

R. K. NARAYAN: THE CREATOR OF MALGUDI TOWN AND THE TYPICAL PEOPLE IN HIS STORIES

Dr. Narendra L. Gadge

Dept. of English

Smt. Rajkamal B. Tidke Mahavidyalaya,
Mouda Dist. Nagpur

Email Id -narendra.l.gadge@gmail.com

Mob. No - 8087781317

Abstract:

The very purpose of this Research Paper is to focus on the selected short stories of R. K. Narayan through which he created the new town called Malgudi. Although it is an imaginary but seems very real which might be situated somewhere in South India. Not only this but its typical people and their idiosyncrasies also seem genuine in the real life. This is the magic of R. K. Narayan's imagination that he has created the real world in a small town. We meet the real people in his short stories and the incidences and events which they encounter in their lives also seem genuine. Although the incidents seem simple but the ironic and humoristic style of R. K. Narayan has made those incidents and event very special which never fail to entertain the readers.

Key words: new town, Malgudi imaginary, real, South India, idiosyncrasies, incidences, simple, ironic, humoristic style, special, entertain

Introduction:

Everyone loves a story. We must have listened to our grandmother's stories on cold wintry nights and felt happy or sad on hearing it. A story sometimes takes you to a world other than the one you are living in and you are left fascinated by it. A short story is perhaps easier to read and less time-consuming than a novel which takes a long time to finish reading. But a short story also is perhaps harder to write than a novel as it has to create its effect in a limited number of words. Like miniature paintings, they are tightly wound and every detail counts. Let us see now what H. G. Wells has to say about a short story: "A short story is or should be a simple thing; aims at producing one single vivid effect; it has to seize the attention at the outset, and never relaxing, gathers it together more and more until the climax is reached. The limits of the human capacity to attend closely, therefore, set a limit to it; it must explode and finish before interruption occurs or, fatigue sets in."¹

There was higher literature no doubt, but it could not cater to the new needs, as all men could not read higher literature, some did not have the requisite education. Other sufficient intellectual penetration to understand and appreciate it. Moreover higher literature is meant for deep meditative study not mere casual reading. Therefore almost a universal need was left for light works, hence the short story.

R. K. Narayan was born in Madras on Oct. in 1906 and educated there at Maharaja's College in Mysore. He has lived in India ever since, apart his travels. Most of work starting from his first novel 'Swami and Friends' (1935) is set in the fictional town of Malgudi which at the same time captures everything Indian while having a unique identity of its own. Today



we call R.K. Narayan the grand old man of Indian literature. In a writing career spanning seven decades, he has enthralled and entertained generations of readers with his deftly etched characters, his uniquely stylized language and his wry sense of humor. His themes are creative, delightful, witty, humorous and ironic in nature. His stories bristle with innumerable Indian scenes and characters. He delineates his characters with a comic touch. His stories reveal the fullness and intimacy of his knowledge of everyday life.

By using the language of everyday life, Narayan maintains the freshness and the realistic tang of natural speech habits of men and women. There isn't any authorial intrusion of trifle language or colored adjectives. This style is characteristically modern which has the lucidity that enlivened the story. Thus, R. K. Narayan is a story-teller par excellence. Narayan has a scholar's pen, a poet's imagination and the perfect eye of the journalist. "When we consider Narayan's novels as a totality, we are faced with the problem of locating the precise area of his creative genius." 2

Imaginary Immortal Malgudi Town:

A town called Malgudi. Where is it? One won't find it on any map, though an intrepid American academic once drew a city map of Malgudi which was pretty much like the real Malgudi, if it had ever existed outside the imagination of its creator. It is easier to say what Malgudi is not. It must first be stated categorically that it is Mysore city. Malgudi is no way resembles Mysore which has stately palaces and beautiful buildings, broad avenues flanked by huge flowering trees, and a picturesque hill within walking distance for the sturdy limb. Nor does Malgudi resembles William Faulkner's sin and gloom ridden Yoknapataupha County, to which it has been sometimes compared because both writers created their own landmarks and people. The name Malgudi occurred to Narayan when he started writing *Swami and Friends*. He wrote: 'The train stopped at Malgudi.' And Malgudi became his town (actually the train stops for the first time only at the end of the book). Malgudi has a strong resemblance to small provincial towns of those days, complete with a Taluqa Office, a municipal building, clock tower, and a central statue with steps on which young and old sat on an evening, while hawkers peddled their wares. Malgudi is a dusty little town, with winding lanes, tenement houses with one water-tap for all the families.

