CHAPTER-III

THE IMPORTANCE OF MALGUDI
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A. Malgudi: An imaginary landscape.

Etymologically speaking Malgudi as a combination of two routes Mal+Gudi, according to the South Indian language connotations is ethnically a backward area, a habitat smaller than a village, with its inhabitants as a tribal outcast. But R K Narayan’s Malgudi was meant to be such an ethnic area which provokes a sort of uncivilised hatred. If he were to take a real contemporary city or town, it might irritate and incure the wrath of any city father or any actual town or city. It is evident that R K Narayan quite fancifully imagined the landscape of Malgudi. Inspite of its ‘a little street or a school or a temple or a bungalow or even a shop, a railway line place, and the far-off mountain roads and forests’, suggest at a sort of analogical parallel to a gradually developing and modernising ethnic spot. But at the same time its inhabitants, with their pre-Adamic manners of behaviour, provide a typical quaint and uncivilised manner of life, which becomes immediately attresting, attractive, mysterious, and even miraculous to a child’s comprehension.

The whole region is full of dramatic particulars in the name of human behavioural patterns. The human behaviours here do not have any civilised sophistication. Inspite of its schools, temples, bungalows and railway lines, the people inhabiting the area are quite uncivilised, in the sense that they are hectically struggling for survival, of course in their own manner and freedom, suggesting at altogether an interesting place, with all the follies and foibles, and all the excessive freedoms of behaviour, usually associated with illiterate masses. It is important to note here that many of his protagonist like Swami and his friends, as well as the author himself, are conceived as school going children learning th-
art of life. So all sorts of life particulars are envisaged in Malgudi, with all its dramatic urgency and intensity.

All human beings are endowed at birth, with a capacity for perceiving things around them, in a sort of concrete particularity. In children, these perceptions are always as provoked by the immediate, as presented to their immediate attention. It is all in accordance with their instinctive needs and surmises in the 'here and now'. But their ability to make such abstractions, as might be necessary for comprehending, co-ordinating, and controlling the world around them, has to come to them through the medium of the stories they hear in their childhood. In short, they have to develop in themselves, their own world view. They do it according to their instinctive perceptible quality. Thus its nature is limited to the immediately and instinctively grasped impressions of the things around them.

Extended imaginary and conceptual comprehensions is not possible for them. But, however, children are provided with inflated imaginative cast of mind, wherein the specio-temporal limitations of the sort that constrains the grown-ups imagination, is not at all sufficient for their autistic world view. This world view is created for themselves without any relevant or resemblance to the mundane world. Then alone it would be possible for child's imagination, a proper child like association and understanding of the given situation. It is a matter of common sense, that the world around us has unending prospects of perceptual and conceptual apprehensions.

R K Narayan in his stories makes such feasible episodic combinations of child like perceptions and conceptions in innumerable ingenious manners. All his characters, to an extent, eminates from his own autobiographical and instinctive imaginative apprehensions.
They are the products of his own creative imaginations. For the curiosity of his mind, they
are required to be conceived in the manner of unlike any social and cultural being.

As they are coming out of the actor's trunk of the author, they take upon
themselves innumerable representative colours of imaginations. Everything around them is
a matter of a instinctive curiosity propaling the life into a meagre willful plane. Their
concerns are child like, their conceptions are innocently dubious, and their perceptions are
always convenient and pleasant for themselves. They are provided with such a make
believes set of mind to visualise even the unpleasant and tragic, with an added sense of
abounding curiosity. Even when they are facing certain discordent and frustrating events,
(their lymphatic manner of protecting themselves from the mystery and horror of life), they
try to spiral themselves into the imaginative extensions of their mind.

In The Guide, the final apocalpics brought-froth in the form of Raju willingly
drowning in the waters slowly and Surely, gives complacent feeling and compromised
reflection of exalation and joy for children and the child like appreciations. It is a fact, that
Raju himself through his excessive antices of behaviour, brings upon himself the tragic
anticlimax. Inspite of the fact that he is a sinner, that deserves to be punished eviscerately,
the child like curiosity of the author, characterises him as a one, who is prepared for the
worst in life. Raju led an exclusively inauthentic and immoral life. In his intriguing
deception of Rosie, by way of forging her signature on the cheque, gifted by Marco to
Rosie, Raju transgressed all the human tolerances, he is faithless fellow who can ditch his
maid for acquiring benefits. Towards the end of the novel, he is only reaping the
consequences. So there is no unbearable tragedy or frustration here. For the child's
imagination, it is simply a matter of simple punishment at the Divine inst.
so you reap, is the formula that gives a great appeal to the judicious considerations of a child.

B. Narayan’s Love of Malgudi

The emergence of R K Narayan can be considered as a great event in the Commonwealth literature. So far he had published more than a dozen novels and a few enviable collection of short stories. In his five decades of creative writing and publications, he extended his devoted and loving readership, to almost all parts of the world. He fictionally located all his novels and short stories in a small South Indian town called Malgudi.

Looking to the topographical and demographic conspicuous and non-conspicuous features of polity, this Malgudi is fictional parallel to his beloved, Mysore. But then as the very name etymologically suggests, it is an humble, or even ugly and neglected primeval village of the sort. That way this village is placed in the twentieth century and it is slowly growing and adopting itself to the modern civilised conditions of life. It has a school, a cooperative bank and all such equipments which are the indications of the village in its slow and steady developmental state. But the people of Malgudi are oftenly humorous and ironic chips of more or less a primitivist state of existence. In fact, Malgudi comes to life in all its full-fledged human sequences in the typical dramatic interactions of the people, men, women and children in their domestic and social interactions.

Narayan peopled his novels with such well-drawn characters and character types, that are prominently available everywhere and anywhere in the world. The tendencies and disposition of the characters are such that they take into themselves, the entirety of human behavioural patterns and interactions, almost in a universal manner. Thus Narayan’s Malgudi can be considered as an microcosmic example, of a human society, representing
the entirety of the universal humanity as a microcosmic. The familiar manner in which the characters come out of Narayan's own suburbs during his childhood times, are immensely engaging.

