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## Prominence of Malgudi in the Fiction of R. K. Narayan



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### **ABSTRACT**

*R. K. Narayan needs no introduction in Indian Literary Circles. His works are thought provoking and criticise the pitfalls of the society without any sort of hesitation. 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 analyse what is the prominence of Malgudi and how far it has been urbanized.*

### **KEY WORDS**

*Malgudi, locale, cosmopolitan, urbanized.*

## **RESEARCH PAPER**

It is universally accepted truth that R. K. Narayan is a unique Indian writer in English and even a cursory glance at his literary achievements convince every reader that he is reading story of a legendary figure. One is bound to view the kaleidoscopic images of aura of Narayan's legend flash upon memory while beholding them with awe and admiration. He always insists on living by pen. He has created an imaginary locale Malgudi for his novels and short stories.

It can be compared to 'Lake District' of William Wordsworth and 'The Wessex' of Thomas Hardy. Malgudi is a symbol of contemporary India. It is a microcosm of India. It is full of knaves, prostitutes, money grabbers, drunkards, *sanyasis* and gangsters. The place is full of chaos. Husbands are betrayed by their wives. Men are captivated by false beauty actresses and female sex. Some children revolt against parents, some lead old ways of life. There is a sense of misery and happiness in reading the fiction of R. K. Narayan. Like the tragedy of Shakespeare there is a touch of sadness and disillusionment.

### **Malgudi grows in Size and Maturity**

Malgudi is neither a village nor a city but a modest town which cannot be seen anywhere in India map. It exists in the imagination of R.K. Narayan. It is a reality charged with all that is intimate and program in human life. It has a very good growth along with the novels of Narayan. The first novel "Swami and friends" introduces us this town on the border states of Mysore and Madras. It has a multiplicity town hall, a club and two schools- the Albert Mission School and Board high school.

"After making his exit from Albert Mission school in that theatrical manner on the day following the strike, Swaminathan become so consistently stubborn that few days later his father took him to the Board

School and admitted him there." "Swamy and Friends". \*1

We see Swamy comes to club by a car.

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

In 1935 itself it had a theatre- The palace talkies

“Malgudi in 1935 suddenly came into line with the modern age by building a well-equipped- theatre the palace talkies – which simply brushed aside the old corrugated sheet – roofed variety theatre citizens of Malgudi with tattered silent film.”\*3

The important places of Malgudi are, 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 Federico lawley , The Sarayu River, Nallappa’s Groves , Mempi hills, hotels, cinema halls make a social frame work on the novel Malgudi passes through many changes with the passage of time . The writer shows the imaginative island in different novels differently.

The town has grown from the small size agriculture town to a semi industrialized city. Malgudi in “Swami and friends” is not the same as Malgudi of “The vendor of sweets”. In the novel ‘The Guide’ we see so much development. New Railway line has come and Albert Mission school has become Albert Mission College, headed by Principal Brown.

“They are having a variety show in college union and were wondering if you would do anything for them .”\*4

In the same college the hero of “The Bachelor of Arts” completes his graduation and Mr. Krishnan, the hero of “The English Teacher” becomes a Lecturer in English.

“I got up at eight every day read for the fifteenth time Milton, Carlyle and Shakespeare 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.”\*5

The readers can see a studio in the novel “Mr. Sampath” There are references of Tea estates on the Mempi Hills in the novel “The financial expert”, Mempi Hill grow into a famous tourist place, at the same time the railway station also develops a lot. Even the Express trains also stop at this railway station. It is connected with Mempi Hills so that Mempi Bus Transport Corporation comes into existence. The journey to Mempi hills became very easy. Market road is always crowded, noisy and dirty. Mr.Margayya in “The Financial Expert” says that the more crowded the place the better and prospects of his trade. This particular description shows how the writer wants to urbanize the town Malgudi.

### **Malgudi Becomes Industrial Town**

Narayan shows in his early novels (Swami and Friends & The English Teacher ) as a traditional town. The readers observe a sudden change in the novel Mr. Sampath. The District board , tank building and three or four cotton mills come up suddenly. The semi agricultural town becomes an industrial town. With this a sudden influx of population of all sorts has been observed. The municipal chairman informs the editor of the newspaper ‘The Banner’ about Malgudi extension scheme. He also explains the press about a garden city at the eastern end of the town, business premises, cinema hall, schools, a market place and perfect houses. Mr. Sampath relates to Srinivas that Mr. Soma Sundaram, the district board president opens a bridge five miles away from the town across the Sarayu. He also says that it changes Malgudi District and it becomes the busiest district in South India. “The vendor of Sweets” tells us about the plans of a hydro-electric project at the foot of the Mempi Hills.



## **Scientific Progress**

The readers observe a sea change in Malgudi town in the novel “The Painter of sign.” It was the base for a hydro- electric project near to the Mempi hills. Jeeps and lorries passed through the market road. The scooter riding boys are seen, the hostels are providing European food. The hippie like youth with side burns explaining 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 the town Malgudi, there is no dearth of hotels clubs, studio, theaters. So many hotels like Bombay Anand Bhavan, Taj and The Modern Lodge etc are seen in the novels. There are clubs and cinema theatres for the people who want entertainment. During the thirties Malgudi has only one cinema theatre. In the ‘The Bachelor of Arts’ Chandran watches English films with his friend Ram. In ‘The English teacher’ Krishnan takes Sushila to Tarzan film. People have got entertainment with silent films.

“let us go to a picture”

“what picture ?” she asked

Tarjan- at variety hall, you will like it very much.”\*7

In 1942 one more theatre ‘Regal picture palace’ has come up. The town changes with the arrival of 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 river. The bus was painted “Sunrise Pictures” along. It’s whole body and placards were hung out on its side.”\*8

### **Traditions & conventions are found in Malgudi:**

The dwellers of Malgudi are the followers of traditions and conventions. In the fiction of Narayan temples and religious sentiments play an important role. The people of this town visit temples for worshipping and to have peace and maintain harmony in the society. In “The Guide” Marco watches the paintings of Iswara temple. Ravi in “Mr. Sampath” gets the glimpses of his beloved Shanthi. In “The Financial Expert” Margayya goes to Hanuman temple to seek the priests 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 anything you suggest.” “Anything ” asked the priest emphatically.”\*9

There are about a half a dozen temples for the spiritual needs of the people. The most popular is Iswara temple in north extension, ancient Krishna temple at Vinayaka street and the small newly built Srinivas temple is at the new extension, Though Malgudi is walking to the commotion of the new culture, they follow tradition and culture. For marriages horoscopes must be consulted and caste must be considered.

### **Conclusion:**

Narayan described Malgudi in his first novel “Swami and Friend” as a small town in south India. He presented the progress of the town from novel to novel. The market road is the centre for economic and official activities. It plays a significant role in shopping of so many characters in his fiction. 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 Malgudians. Mampi hills stand for tourism development. Albert Mission school and college for educational development. According to the needs of the characters the town has been extended. At last the readers wonder whether the character developed the town or the town has developed the characters.

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