The people of Malgudi are by and large gentle and nervous, while some of them are always looking for easy ways to become rich. Narayan's genius lies in giving airy nothing a local habitation and a name. It all seems very real to the true Narayan admirer who also has some idea of real towns like Malgudi. As Graham Greene says, 'we have been as familiar (with Malgudi) as with our own birthplace. We know, like the streets of childhood, Market Road, the snuff stalls, the vendors of toothpaste, the Regal Haircutting Saloon, the river, the railway.' To settle the question once and for all, Narayan said, on the occasion of being presented with the membership of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters by Ambassador Harry S. Barnes: 'I didn't consider too long when I invented this little town. It had just occurred to me when I started on my first novel, *Swami and Friends* in September 1930. 3

We are the beneficiaries. Malgudi, with its dusty streets and lanes, the river Sarayu which is dry half the time and provides a place to relax in the young and old, the Mempi hill and forest at a distance, all of which are the background for little boys desperately wanting



hoops to wheel around, young men ogling girls drawing water from the Sarayu, the financial expert who gulls illiterate peasants and a score of others, is so much a part of our life that we would feel deprived if it were taken away from us suddenly. Critics have tried to analyze Narayan's art but without much success.

Typical People of Malgudi:

Narayan's stories dwell on the value of village traditions and the lives of ordinary people. Although Narayan's writing is sometimes seen as quaint and outdated today, his books "accurately portray an India that hovers between unchangingly rural and the newly industrial and that its still filled with individualistic, often eccentric personalities that recall his imagined Universe." What Malgudi to R. K. Narayan is Wessex to Thomas Hardy. Just as Wessex in Hardy's novels is the microcosm of the declining English agriculture community, Malgudi represents an Indian small town and stands at a nicely calculated distance between the East and the West. With each novel Narayan develops Malgudi town. In 'Swami and friends,' it is a small town and urbanized in 'the Vendor of sweets'.

We like him for his excellent plots, captivating characterization, lyrical language, sharp irony, wit and humor technique in unfolding the mysteries of human nature in his novels and short stories. His short stories mirror microcosmic India caught in the conventions, traditions and social changes. His characters are lively presentations of common Indians. His heroines are replicas of common Indian women. Despite a pure Indian living absorbed in religion and family, he achieved a feat to express his creative urge in an alien language and has become virtually craze in European countries. His short stories mirror microcosmic India caught in the conventions, traditions and social changes. His characters are lively presentations of common Indians. His heroines are replicas of common Indian women. Despite a pure Indian living absorbed in religion and family, he achieved a feat to express his creative urge in an alien language and has become virtually craze in European countries. R. K. Narayan was a conscious story-writer.

He pursues his art with seriousness and dedication. His task was the faithful presentation of life which was purely Indian. His stories are free from artificiality and superfluous details. He appears to write with a set formula, working out on the details painstakingly, however, that does not undermine the naturalness of his narrative. We find many typical character in his popular stories. We meet Kali in *Sweet for Angels* who is unmarried but extremely loves to children. Then we meet Velan in the story *The Axe* who extremely loves to tree. Then we meet Dr. Raman in *The Doctor's Word* who does not believe in kind words to save the patient. We meet an astrologer in *An Astrologer's Day* who doesn't know his own future but becomes an astrologer by an accidental even in his life. We meet a Gateman in *Gateman's Gift* who becomes insane after receiving an award from his master. We meet Iswaran in the story *Iswaran* who commits suicide even after passing intermediate examination. We meet a strange thief in *The Trail of the Green Blazer* who is caught while giving back the wallet to the owner. Because he becomes kind and sensitive after seeing the balloons in the wallet. So he decides to keep the wallet back in the pocket of the owner but eventually he is caught.

Narayan's stories have a tail and aim at surprising ending. He is a skillful narrator of



factual and human scenes. His narration is direct, simple and pointed. Narayan is regarded as a pure artist, especially, when compared with his contemporaries like Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. His is 'art for art's sake'. Narayan shows a strong affinity to typically Indian tradition of storytelling. But he adopts his form and style from the West. He steers clear of a message or doctrine to his readers. "He is an analyst of individual feelings, emotions and action in an exploration of hidden human conflicts. Nowhere in his novels does he preach or pontificate."⁴

Conclusion:

Narayan's short stories mirror microcosmic India caught in the conventions, traditions and social changes. His characters are lively presentations of common Indians. His heroines are replicas of common Indian women. Despite a pure Indian living absorbed in religion and family, he achieved a feat to express his creative urge in an alien language and has become virtually craze in European countries. His typical characters in his stories seem somewhat strange, whimsical, sometimes eccentric but eventually they are humane, emotional, kind and supportive. We also find that the people of R. K. Narayan's stories are poor and middle class. They spend their time in fulfilling their daily needs by facing strange events which generally create humor and pathos at the end. Undoubtedly we the readers love all the people in the stories of Narayan for we find ourselves among them.

Works Cited:

- H. G. Wells Short Stories, Ernest Benn Ltd. U.K.1927.
- K. R. Srinivas Iyengar, 'Indian Writing in English (1985 Ed.), Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, p.p. 364,338,360,384
- Novy Kapadia - Middle class Milieu in R. K. Narayan's Novels. Commonwealth Fiction Ed. R. K. Dhawan, Classical Publishing company, New Delhi, Vol. I, p. p. 146 – 147
- C. Paul Verghese 'Problems of the Indian Creative Writer in English - Somaiya Publishing Ltd. Bombay, 1971, p. 139