Narayan falls under the category of the great novelists like Charles Dickens and Mark Twain as representative creative writers of social, cultural, ethical and moral dispositions of certain people belonging to a particular area or geographical region. The representative manner of R.K. Narayan follows the age-old tradition of the European novel, as a fictionally created picture of real life and real people, with all their real problems and real ironies of life. Thus, it can be said that R.K. Narayan, as a novelist is a social realist of all the important social realistic features of life, as represented by him. Narayan, has an enviable manner of representing children and their problems in the world, which cannot be said even congenial, leave aside a harmonious, comfortable and happy place, for their existence and survival in accordance with their own freedoms and choices.

According to the age-old traditions, human society is a ground-fuel for the creation of ideal and responsible citizens of a nation. The excessive and extraordinary eviidity in the domestic, social and cultural environment, in order to create ideal citizens of the nation. The elders of the said given society always prescribe certain cohesive 'do's' and 'do not's', particularly to the children, all in theme of disciplining and civilizing them into ideal representative of human probative. There is a double irony in the intentions of the so-called elders in a given society. At the outset, the elders themselves are not as much disciplined and civilized as they can be called disciplined and responsible citizens. The extra vehemence that they show about their concerns for children, is always attended with its great defects and personality like lacunae in the elders themselves. It is but natural that
children always had survived under the strict supervision of the elders in home and in the society. But, in so far as the problems of freedom and choices are concerned, the world of children have its own distinct and distinguished parameters, which according to the elders, if allowed to go unchecked and unrestrained, contributes for an utter and gross spoilage of children's acts. In such an environment of cultural preferences, there is always a place for a tussle and trying conflict between the relative intentions of the elders and the children.

R.K. Narayan, as a true disciple of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain, finds a great fictional place for representing the dramatic scripts and ironies in a given examplery habitation. As a matter of fact, Narayan's inner conscious always tilts towards the children's side, and the kaleidoscopic focal length of his fiction is prominently projected from the child's angle of looking at the world and its ways. This bias manner of conducting his fictional activity, from the point of view of children, is born out of Narayan's own love and passion towards absolute freedoms and choices. Given the free-play to the absolute freedoms and choices, and if such freedoms and choices are to be really implemented in a society, Narayan believes that the whole world can be slowly and gradually turned into a happy and comfortable system, than in which the people are surviving today.

Even if children have brilliant concepts of freedoms and choices, they certainly do not have necessary capacities to further their ideas of good and happy living. They lack the necessary scheme and vision to further enhance their intentional faculty of their own choice. It is only during the adolescence and after, that a child learns to solve complex, abstract problems of life. In the mean time, a child only has a sort of wild and unturnable notions of freedoms and choice.
In the meantime, children have their own specified and specifically marked workable world, which emerges out of their instinctive and immediate manner of apprehending life as a concrete given self, in its situation. Such imaginary notion of childhood vision are somehow carried on further by the grown-up characters of R.K Narayan also. From this angle, the grown-up characters never successfully and strategically saves themselves from the child like (may we say childish?) manners of conducting their life, and in facing the concrete and abstract problems of life.

In short, there is a drastic difference between the parameters of social engineering as conceived by children and those of the elders. A sort of absolute ignorance of the differences between the imaginary pictures of children and the real picture of life to be lived by elders, bring forth a very rich entertaining and anomalous drama of life. In this anomalous complex life pattern, there are innumerable tragic flaws and comic errors. The same tragic flaws and comic errors, which would not produce rocks in lives, in the case of children, are most likely to become absolutely tiring and troubling in the case of elders.

C. People of Malgudi

As we know, just as he created sympathetic, loving and lovable child character like Swami and the child in the short story “Naga”, R.K Narayan is an expert in creating vaccine child models, repelute mischief and frowardness. It is in his The Financial Expert that we have a notorious example of such a disgusting child, in the character of Balu. Both the stories, read from the point of view of the progress of the child characters involves great difference.

It so appears that The Dark Room and The Financial Expert are a reaction to each other. There are innumerable other novels and short stories that...
very important roles. But in many of the novels of R K Narayan, we do not have the child characters, the grown-up protagonist and the attended characters, of almost all his novels are built on the formula of the characters behaving themselves as those, who had controversial and incongruent childhood times, as in the case of Raju, the sinner turned to sainthood, is one such conspicuous example. Almost all the grown-up characters of R K Narayan are problematic fellows, and R K Narayan convincingly presents them as spoiled children, when they were young. Mr. Sampath, The Financial Expert, The Guide, The Man-Eater of Malgudi, and The Sweet Vendor are the last group of novels that R K Narayan had written. Referring to the character types in these novels, K. R. Srinivas Iynagor says as follows. In these novels, says Iynagor:

"We enter an exotic world of half-headed or half-heated dreamers, artists, financiers, speculators, twisters, adventurers, eccentrics, pranks, cinema stars, Sannyasis, several of them not Malgudi products at all but straying or imported from ‘outside’ (which may extend as far as Hollywood or the antipodes)."

In all the above novels, we have child-minded elders or the mind-blinded children grown-up, as prominent and interesting character types. These character types have immense appeal to children of all ages. This means to say that, R K Narayan always maintained in his novels, a typical appeal that arrestingly enthuses children. It does not mean that he had written his novels for children alone. When his novels are read properly, one thing becomes clear, the characters and incidents are conceived in such a manner that they provide a great leap of transporting oneself into a strange world of elders, which ultimately becomes an interesting curiosity stop. The intensities and inner modalities of thoughts and actions of these characters are in the nature of myths, fairytales, and folklore.
While Swami is mind-blind child, often interested in his own absurd inner thought processes, Raju, his grown-up counterpart is a mind-blind elder. Swami serves things from his needs, based on interior desires, which are always childish and unconvincing, like his passion for the 'hoop' or it is for six annas worth of huge wealth. More or less in the same passionate and urgent manner, Raju performs himself always risking his personality, almost in a child-like manner, in order to equip and enhance himself with the fond necessities of his life.

