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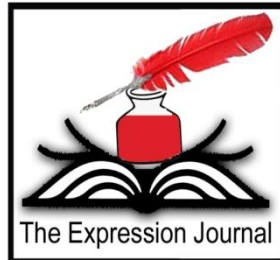
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## ***Malgudi* : An Illusionary World of R.K. Narayan**

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### **Abstract**

Every writer creates a fictional world for himself and lives in it like Alice lives in her wonder land in the *Alice in Wonderland* written by Lewis Carroll. R. K. Narayan's novels and short stories have a specific fictional and an imaginary locale town named Malgudi in South India. Some writers create such an interesting imaginary setting and places that seemed real and existed physically and geographically. Famous Indian writer Khushwant Singh created Manu Majra in his famous novel *A Train to Pakistan*. Famous nature poet William Wordsworth recreated the beauty of Lake District and Arnold Bennet created Pottery Town. All these writers created a fictional world in such an artistic way that some time it seems that these places are real and existed somewhere. In this paper also, I have tried to explore the importance of the fictional locale created by a great writer R. K. Narayan.

### **Keywords**

R. K. Narayan, Fictional World, Malgudi, Identity Crisis, Mutual Relationships.

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### **Introduction**

R.K. Narayan has emerged as one of the most glittering and most eminent name in Pre and Post Colonial Indian Literature, born in 1960 in Madras. He is one of the famous trio writers during early 20<sup>th</sup> century; the other two were Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. His novels are marked for simplicity, urbanity and reality.

Narayan had succeeded better than any other Indian writer in English creating an Imaginary Indian town which keenly impress our mind and soul. We feel some kind of sympathy and attachment with the character and place of action. Narayan's strength lies not merely in the conventional life of middle class Indian people. He gave a minute and detail picture of Malgudi and its inhabitants. Malgudi town is not a geographical expression; it has distinct personality of its own. Dr Srinivasa Iyenger rightly aptly remarks that "Malgudi is the real hero of his novels and short stories". It is Narayan's artistic triumph that he makes us complete faith in the reality of Malgudi. Various critics have attempted to locate or identify the original of the mythical town. In his famous novel, *Swami and Friends* (1935) Malgudi is neither a village nor a city but a town of modest size. In *Bachelor of Arts* (1937), we find that people of Malgudi are conventional and conservative thinking. Sex and love are taboos there. Krishna, the protagonist of the story cannot express his love with the result that girl is married to someone else. In Malgudi love is sin. Malgudi is ancient looking. Its streets are dark and dingy and its buildings unimpressive, but it is growing town. Such a gloomy picture was presented by the author in the novel 'Waiting for Mahatma' (1955) as in the following lines:

"The house was two hundred years old and looked it crooked street run in front of these houses: there closeness to the market and to a higher Elementary Town school, the local fund dispensary, and all to the half dozen benches around the market fountain, we said to give these houses in Kabir Street a unique value"

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In physical setting – the river, the railway station, the nearby hill and forest, lodge and hotel, colleges and cinema hall, we find Narayana characters moving freely. His method of creating this distinctive setting is for the part descriptive. Some outstanding features Malgudi are Englandia Insurance Company in *The Dark Room* of which Ramani is a branch manager, the Englandia Banking Corporation. The description of Malgudi would be incomplete without the mention of the caves. The caves are the central identity of the town. They establish the historical perspective and antiquity of Malgudi. The presence of the caves in the midst of the growing structures and building lends credibility to the geography of the town.

“The entrance of the cave was beyond a thicket of lantana. A huge door on its rusty hinges stood open. And, of course, all the crumbling brick and plaster was there. It was a cave with a single rock covering its entire roof—the roof was low, but every inch of the wall space was covered with painted figure.” (*The Guide*)

Marco explores caves with their carved doorways, wall painting and discover musical notion on the wall. As Srinivasa Iyenger has rightly pointed out “Malgudi remains unchanged but it has now acquired richer and more exotic surroundings otherwise it would have been mere Malgudi”.

Narayan’s attitude toward Malgudi remains lovingly ambiguous. In *The Financial Expert* (1952) he has depicted the traditional life of the Indian town with all its backwardness and poverty.

“Oh! You have come back for a new loan. I suppose if you pay seventy five rupees more, you can again take three hundred rupees within a week! The bye law allows a new loan when fifty percent is paid up”.

Narayan has treated the baggers, sponges tricksters etc with gentle teasing and melancholy understanding. Dreams and bohemians are oddly enough quite at home in this orthodox community, but Malgudi is less tolerant of the modernizers, Americanizers and Anglicizers of one sort or another, government planners and men of violence, fanaticism and needless novelty. All the characters, central and secondary, seem to contribute to the recognizable ambivalence: the gentle ineffectual dreamers, the colourful scamps, the cricket mad school boys, the puzzled middle aged parents, the postman who read and deliver the news, the busmen who invent new routs as the go along, the corrupt politicians and their sycophants so, Malgudi takes on a character of its own.

George Eliot once remarked, “depend upon it would gain unspeakably if you would learn with me to see some of the poetry and pathos--- lying in experience of the human souls that looks out through dull, grey eyes and that speaks in the voice of quite ordinary tone.” It is the poetry and pathos of the everyday life that Narayan has succeeded in discovering in the Malgudi novels. The background of a small town with its drabs and colourless street, its unimposing building and its seemingly insignificant landmarks is charged with life by the people who walk in these street live in these houses and gaze with affection at these landmarks. There exists a strange sense of communion between the characters and the background. The people of Malgudi grow out of it, live in it and belong to it natural setting is its reluctance to change.

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The most distinctive feature of Narayan's fictional setting is its reluctance to change. Malgudi of *Swami and Friends* (1935) is the Malgudi of thirties and is naturally touched by political disturbances. In *The Bachelor of Art* (1937) Narayan seems to be consolidating the setting he has created in the earlier novels. In his two other earlier novels such as *The Dark Room* (1938) and *The English Teacher* (1945) Malgudi remains slow moving peaceful and unruffled. It speaks through myriad voices, smells and sights but essentially it remains the same and does not lose its identity. The success of his art lies in making us recognize that all too familiar landscape. We feel it and see it and know it to be true. People of Malgudi are so strongly tied to the deeply rooted tradition and aged old custom that they look upon any new idea with suspicion and distrust. In spite of disturbance and changes from outside and inside, Narayan underlines and timeless quality of Malgudi; his novels celebrate a kind of heroic Indian inertia. Malgudi has been oral traditional history that goes back to epic times. Rama may have passed that way in the expedition of Lanka and its path may have been touched by the lotus feet of the Lord Buddha. The town's past is incredibly involved with the past of India. Malgudi is an epitome of mother India herself, and identification that reminds us of Raja Rao's very different village of Kanthapura. Thus different novels give an account of the life and relation of various communities living in Malgudi.

## Conclusion

Thus, we see that Malgudi is a jerk of kaleidoscope when a new engaging and pattern emerges to hold our attention and indeed Malgudi has been more or less like this not only during the last twenty years of seeming topographical and technological change but also during long vistas of the past. The solid achievements of Narayan's Malgudi 'saga' put him at the pinnacle of Indian writing in English in our country.

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