



### URBANISATION OF MALGUDI IN R.K. NARAYAN'S FICTION

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*R.K. Narayana is a prolific Indian writer in English. Malgudi is an imaginary locale for carving his characters in his fiction. It has started like a small town and has been developed as a city of a cosmopolitan look. In this paper I would like to analyze how far Malgudi has been urbanized in his fiction.*

**KEY WORDS:** Malgudi, City, Urbanization, Mempi hills, Sarayu river.

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

It is a truth, universally acknowledged that Rasipuram Krishna Swami Iyer Narayanaswami popularly known as R.K. Narayana is a unique Indian writer in English and even a cursory glance at his literary achievements should convince any one of his unique success story, reading almost like a legend. One is bound to view the kaleidoscopic images of the aura of Narayan's legend flash upon memory while beholding them with awe and admiration. He is an internationally reputed novelist. Narayana always insisted on living by pen alone. He has created an imaginary locale Malgudi for his novels and short stories. This place has comparable standard to the other writers of English literature. It is compared to 'boarder countries' of Sir Walter Scott, 'Lake District' of William Words Worth, 'The Wessax' of Thomas Hardy or 'Five towns' of Arnold Bennet. Malgudi is a symbol of contemporary India. It is microcosm of India. It is full of knaves, prostitutes, adults, money-grabber, drunkards, sanyasis and would be gangsters. The place is full of chaos. Husbands are betrayed by their wives. Men are captivated by the false beauty of actresses and the female sex. There are children revolting against parents and the old ways of life. There is a sense of misery and happiness in reading



the novels of R.K. Narayan. Like the tragedies of Shakespeare there is a touch of sadness and disillusionment.

### **MALGUDI GROWS IN SIZE AND MATURITY:**

Malgudi does not exist on any map of India. It is neither a village nor a city but a town of modest size. It lives in the imagination more distinctly than any other region described by any Indian writer. Narayan's Malgudi is a reality charged with all that is intimate and poignant in human life. It is associated with the rise and fall of heroes and heroines. Narayan's first novel 'Swami and friends' introduces us to this town called Malgudi on the boarder states of Mysore and Madras. Malgudi has a municipality, a town hall, a club and two schools – The Albert Mission School, and the Board High School.

*“After making his exit from Albert Mission School in that theatrical manner on the day following the strike, swaminadham become so consistently stubborn that a few days later his father took him to the Board School and admitted him there.” “Swany and Friends” \*1*

We hear of cars in which Swamy comes to club.

*“A car hooted in front of the house. Father snatched his tennis racket from a table and rushed out followed by Saminadhan.” “Swami and Friends.” \*2*

Even in 1935 Malgudi had a theatre – ‘The Palace Talkies.

*“Malgudi in 1935 suddenly came into line with the modern age by building a well equipped-theatre the place talkies – which simply brushed aside the old corrugated sheet – roofed variety hassle citizens of Malgudi with tattered silent film.”*

The Principal land marks of Malgudi – Malgudi station, the Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank, the Bombay Anand Bhavan, Kabir street, Lawley Extension, The Regal Hair cutting saloon, the statue of Sir Frederic Lawley, The Sarayu River, Nallapa's Groves, Mempu Hills, Hotels, cinemas make a social frame work on the novel Malgudi passes through many changes with the



passage of time. The characters in various novels pass through various stages of development. “In swami and friends’ Malgudi is neither a village nor a city but a town of modest size but in successive novels it grows in time and place. The writer expresses the picture of this imaging island in different novels differently.

It has grown from the small sized agriculture town to a semi industrialized city. The Malgudi of “Swami and friends” is not the same as the Malgudi of “The vendor of sweets”. Even in the novel ‘The Guide’ we see it passing through various phases of development. Albert Mission School has become the Albert Mission College, headed by principal Brown.

*“When the Albert Mission boys had their annual social, I mixed in their affairs through the slender link of the clerk in the union”.*

*“They are having a variety show in the college union, and were wondering if you would do anything for them. \*3*

In the same college the hero of “The Bachelor of Arts”, graduates and in which the hero of “The English Teacher” Mr. Krishnan lectures on English Literature.

*“I got up at eight every day read for the fifteenth time Milton, Carlyle and shakespears looked through compositions, swallowed a meal, dress and rushed out of the hostel just when the second bell sounded at college, four hours later I returned to admonishing, cajoling and brow beating a few hundred boys of Albert Mission College. \*4*

In Mr. Sampath, we go to studio on the other bank of the Sarayu. In “The Financial Expert” there are references of Tea estates on the Mempi hills. We hear of ruined temple and half a dozen jungle tribes on the top of the Hills. In “The Guide”, there are the “Specious bamboo jungles of Mempi” and we are privileged to trace sarayu’s source on Mempi peak. Marco takes room in Mempi peak house on the top most cliffs. When the Mumpi Hills grow into a famous tourist attraction, the railway station also develops and acquires importance The Mampi Hills are connected with Malgudi



railway station by means of buses and taxis. Mempi Bus Transport Corporation comes into existence on account of which journey to Mampi Hills becomes very easy.

The Market Road, “Lifeline” of Malgudi, is crowded noisy and dirty. A man like Krishnan would be very much out of place. But Margayya in “The Financial Expert” views that the more crowded the place, the better are prospects of his trade. This shows how Narayan wants to urbanize his imaginary town Malgudi.