One characteristic feature is common to both Swami and Raju. They make instinctive and instant decisions, prompted by passionate desires and not by cool thinking. The moment they make their decisions, they go to execute them with all force and fury of their mind. In Swami, since he is a small child, it is understandable and even enjoyable. But in Raju, since he is a mind-blinded elder, all his antic activities revert upon him and force him to reach the consequences of natural justice. Just like Swami, Chandran and Krishnan can also be considered as child-minded elders. But Raju, Ramani and Margayya all come under the category of the mind-blinded elders, behaving themselves as meaninglessly as children. It is a writing on the wall that they are resorting to such childish pitfalls in their lives because of their false egos and faulty aspirations. So far the faulty aspirations are concerned, Swami and his friends, as well as Chandran and Krishnan, are more or less compounded with the same characteristic positive material. But in the other group of characters, prominently represented in his latter novels, a sort of negativism rules the routes. Whether it is the positive or the negative characteristic traits, the ultimate result of creative engagement is concerned, the profiles of the characters and the nature of the incidences is obviously intended to enthuse in the readers, a sort of child-like instinctive
artistic perception. Both, the characters and incidences are prominently straight forward
and easy to understand.

This way in his *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher*, Narayan gives the
child-minded elders as the protagonist. In fact, even in the latter mature novels like *The
Dark Room*, *Mr. Sampath*, *The Financial Expert*, *Waiting for The Mahatma*, also we have
innumerable example of such child-minded elders prominently committing themselves to a
life of serious elderly commitments. But, however, the unpredictable manner in which the
protagonist of this novels, land themselves into silly and absurd dimensions of life confirms
them as mind-blinded elders.

Narayan’s child characters, child-minded elders and mind-blinded grown ups are all
the outcome of the child like imagination of R K Narayan himself. A child always needs a
story and such stories should always be coupled with surprises. Even if these surprising
patternal behaviour of these elders are behind the comprehension of the child’s reason,
they certainly offer him a broad range of surprise extending from natural and ordinary
mistakes, to out and out adoption of misguided cruelty as a late motive of these
characters.

D. The Children of Malgudi

The boy in “Naga” is a blend of affection, responsibility and compassion towards
lower animals like snakes and monkeys. It is in this story, that R K Narayan profoundly
reflects upon the average Indians emotional cast of mind. An average Indian breeds in
himself all sorts of pantheists sentiments, with which he looks upon nature and the
fellowmen, with an added sense of devotion and love. From a very ordinary experience of
a snake-charmer’s child, R K Narayan tries to visualise, the equinox manner in which the
Indians look at nature and all its creatures. The emotional tendencies of the boy here, in a way, may be dubbed as false and untended sentiments.

Psychologically speaking, the Indian children, by nature are associated with a rare sense of compassion and love. One possible reason for this, abundance of love and compassion may be found in the instinctive sympathetic manner. In a way, an average Indian child is born poor. The material poverty virtually contributes for a profound growth of richness in the mind. Indian children generally do not harm the creatures. They are not as wanton as to kill the lower creatures for their sport. They certainly want to play all sorts of domestic animals. Their devotion towards animals reaches the height of devotions. The boy's love towards Naga, in this story, profoundly reflects the average Indian manner of fondly loving the domestic animals, almost in a plutonic manner.

R.K. Narayan opens up a great world of fond affections and sacrifices for the sake of each other in a social segment. Narayan had always believed that the greatest streak of humanity is not merely in the show of kindness and love, but it is in the absolute manner of maintaining a concern for all. Children always like to be treated with a sort of an absolute concern for them by the elders. The child in the "Naga" is quite unceremoniously and quite abruptly left for himself by his father without any concern. As a natural reaction the boy should have started hating his father, but in his own concerned manner of generosity, the boy does not react or retaliate the father. While leaving the house the father left a little bit of money in the form of a few coins in the house. When the boy was hungry, he does not hesitate to take that money and purchase a few 'idlies' for himself. On the same score, he could not afford to forget the old Naga and his hunger and freedom.
The concerned manner in which he tries to leave Naga in his natural habitat, so that he might be received by his kith and kin, so that he might grow in freedom and happiness up to such a ripe old age, when it could develop wings and fly to heaven (for that excellent mythic desire and belief of all children) In this desire of the boy there is that symbolic suggestion that all day dreaming children, practically believe in the idea of flying in freedom into the unknown heaven. But at the same time the boy's own experience in being disowned by his father intimates him that the world of elders does not contain in itself a real concern for the growth and freedom of children. The elders on the other hand, have their own crude selfish motives in bringing up their children.

The snake-charmer, instead of sending his boy to the school for education, always preferred to use him as a helping hand in his street-shows of snake-charming and monkey dancing. When the father became totally overpulled by the spinster passion for a woman, he did not hesitate to desert the boy and leave him for himself to survive without any means of survival. On the same analogy, the boy too could have left the old Naga to starve and die in the basket. But his natural inbred senses of compassion do not allow him to do so. Therefore, in this short story, while Narayan presents a contrast in the world of children to the world of adults, the manner in which the natural feelings of children operate themselves, on instances envisaged a great hope for human impulse. The following observation of Narayan himself about children and the ways of their thinking is worth quoting says Narayan:

"(Children) prefer to be treated as normal living creatures, as fellow-citizens on earth, subject to the same impulses good and bad, as adults and accept the same amount of toleration that they see practiced among adults. They see that adults do practically all that
they forbid the young fellow to do and never correct each other. Thus children naturally resent that there should be two sets of laws in the world, one for the adults and one for themselves" (47-48)

In spite of their resentment towards the "two sets of laws in the world", the child in "Naga" quite ungrumblingly accepts blunt reality of the "two sets of laws". But then unlike in the stories "Dodu" and the "Regal", Narayan presents here, an altogether the loving manner in which the boy reciprocates with concern towards Naga and his well-being. When ultimately the Naga prefers to come back and settle in the basket instead of joining his kith and kin in the forest, the boy immediately realises the primal lessons of affections and concern. He prefers to work on the railway station for himself and also determines to look after Naga with a fond affection. The real point of the story lies in the manner in which the world of children compensates the whole world with the prime violation of concern and affection, which are usually lacking in the world of elders.

