjadaro Style.

In Malgudi Railway line has come and instead of Jutka drivers haggling for fares, we have trains linking it with trichy, Madras and other parts of South India. The business transaction have a conducive environment with the coming up of post office savings Bank and co- operative bank. Thus all the infrastructure for the growth of business and commerce is available in Malgudi and with its trains cinema industry, tourism and parks, it becomes a semi-industrial town. The Malgudians collected on the sands of the Sarayu for past time or business but now with the development of better communication. “Malgudi seemed to unroll a new-sight-seeing place each time” (Guide 63) and people come on site-seeing excursions and to explore its archeological treasures in Mempi Hills.

Malgudi used to be a place where Margayyas and Jagans moving about in jibba and dhoti were a common sight. Margayya is disgusted “with his dhoti going brown for lack of laundering and to prop up his personality” he wore a lace edged dhoti (Expert 12, 18) Jagan belongs to the same old generation and “he wore a loose jibba over his dhoti” (Vendor 15). The ladies wore sarees and petticoats and lived within the four walls of their houses.

As regards education, B.A. degree seemed a coveted qualification as Swami’s father once remarked in anger that one can rest only after one passes B.A. Chandran is a graduate while Srirama is drop-out. Malgudi witnesses growth in education with the coming up of colleges and libraries. The shift from book stalls to libraries has led to higher qualification in the shape of M.A. and research work which places the middle classes desire for education in a proper perspective. Rosie is M.A. in Economics and Vasu is M.A. in taxidermy Marco is doing research work on stone engravings so much so that “Dead and decaying things seemed to loosen (SIC) his tongue and fire his imagination” (Guide 72). Even Dr.Rann in the Talkative Man is working on the extermination of some “cannibal herb” and wants to “call it Futurology” (TM126, 92) we move from performing parrots and monkeys to trapeze art by Rita in a tiger for Malgudi.

Human relationship also shows a steady March responding closely to the material progress of Malgudi. Family is the nucleus in Narayan’s fiction and it is the spring board from where he launches his men and women in to harsher realities of life. To be more exact, he is an exponent of joint- family system where parents work as guardians of age- old family traditions and relations ever with an over swaying veto power vested in them down the generations. The New Generation is that of lecturers, executives, tourists and doctor’s who have to work away from their parental homes. It is the small family with parents and children only that becomes a reality now. We see it in the form of an independent economic unit in Romanian’s in the Dark Room, in Krishna-Susila family in the English teacher, in Sriram and Bharathi affair in writing for the mahathama in Mali and grace tie up in the Vendor of Sweets, and Srinivas and his wife in the Man eater of Malgudi.

As a result of the emergency of small family as an independent sub- unit of traditional joint family, parent – son relationship and husband – wife ties undergo drastic change, Narayan hints at the modification even in nomenclature of his characters. The women have a better place now and their names make different from Savithri, Shantha Bai and Shanthi to Rosie, Grace and Daisy. The mutation is perceptible even in male characters as from

Romani to Roman and finally to Rann. Now simplicity, the golden ancient norm is supplanted by ostentation and luxury.

The new relationship demand a readjustment of moral values, Malgudi is enjoyed in the process of compromise in its original moral code. The older Generation of parents and grandmother's cannot think of male – female partnership in any other nextes except marriage and procreation. With the seductive clink of wealth, sex becomes a luxury and relations outside wedlock are a sequel to it. Ramani, in the dark room considers his flirtation with his trainee, Shanta Bai, a relaxation which he can safely claim. He is brought to his senses only when Savitri reaches violently to it and raises the banner of revolt. Many eyebrows are raise when Raju and Rosie in the Guide live under the same roof without the safety of wedlock. His mother has never seen such defilement of her home and is afraid of the accusing finger of Society. She leaves her home to stay with her brother. The moral crisis deepens further when Mail brings Grace as his Mistress from abroad and lives with her as man and wife.

The parent – child relationship has also drifted towards chaos. The old generation of Margayyas, Jagans, and Grand – Mother's remain fond parents giving all their love and care to the heir and they are an inheritor of a tradition where children compensated for it through sheepish and ungrudging obedience to elders. Now mother had come up in the changed role of a working women and it is natural that there is a turn in priorities at the domestic front. Mothers have to move out in search of jobs and other calls of the situation and leave their children with someone else. Malgudi is a microcosm of India in yet another respect as the political events happening around also filter through its tenor theme, war, mood of life to make it a living reality. R.K.Narayan's Malgudi epitomizes India at different stages of its political turmoil, national consolidation later National Re-construction as India changed her status from a slave state to a free nation enjoyed in the welfare of its people. It is quite interesting to note that Narayan's pre-occupation with the middle classes in fiction makes the picture whole and alive because it was this class which spear headed the liberation movement in the society. It seems that politics creeps in imperceptibly in Malgudi life as the class Narayan depicts was in the midst of the liberation movement and this politics, through the depicted on a reduced canvas, marks Malgudi a real microcosm of Indian Society.

The period of in Indian history up to 1947 is the period of struggle for freedom of the nation. During these days of British rule, there was spread of education in India to a considerable extent and middle class benefited the most from it. Right on the heels of the better facilities of education, came out the media power and Indian press went quite a long way to further the cause of National emancipation by bringing about an awakening in the society against the

foreign exploitation, despite this overwhelming trend towards national culture, the British culture had its allurements for Indians as there was a craze for education abroad and a linking of their fabric and other goods in India.

India moves on to further modernization and public welfare projects while new issues crop up to engage her attention. Modernism enters Indian life in the form of foreign collaboration and Industry. It gives birth to certain discords which are, manifested in the discomfiture of Jagan at the unusual alliance of Mali and Grace. “Malgudi was changing in 1972 it was the base for a hydro-electric project somewhere on the Mempi hills” (Painter 12). A dam is said to be under way in the man eater of Malgudi which has given a new life to the place around. It was the period when India became aware of the gravity of population explosion which was working against all the futuristic planning and building.

It was a different tension during the earlier period of pre-Independence days when rival cultures clashed on the Indian soil. Now with advancement and emancipation, tradition is constantly clashing with modernity. The solution of the earlier disharmony was the freedom from alien culture but the changing situation is responsible for many quarrels and feuds in the society.

It is a typical model of Indian society picturing its steady emergence on the map of the world, progressing socially, economically and politically. All the changing situation is visualized with the middle class occupying the central stage all the time, embracing, recoiling renouncing accommodating, challenging and advancing. Novy kapadia aptly calls it: The perfect comic product of the colonial situation.¹¹ The Indian villages respected ancient social and cultural values and kept their harmonious tenor despite the impact of western culture while the town got westernized to a large extent. Narayan leaves out poor villagers and labourers from his panorama of Malgudi Town partly due to his comic vision.

References

1. Narayan R.K, Mr. Sampath, Mysore: Indian Thought Publications (1986).
2. The Guide, Mysore: Indian Thought Publications (1986).
3. The Vender of Sweets, Mysore: Indian Thought Publications (1982).
4. The Painter of Signs, Mysore: Indian Thought Publications (1986).