### **INDUSTRIAL TOWN:**

In early novels like “Swami and friends” “The English Teacher” Malgudi has a gradual change as a traditional town. The change first begins in “Mr. Sampath” the district board and tank building and three or four cotton mills suddenly sprung up into existence. Malgudi passed from a semi agricultural town to industrial town, with a sudden influx of population of all sorts. The Municipal Chairman informs the editor of “The Banner” about “Our Malgudi extension scheme” which visualized a garden city at the eastern end of the town, with its market, business premises, cinema, schools and perfect houses. Mr. Sampath informs Srinivas that Mr. Soma Sundaram, the District Board, President, is ‘opening a bridge’ five miles from here across the Sarayu. it is going transform our entire Malgudi district.. This is going to be the busiest district in South India.

*Sampath explained to Srinivas*

*“He is opening a bridge five miles from here across the Sarayu a grand function. Do you know that it is going to transform our entire Malgudi district ? This is going to be the busiest district in South India.” \*5*

“The Vendor of Sweets” reveals that plans for a hydro –electric project were afoot somewhere on the Mampi Hills

### **SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS:**

It is realized in “The Painter of Sign” Malgudi was changing in 1972. It was the base for a hydro-electric project somewhere on the Mempi hills and jeeps and lorries passed through the market road. “The scooter riding boys’ are seen in Malgudi and hostel is providing European food. ‘Daisy’s



family planning centre' is an important sign of changing time. The hippie-like youth with 'side burns' who explained the stucco effect on the freshly painted sign board".

*"What's Stucco ? Asked the lawyer challengingly . A hippie like youth came out to explain, Don't you know uncle? Latest in architectural surfaces. He was a student of engineering." \*6*

### CITY OF ENTERTAINMENT:

In Malgudi there is no dearth of hotels clubs, studio, theatres etc., we came across numerous hotels such as the Taj, Anand Bhavan, The Modern Lodge etc., There are clubs and cinema theatres for people who want entertainment.

During the thirties, Malgudi had only one cinema theatre where " In the Bachelor of arts" Chandran sees English films in the company of his friend Ramu. Citizens of Malgudi are entertained with "Silent films, Krishnan takes Sushila to Tarzan film.

*"Let us go to a picture"*

*"What Picture ?" She asked*

*Tarjan – at Variety Hall , you will like it very much"\*7*

By 1942 one more theatre 'Regal Picture Palace' has come up. Malgudi changes with the advancement of time as it obtains film studio and other amenities of modern civilization.

*"The next important event was the opening Ceremony. A special bus ran from the city to the studio on the other bank of the river. The bus was painted "Sunrise Pictures" along. It's whole body and placards were hung out on its sides"\*8*

### TRADITIONAL TOWN:

The society of Malgudi is traditional and dwellers are the followers of customs and conventions. The temples in the works of Narayan present religious sentiments. The people in Malgudi visit the temple for worshipping to have peace and maintain harmony in the societ. In "The



Guide” Marco watches the paintings of Iswara temple and Raju engages Rosie in the same temple. Ravi in “Mr. Sampath gets the glimpses of beloved Shanthi, In “The Financial Expert”, Margayya goes to Hanuman temple to seek the priest’s advice of propitiating Goddess Lakshmi for financial earnings.

*“Margayya felt he could no longer keep back his request.*

*He felt some what shy as he said. “I want to acquire wealth can you show a way ? I will do any thing you suggest.”*

*“Any thing” asked the priest emphatically”\*9*

There are about a half dozen temples which are the spiritual needs of Malgudians ceaselessly. The most notable is the Iswara Temple in North Extension, depicting episodes from the Ramayana, ancient Krishna temple at Vinayaka Street, Human temple at the end of Vinayaka (mudali) street and the small newly built Srinivasa temple is at the new extension. Malgudi is waking to the commotion of the new culture and yet engages its rigid caste divisions, uncountable social taboos and tyranny of astrology. As a result Chandran, infatuation for Malathi can never accomplish fruition and is bound to be dismissed as adolescent. For marriages horoscopes must be consulted and caste must be considered. Chandran at the end forsaking his adolescent fancies, makes a conventional marriage.

### CONCLUSION:

Malgudi has been started as a small South Indian town of geographical existence in Swami and Friends. The development of the town from novel to novel is progressively presented. The important places in the town are linked with characters and action of the novel. Linked with characters and action of the novel. The Market Road is the centre for economic and official activities plays an important role in shaping of so many characters. Jagan’s shop in “The Vendor of Sweets” is situated at Market Road. In the novel “The Painter of Signs” Raman meets Daisy at Market Road. The Banks in Malgudi are symbolic of economic development of the Malgudians. Mampi Hills stand for tourism development. Albert Mission College for educational development according to the needs of the characters the town has been extended. At last we wonder whether the characters have





developed the town or the town has developed the characters. We can say both have been developed by R.K. Narayan.

*As Agnihothri has said "In the earlier novels, we have a simpler pictures of school children, college boys and college teachers. In the later novels we enter the more complex world of dreamers, artists, financiers, speculators, adventurers, eccentrics, cranks, cinema stars, sanyasis and several others." \*10*

Thus R.K.Narayan started his Malgudi from a small town like village to a big city from "Sawmi and Friends" to "A Tiger of Malgudi."

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