In his novels, short stories, and essays, there are abundant evidences to show that his art of characterisation, basically takes into consideration the conditioned reflexes of a child finding himself in an alien environment in the society, at home and in the school. The result is an ingenious manner of trying to escape from the immediate surroundings into an autistically imagined context of a day-dreamer. True to the behavioural patterns of a child, he prominently proposes playing along with his friends or mischief making in the classroom without being noticed by the teacher. There is a pretty long list of child characters that can be illustrated from the novels and short stories.

Children culminate out of his pages like innumerable flowers in a garden. Again like these flowers, they are distinct and prominently variant in their behavioural patterns.
Swaminathan, a young teenager, is the main protagonist of his Swami and Friends. All of them are contingent rivals in mischief making as a result of the dominating and discarded school and domestic environments. They all invent for themselves a unique world of children at play (cricket). They also divide themselves into rival groups and put against each other in a mock-heroic manner, as spirited rival groups conducting a furious campaign against each other. But then, they fall into immediate companionship as immediately as they pick quarrels amongst themselves.

The children's world of Narayan is profoundly lovable for this naturalistic manner of gregarious operation. Children can never live in permanent rivalries and differences. As a natural corollary, of Swami and Friends, we have in his The Dark Room Babu, Kamla and Sumati. We have the most mischievous and excessively pampered child in Balu, in The Financial Expert. The childhood depiction of Raju, in The Guide and that of Babu in The Man-Eater of Malgudi, contribute for a typical contrast of different child characters, brought up in different circumstances.

Raju, in The Guide spends his life in utter poverty as a child. Moreover, having been orphaned from the father's side, he grows as a boy forced to earn his little livelihood by way of assuming upon himself the role of a guide. Infact he does not have the needful factual historical information concerning the actual importance of the tourist spots.

Raju has a charming quality of inventing and imparting, all through his own imagination, very fine and audibly attractive lore about the historical past of the places The tourists are more attracted towards the manner of what all he tells rather than towards the historical veracity of the tourist spot. He guides the people, as it becomes quite evident from the extra sublime rhetoric of his manner. Thereby he compounds a historic and
genology in accordance with his own imaginative flair for a coherent story telling. The
readers immediately come to know that Raja is inventing cock and bull stories about the
historical importance of the tourist spot. But what all he says is quite enjoyable as a story
on the occasion.

Knowing fully well that what Raja tells is not a fact, the tourists go satisfied with
the manner of his telling. But in the case of Babu in The Man-Eaters of Malgudi is all
together different from Raja, as a child in The Guide. While Raja is ground to the earth as
a real mischief making child, Babu is somewhat an archetype and can be found in the pure
imaginative stories, at once incredible but quite winning on the immediate attentions of the
hearers. His is a character, capable of not only understanding but also amicably coexisting
with the natural enemies of human beings like tigers. The purpose here being that in the
well-made stories, the readers are not at all serious about the possibilities of his story
being quite unnatural and incredible.

E. Empathy Towards Children

Ramesh K. Shrivastava hastens to add the following to the above statement says
Shrivastava "Narayan, with his characteristic empathy, puts himself into their
personalities, understands them fully, and delineates them exquisitely" (73–86)

The expression, 'characteristic empathy' is very important. R.K Narayan as a
reasoned modern man empowers himself with the enlightening qualities of an ideal
personality in accordance with the ideas and ideals of the eighteenth century enlightenment
of Europe. In the eighteenth century enlightenment of Europe, the most important
humanistic development is in the broad recognition of freedom as the most igniting aspect
of human personalities. The enlightened spokesman always believes that freedom is a
social essence, if implemented wholeheartedly and rigorously, the whole world one day or
the other would become more friendly, more human, and more congenial to the inhabitants
of the whole world

They had a dream of the entire humanity been one idealistic, affectionate cluster of
individuals ridden with exuberant humanistic impulses of mercy, pity, peace, love, and the
most important of all charity. But then, when it came to the discussion of implementing
this 'freedom' strategically, there emerged a quaint and pseudological ideology. It was
believed that this freedom can become implementable only amongst the like-minded. In a
heterogenous demographic entity, implementation of this freedom in a free and frank
manner is not at all possible. Therefore, this argument gave a possible standing for a crude
tune of the social system established on the parameters of freedom. The crude thing is the
idea of a strong nation. This idea virtually divided the social Europe into innumerable
small nation states, always ready at hand, with a quarrel and war with their neighbours.
R.K.Narayan plays a very interesting joke at the multiple cluster of nations with their
extended and crooked geographical boundaries. Swaminathan opens the atlas and tries to
grasp the political map of Europe. He develops a child like aversion to the whole map of
Europe standing like a ungraspable zig-zag puzzle. The following passage is the best
example of the pure humour of R.K.Narayan

"It puzzled him how people managed to live in such a crooked country as Europe.
He wondered what the shape of the people might be who lived in places where the outline
narrowed as in a Cape, and how they managed to escape being strangled by the contours
of their land. And then another favourite problem began to tease him, how did those
mapmakers find but what the shape of a country was? How did they find out that Europe,
was like a camel's head. Probably they stood on high towers and copied what they saw below. He wondered if he could be able to see India as it looked in the map, if he stood on the top of the Town Hall” (60).

R K Narayan provides here with a narrative commentary, about the immediate reflections and state of mind of Swaminathan. As usual with any child learning, that too something which is represented graphically for visual perceptions, the painstaking experience of learning becomes quite tiresome and disgusting. The rationale behind map drawings is always a funny experience, particularly because of the fact that the nations are usually presented as unique visual figurations. Since it is associated with the painstaking manner of learning in the initial stages of childhood, the involved rigour drives the child towards escaping from the painful phenomenon of understanding. At the outset, Swami is a child waxed with the rigours and discipline of learning. Since he wanted all time for play and mischief, it is his mischievous angle of insight that makes him wonder at the map of Europe, because it is a ‘crooked country’. The word ‘crooked’ is used here with a suggestion quite unintendedly proposed to stand for the crookedness of the European races. The whole passage is stuffed with automatic antithetical puns, consolidating unintentional ironic slangs, wonders at the possible ‘shape(s) of the people and the possible manner in which they might live in a land whose ‘outline narrowed as in a cake’.

