ABSTRACT

The term ‘setting’ functions as a background or as a locale of the fictional world set against a certain period of time. It may be any place under the sun or on the moon and cast against the remote past, or the actual present or far off future. It has been employed as a locale in the novels of Thomas Hardy, William Faulkner and Arnold Bennett. Setting beyond its common meaning, is realized as a living presence symbolizing and voicing the quintessential character of the people, that it becomes what Lawrence calls the spirit of place.

Setting as the sprit of place reflects the customs and attitudes of the community. It represents the psychological, religious, moral, social and emotional milieu in which characters exist. Setting is realized symbolically as microcosm representing certain nation or people. It has also been realized as an active antagonist and protagonist influencing the course of the events and the destiny of the characters.

Malgudi, the permanent locale of Narayan’s entire corpus of novels fascinates both the readers and the critics equally. It represents a unique case of dual existence, first, setting as a geographic territory, an ‘unknown and airy nothing’ conceived and shaped by the novelist’s imagination and turning into a local habitation called Malgudi. Malgudi as a small and typical Edwardian town in South India grows from novel to novel.

An in depth study of Narayan’s novels, done on thematic, structural and philosophical level should reveal interesting findings. A recurring pattern of structural device of all the Narayan novels have a circular structure -: a recurring pattern of the theme ‘return of the native’ the social/moral deviators returning to the accepted social norms:- a recurring pattern realized in the employment of ‘rite de passage’. One more thing, along with the recurring patterns mentioned above, the author’s image or the aura of imagination as Trilling would call it, the ‘Karma consciousness.’ Most of Narayan’s people live with his world view deeply steeped in Indian culture and the Hindu ethos as they are inextricably embedded in the spirit of place.