Much more wonderful ideas that strikes to him is that how the people there ‘escape being strangled by the contour of their land’.

The whole passage has innumerable suggestions to make about the nature and Europe is geographically divided into very small and vast parts. Geographically speaking, they have a common...
divided on the basis of language. To divide the whole of Europe into innumerable small nation-states is clumsy and unlearnable for a student. Therefore, the reflections of Swami are born of child-like lethargy and inhibition in learning map-drawing. But then, all these are his personal innermost thoughts, provoked by the inherent touch of irrational, which is very common with almost all children. The passage is important for its analogous of child like detections, alluding and hooting out all the possible reasons, converting them into his own personal detections born of hatred and dislike.

One should not forget that R K Narayan as a child was studying in the European Missionary Schools. He has developed in himself, a streak of antagonism and hatred to all the Europeans in general and to the Missionaries in particular for their religious oriented impartations. He hates the Missionaries, because Missionaries openly degrade the Hindu religion and Hindu Gods. At the same time, the Indian National Movement, that was raging high and dry in the whole of India consciously put into the minds of Indian, a sort of intensive hate syndrome of what all the European races made for India.

The implicit irony is speaking of the sentimental antagonism of average man towards what all Europe stands, for in trying to heckle at the map of Europe, Swami quite unintentionally, lands into this hate Europe idea. His hatred of Europe then reverts upon the possible improbable manners of the mapmakers of Europe. If we remember that these mapmakers on the vast European territory are the most conservative races that whimsically segregated the European mainland into innumerable small nation-states almost unenthusing for the average comprehension of a normal human being. The real mapmakers of Europe here are those ruthless races that grasped the possible geographical
entities and established their rule of law in their own whimsical autocratic manner, during the middle ages.

For all this, Swami in his child like wishful thinking wanted the whole of Europe to be one unified nation. What Swami intended in his innermost personality is true to the civilised experience of the great political leaders like Rhodo Willison, who dreamt for the League of Nation and United Nations Organisation and the like in order to eliminate the wars and its skirmishes amongst nation-states. Swami's innocuous perception and meditation is born out of his obvious disgust of learning map-drawing, with its laudable undertone of one vast world with crumpling geographical boundaries. Towards the end, the statement 'he wondered if he could be able to see India as it looked in the map, if he stood on the top of the Town Hall', isbastling humorous, and abjectly ironic. Seeing 'India as it looked in the map' is altogether different from seeing India as a nation state, particularly with its heterogeneous ethnic variations and religious differences. That he could not have seen India as it could have looked in the map by standing on the top of the Town Hall, had ominously and profitably been proved after the independance, with India being divided into Pakistan and Indian Union. That the whole of India should be designated as one unified country, is a dream of all the citizens, both, in the Indian Union and Pakistan. The last statement of Swami suggests at a profound anticlimax to the entire drama of Mahatma Gandhi and his Independence Movement. That the countries are not like in the structured map of atlas, is diplomable point that eminates out of Swami's innocuous broodings on the map of Europe.

There is a good reason for these children of R K Narayan to be lovable for the readers. R K Narayan takes his reader into confidence and reveals his stories of children.
as though they are very casual and normal. As a matter of fact all of us are consciously aware of our bygone childhood and its relative happiness as compared to the grown-up man’s constraints, and, given the opportunity all are capable of wholeheartedly participating, quite nostalgically in the life patterns of a child and his mischief. Compared to the duties and responsibilities of a grown-up, a child’s mischievous manner of seeking freedom of operation in mischief and play becomes quite charming and loving as a fiction.

F. The Fictional Innovations

Narayan, as a fiction writer is particularly important for the creation of an imaginary fictional village called Malgudi. Almost all his novels are localised in this imaginary village. As a matter of fact, the inhabitants of Malgudi, inspite of their conspicuous and non-conspicuous local characteristic features, maintain in them the fullest and totality of a social unit growing in its human content along with the times.

Malgudi is an imaginary region, just like the Western region of Thomas Hardy, Narayan constantly and consistently contributes his fictional energy through his fictional strange regional novel. It may not be possible to locate the demographic presence of Malgudi, in any geographical region on the globe. But then from the characters, themes, incidents and episodes, represented in all the novels of R.K. Narayan confirm to his familiar native land, that is South India. This south Indian village, Malgudi had its fictional origin in his Swami and Friends. Narayan takes a painstaking exposition of naturalistic condition of this Malgudi.

In his various novels, Malgudi equips with innumerable human characters, who in their entirety maintain a sort of kinship with the whole humanity. In Swami and Friends, it is neither a primitive village nor a well established city. It is a small town of moderate size.
With each growing novel, the characters fulfilling the human drama in this region are distinctly different and variant. But the main topographical condition of the town remains more or less the same. The river Sarayu flows by, just slightly beyond there are Nallapa Mango Groves and the Mempi forest. In the town itself we have Grove street and the Forest road. There is also a Trunk Road that goes to Trichurapali and there is also a small railway station from where the train reaches Madras. There is a Market Road and it is described by R K Narayan as “Life-line of Malgudi”.

In Mr. Sampath, and in his The Dark Room we have reference to the Race Course Road, which is intersected by the Market Road. There are many streets and lanes: Kabir Street, Smith Street, Vinayak Mudali Street, Abu lane, Ellamann Street, Keelacheli Street etc, etc. It is very easy to make a precise imaginary picture of Malgudi with the help of above details. It is just a South Indian township, with its compelling characters that are discovered and rediscovered by R K Narayan in order to satisfy his child like fairy tale imaginary landscape as an abode of transport and sublimation. This transport to a strange region and sublimation of the actions and the interactions of the people therein, constantly compounds in the readers the very essential manner of discovering for themselves a strange land and the interesting people who fill in this region.

Narayan has an innate artistic capacity to give a full-fledged representative mechanism of a particular region and the place, where the characters exactly behaves themselves as the people everywhere in the world. In his each novel Narayan consistently examines and reconstructs a pleasing human drama, with all its joys, pleasures, pains, sorrows. In all such incidences, which envisage for a deserving eve a typical human microcosm, whose microcosm is everywhere and anywhere in the world. But this does not
mean that the peculiarities that are shared by a particular region are not there. As a matter of fact, it is because of these particularities and peculiarities, that the human drama in R K Narayan becomes interesting.

Every novel has a specific story line, with its well-drawn characters. But then, both the stories and the characters are conceived and confectioned in such an enthusiastic manner that fulfills the mind of the reader with a child like primal reaction and equal child like enthusiasm, for arresting discoveries concerning human behavioural pattern. The most familiar characters that are usually found in our surroundings are given an effective, even startling characteristic behavioural dimensions, with the help of which they turn out to be strange and attractive individual about whom we want to know more and more.

Narayan fulfills his narrative art by way of introducing into it a perennial potential for new discoveries concerning the human beings. The intense packed curiosity that surrounds his characters constantly provides a new opportunity for discovering for oneself a pertinent secret knowledge of others. This kind of enthusiasm and an earnest desire for discovery are the child like characteristic features. Narayan had them in abundance and he makes his readers discover for themselves the profound and personal manners of the people, whom he considers important.

Narayan's characters, and people, are in no way different from all other human being. They are only peculiar and particular in being themselves. It is this peculiarities of the characters and incidence that arouse an immense curiosity and abundant scope for discovery that attracts children almost like fairytales and folklore. Unlike his fairytales and folklore, the characters and the incidents are so arrestingly real that they speak for
themselves about certain broad realities. One has to read Narayan to rediscover for himself these charming realities.

G. Malgudi: A Fictional Synthesis of Child’s Eye-view of Life

All the novels of R.K. Narayan and his nine volumes of short stories are prominently localised, in that fictionally imagined stretch of land, called Malgudi. The kaleidoscopic survey of his life work reveals that the author is creating a parallel world of human habitation, from its primeval simplicity and innocence to its modern complexity and confusion. It is but natural that all the novels are not characteristically fulfilled with the child characters and childlike vision of life. In his latter novels, there are as H.M. William points out, there is “a succession of eccentrics, bohemians, semi-lunatics, film stars, criminals, tourist guides, frauds and pornographers descend upon expanding Malgudi”.

But in taking up all such worldly cheats and imposters, Narayan shows his painful concerns for the loss of a great “ceremony of innocence” which must be inherent and initial primeval property of the Malgudi landscape. This primeval property gets enviably represented in his Swami and Friends, The Bachelor of Arts, The English Teacher, The Financial Expert, and innumerable short stories. The whole and sole purpose of R.K. Narayan in his first phase, lies in giving a sort of innocuous and sympathetic child’s eye-view of Malgudi. The second phase is obviously, representative of painfully changing patterns of Malgudi from its original primeval and innocent state to a sort of malignant world. The second phase categorically begins with Mr. Sampath and Ants of Wits, The Sweet Vendor, through The Financial expert, waiting for the Mahatma, The Guide and The Man-Later of Malgudi.
The first phase and second phase are relative in their content of innocence. It can
be speculated that the first phase depicts the pre-independent India, while the second one
concentrates on the post-independent facets of Indian polity. This is all as though that
Malgudi is slowly and surely metamorphosed from innocent to the so-called maturity in
civilization. H M Williams in his, “Precarious innocence: Patterns in novels of
R K Narayan” rightly points out that “The novels so far traced the half-lamented
‘growing-up’ of Malgudi from pastoral simplicity to contemporary complexity” (107-162)

The relative comparative manner of giving the life pictures of Malgudi implies a
serious matter of consideration. Narayan wants to suggest that the most possible loss of
mission to growth and development is a matter of serious concern. Modern man has to
think twice, if what all that is happening to Malgudi is a pattern of progress or it is only a
sort of un withstandable change and alteration towards more and more wicked and intrigue
world.

If Malgudi is a representative version of R K Narayan’s world view in progress, it
is certain that he resents to the so-called modern complexities of growth in material
civilizational properties of life. He appears to suggest that the modern civilisation and its
development are ultimately most harmful for the survival of humanity. Therefore, in his
second phase, he appears to be anxiously speculating for a possibility of recovery of
innocence. In the whole of this process, the relative manner of celebrating innocence and
characterising its loss are certainly painful, what H M Williams calls ‘half lamented
‘growing-up’

If we have considered the symbolic dimensions of this process, there is something
really painful in the very act of growing, whether it is a man from the childhood to old age
or it is a culture from the primeval innocence to modern complexity. The pain is all the more relevant and immediate for the innocent manner of humanity sustaining in all its happiness in remaining uncivilised. But then the one way traffic of historical process from the past to the future through the present or the unified physiological manner of childhood to the old age, through adolescence, is a one-way traffic where there is no place for corrections and rectifications. Therefore, Narayan appears to be pleading for a sensitive and precarious survival of humanity on the earth.

It's a matter of critical interest to note that Narayan, somehow, was not attracted towards the modernist experimental writings in the Western novels. Particularly after the Second World War, the structural dimensions of Western novel were progressively becoming experimental. 'The stream of consciousness' novel is a prominent example in this connection. The traditional representative novel with a 'set theme', appropriate 'personae', and rationally invoking dramatic 'incidents and episodes', was becoming obsolete. But Narayan, probably because of his child-like bend of mind, sticks to the traditional representative novel formula. This passion for the traditional manner of story telling is inherent in his personality right from his childhood.

Children in general, love well made stories with adventure, miracles and mysteries. Unless something does not happen in a magical manner, a child will not be enthused. Such magical manner of incidents dramatically converging into satisfying moments of experience, the child-like progresses and reversals temperamentally suits his imaginations. Almost all the novels are imaginatively coloured with child's imaginative dimensions and proportions. Even the novels, with the grown-up characters involving themselves in dramatic manner of executing their lives contain in themselves an upsurge of child.

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streak of inducting surprising reversals and revisions, as though some mysterious force is at their back.

Narayan's novels are purely representative in character. Attributing Henry James's 'central intelligence' phenomenon to the unanimous storyteller or spokesperson convincingly presents a winning story. This passion for story and the ingenious manner in which he introduces the story element in the real characters and colours of his own childhood surroundings, give Narayan the prime credential of a great novelist.

An average child is always complexly influenced by his surroundings. From the child's point of view these surroundings of his childhood are not very often amicable and comforting. As such a child is under a personal necessity to imaginatively escape into the land of his own comfortable imagination. Such land of comforting imagination was invented by him in 'The Malgudi' milieu. In fact, Narayan as a creative writer had altogether a different autistic purpose of tracing and creating an imaginary geographical region which stands as a legator to the mundane world of our existence. Needless to say, that the whole world in the twentieth century was prominently changing and altering in its topographical and cultural dimensions through industrialization, mechanisation and urbanisation. The whole world taking a leap into mechanisation and industrialisation was not up to his liking. Just like a child who finds himself always constrained and conformed by the surroundings, Narayan developed a sort of genuine fear and concern to the formidable changes and alternation that industrialisation brings. The whole story of

Narayan’s Malgudi, to the extent that it is purely an imaginary habitation, provides a wide fictional opportunity for a possible escape from the vaccine problems of everyday life. Reading Narayan’s Malgudi novels is a matter of literal evocative transport into an imaginary landscape, as it usually happens in the ancient fairytales and folklore. In so far as designating Malgudi, with its South Indian particularities and peculiarities of the village life in India, is exactly somewhere in the ethereal sphere of imagination, and this ethereal sphere more or less as a ‘no man’s land’ and ‘everybody’s ecstasy and exquisiteness’, compounds in the reader’s mind a kind of fairy tale effect. But at the same time, Malgudi is virtually populated with real people struggling to extricate themselves from the mundane problems of their life. For this purpose the inhabitants of Malgudi take upon themselves a pleasant autism that renders them altogether a distinctly different species, lacking even in the commonsense approach of life.

In this context, the story of Mali in The Vendor of Sweets is highly important in exposing the childlike odyssey of Mali. Mali’s father is a proprietor of an establishment making and selling sweets. To start with, he was very hopeful of Mali continuing his tradition of making and selling sweets in this remote village. But on the contrary, Mali adopts for himself Westernised culture by way of marrying an American-Korean wife. Mali was Jagan’s only son. Jagan had all sorts of pleasant hopes about him and his faithful manner of adhering and continuing father’s inheritance. But Mali out of his peripheral enthusiasm smashes all the hopes of Jagan.

It is interesting to note that both, father and son act themselves in a sort of childlike confusion rather than adopting for themselves a clear, progressive vision of life.
Herein lies the whole misguidance. For Jagan, a typical self-satisfaction within the available material facilities of life is all that provides mundane satisfaction. But for Mali it is altogether different. He aspires to acquire for himself through his American-Korean wife all the material heights of culture. This American-Korean wife in her turn is another bebe-like character, who nurtures in herself a scheme for manufacturing a fiction writing machine.

It is here, that R K Narayan nicely pin-points, in the words of William Walsh, "all the diversions which maddeningly separates the two of them (Jagan and Mali), the division of the East and West, of the young and old, of the child and parent." (252) This unthinking manner of Mali adopting for himself the Western modes of life creates a type of heart brokeness in Jagan. Instead of making sweets, Mali opts for himself the idea of assisting idol-making on the rocks. Very interestingly, as an idol-makers assistant, his concepts of spirituality, as well as mundane affairs are "stained with human fallibility" (251), to borrow the phrase of William Walsh. Somehow, a sort of childish notion gets settled in his mind. Mali’s hasty manner of striding away from the tradition, puts into the heart of Jagan a serious introspection, in the context of which he was sure that all the things in the world were fraud in one form or the other. Somehow in a strange child-like manner, Jagan considers that a fallibility in humanity is a structural necessity.

Jagan amounts to suggest him that perfection in any form or manner is fated to shattering and smashing, just like his own sweet vendor’s aspirations were mercilessly destroyed by his own son. Therefore, flaw is the necessity in the creation. As Jagan says, "I always remember the story of the dancing figure of Nataraj, which was so perfect that it began a cosmic dance and the town itself shook as if an earthquake had rocked it, until a
small finger on the figure was chipped off we always do it, no one ever notices it, but we always create a small flaw in every image, it’s for safety "(?)

It is a matter of widest spread commonality that almost in all the Indian houses, the loving mothers put a small black spot on the lovely faces of their children, after having washed and beautified them. This black spot, they believe saves the child from the possible evil eyes of others that might work for dangers to their children. Jagan’s psychological predilections are like those of these Indian mothers. In his heart of hearts, he regrets for not having introduced a little bit of defect in the upbringing of Mali. All the characters of R.K Narayan suffer from this kind of lurking predilections of infantile imagination. This kind of infantile imagination in the characters of R.K Narayan is born of his clear intentions to escape from the crises of the sort that befall him in the death of his young wife and in the arduous responsibility to bring up his daughter, mercilessly orphaned from the mother’s side. So, R.K Narayan resorts to fiction in order to escape and transport himself from the mundane world to a cloud cockoo land.

Quite ironically, the cloud cockoo land of Malgudi is not at all a rescuing phenomenon in providing a fairyland prospect. On the contrary, all the banks of life that human flesh is prone to, are substantially present in Malgudi. As a result of this kind of analogue, R.K Narayan provides a straddled reading, coupled with wonder and surprise at every turn of the behaviour of his characters. Needless to say, that wonders and surprises are passionately demanded by children. Therefore, Narayan provides a pleasant reading to all such who can assume upon themselves a childhood of mind. We are all ‘children of mind’ when we go to read R.K Narayan.
The humans life and incidences as projected in the latter novels does not have a scope of child characters. But, however, the strange and dibolic manner in which the grown-up characters enact themselves in their exotic situations of lives confirms a fact that, if the protagonists of these novels are not mature enough to be responsible persons, they are not capable of attaining to the needs of their own lives in any conventional and approval manner to the extent that they are driven by quixotic desires and unconvincing manners of life, they perform themselves as certain strange human types. Since their manners of behaviour are quaint and unconventional, they figure themselves as strange creatures emerging out of the world of their own.

Precisely speaking, almost all the protagonist of the latter novels are strangely withdrawn into themselves. If the child like innocence of Swami is given good-bye, they have not even learnt the primary lessons of experience. It seems as though there motor systems are driven by some strange and unconventional 'collective unconsciousness', to borrow the expression of Carl Jung. Both the cultural unconsciousness and the primitive natural unconsciousness give way to a kind of insufferable, but humourous, tendencies of life. While The Financial Expert is a story of a ruthless financier, who mercilessly exploits the ignorant poor people of the villages, Raju (The Guide) is out and out, a cheat, a conniver and a potential danger for the established systems of society. Narayan has a very important point to suggest in these novels. He wants to make it clear that the very nonsense of humanity are completely lost in the newly emerging battles of civilisation.

It is important to note here, that Malgudi, which was a calm, quite and peaceful region like any village in India, is gradually turning to adopt for itself the newly emerging civilisation, which is replete with material gains and personal profits. In this context the
above novels of the latter period need not be necessarily considered as entering into children’s experience and the vision of the living. They are more or less for the readers of all ages. But, however, it can be said that the intense manner in which a child looks for “a stretching of imagination, a deepening of experience, a heightening of awareness” are the criteria of literature meant for children. The above criteria is considered important in all children books. Infact, R K Narayan’s The Dark Room can be considered as a story of children emerging into awareness of the battle-lines between their mother and father. Thus, the novel enshrines the childhood manner of understanding pain.

The novels, that Narayan had written from Mr. Sampath and after, certainly cannot be categorized as children literature. To the extent, they maintain in themselves certain airy fables, with graceful human impossible adornments of the world of elders are taken into consideration. There are certainly some morally educated qualities that confirms the children with substantial ways of taking an insights into the world around them. It is important to note that the world of elders, with all its complex problems and urgent decisions to make, certainly offers some potential ground realities for their minds. Even often they do not understand the specific cases and constrains that go to make adults also behave with the kind of naivety with which the protagonist of R K Narayan’s latter novels performing themselves, provides the children with a kind of deepening understanding of the world as a blend of innumerable contradictions and comprehensions.

In short, the world of elders projects itself before them as an absurd one. This kind of reflection towards the world as absurd is the manner in which Srinivas, the narrator of the story of Mr. Sampath falls into a confusion. In understanding the eccentric world of Mr. Sampath’s ways of looking at the world, Srinivas linctear pertinently comments that
"Like his own Srinivas, Narayan also seems to see the world as a complicated system of
checks and counter-checks, the net result being the enthronement of the absurd" (374)
This manner of absurd, in one form or the other, is the manner in which the themes and
structures of the latter novel move on. The following commentary from Mr. Sampath,
clarifies this situation. According to Srinivas

"His mind perceived a balance of power in human relationship. He marvelled at the
invisible forces of the universe which maintained this subtle balance in all matters; it was
so perfect that it succumbed to be unnecessary for anybody to do anything for a moment it
succumbed to him a futile and presumptuous occupation to analyse, criticise and attempt to
set things light anywhere. . . . If only one could get a comprehensive view of all humanity,
one would get a correct view of the worldly things being neither particularly wrong nor
right, but just balancing themselves. Just the required number of wrong doers as there are
people who deserved wrong deeds, just as many policemen to bring them to their senses, if
possible, and just as many wrong doers again to keep the police employed, and so on and
on to an infinite concentric circle" (374).

If innocence is the mode of insights in R.K. Narayan's earlier novels upto The
English Teacher, naivety becomes the mode of insight in the latter novels. The foolish
manner in which Raju (The Guide) entangles himself with innumerable problems and the
overconfident and impermissible manner of Margayya (The Financial Expert), provide for
the readers mind a typical naivety which ultimately reverts upon them and turns them into
tragic characters. Here is a pertinent message and lesson to the readers of all ages, but for
children they offer certain instinctively quickening modes of enhancing and deepening their
experiences of life. They look at them with a sense of arrest in incomprehension. But
however, they wholeheartedly engage the poetic justice quite intentionally introduced in the reversals of the lives of Raju and Mangayya. "The 'Novel' as a literary phenomenon", Srinivas Iyengar informs us, "is new to India" (314).

That way ancient Indian literature had certainly perfected in Sanskrit and the other Indian languages—Lyrics, dramas, short stories, and fables. Several centuries back, but the novel as such reached the Indian shores only in the later half of the nineteenth century, that too under the influence of the Western fictional performances. Again to quote Srinivas Iyengar,

"the novel, properly so called, we have to wait till the later half of the nineteenth century when the Western impact on India's cultural front had resulted, among other things, in the development of formal written prose in the regional languages, first as a functional, and presently as an artistic medium" (314).

The Western influence which originally started in the form of formal prose compositions in the regional languages, became ultimately a foundation stone for the composition of Indian novels. To start with it is only a mere mimetic performance under the influence of Western models. These Western models that particularly influenced Indian novel are mostly of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. English writers like Joseph Edison, Oliver Goldsmith, Charles Dickens, W. M. Thackeray, and series of others. It may not be out of place to suggest here that the original attraction for the British novel came to the Indian writers from the women novelists Mrs. Reid Cliffs, Jane Austen, Bronte sisters, and George Eliot. It is important here to note, as to how these writers were originally initiated into the academic institutions and to the wider reading public thereafter.