Chapter - Nine

The Gains from the British Rule in Malgudi

K.S. Ramamurthy says: "Indian writers in English are possessed by an urge, a kind of compulsion to interpret Indian life and culture and make it meaningful to the West, to present a greater and truer India, to bring home to the Western reader whatever is great and true in Indian life, culture and values."¹ Narayan's primary concern is to present a truer India to both the outsider and his countrymen. He cannot, therefore, rest content with the presentation of what happened in India during the British rule and how India boiled under the yoke of slavery. It is gratifying to find Narayan responding even to the indelible good impress that the British rule has left on Indian life. That is how Narayan's novels do not suffer from imbalance.

Lakshmi Holmstrom summarises the gains from the British rule: "When the East India Company's Charter was renewed in 1813, the English Parliament authorised the Company to spend a lakh of rupees on 'the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and the promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants.'²³

Such a step must have encouraged well-to-do and educated people to follow suit: Narayan's uncle had given up lucrative activities on principle and was dedicated to revive

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Tamil classics and all his resources were utilised for it.  

Personally, Narayan also did not lag behind: Narayan and his friends gathered every evening in Narasimha Pharmacy, sat round and discussed life and literature. During one such session here Narayan decided to start the Indian Thought Publications devoted to literature, philosophy and culture.

The Malgudians of Narayan exhibit this tendency of rapidly acquiring English, cultivating a taste for reading and attempting to revive the study of Sanskrit literature. And the seeds are sown in the minds of school boys and collegians in Malgudi: The Head Master of Albert Mission School spoke on the day prior to the summer vacation that boys of his school would not waste their time but read story books in the vacation. Prin. Brown ended the academic year in the Albert Mission College with the hope that his pupils' interest in literature would long survive the Examination. Together with that, Prin. Brown, throughout his thirty years in India, stressed the need for speaking and writing correct English.

There is the parental encouragement too: Sankar's father was buying a lot of books for Sankar to read during the vacation, books such as Sinbad, the Sailor; Alibaba and son on. Swaminathan's father had bought years ago, Anderson's 'Fairy Tales', which Swaminathan decided to present to Rajam, who was a good reader.

With the passage of years the good habit roots: Chandran had cultivated serious reading in his college.

1. op. His, "My Days" (Serialised in the Illustrated Weekly of India) p.30 (4th August, 1974)
2. Ibid., p.31 (1st September, 1974)
3. SF - p.65
4. BA - p.50
5. ET - p.2
6. SF - p.64
7. SF - p.176
library. Chandran became a member of the Town Public Library and read an enormous quantity of fiction and general literature. He read Carlyle, Shakespeare, Shaw and Wells. Raju was ambitious learning various things from the scrap he bought for his railway-shop, from school-goers. Raman's cupboard overflowed with the books he had cherished since his college days - Plato and Pickwick Papers.

Literature helps growth of the mind: Chandran divided his time between plants and books. If he read a book, he tried to make the print a complete drug for the mind.

Raman's was a habit, quite unusual: Raman wrote the book-seller's sign-board and picked up a book or two instead of presenting a bill. As the second-hand book-seller had absolutely no customers he spent his hours studying the books and discussed them with Raman.

Acquisition of literary pleasure spreads even to those who do not have serious education and also to other Malgudians of assorted professions: Sriram read a novel borrowed from the municipal library. A friend of Krishna spent the larger part of his day in reading. Nataraj spent his time attempting to read Tolstoy's 'War and Peace'. Ramani had the habit of reading novels in his leisure. Dr. Sankar had a great reverence for authors as a class. He was a great lover of books.

Krishna's thirst for reading was insatiable: Krishna had read Milton, Carlyle and Shakespeare not less than fifty times.

1. BA - p.3
2. BA - p.54
3. TG - pp.42,44
4. PS - p.44 (4 Jul 76)
5. BA - pp.123-124
6. PS - p.44 (4 Jul 76)
7. WH - p.12
8. ET - p.171
9. MM - p.237
10. DR - p.170
11. ET - p.85
12. ET - p.1
The older generation is also busy sharing this pleasure: Chandran's father was habituated to read English novels.\(^1\) Krishna's father was a BA of the olden days brought up on Pater and Carlyle and Scott and Browning.\(^2\) Krishna's father-in-law sat up with his daughter all night, reading a novel.\(^3\) Sampath glanced through a book by Pudovkin.\(^4\)

With the spread of learning and the habit of reading critical opinion is in evidence but Narayan is aware of bias in forming opinions: Chandran found Gajapathy a literary fanatic because to him, all English Literature, other than Elizabethan was trash. This was Gajapathy's stand when Chandran said that Wells, Galsworthy and Hardy were superior to the old novelists.\(^5\) Gajapathy with his loyalty of a life-time to English language and literature, thought the American spelling foolish buffoonery.\(^6\)

Even in this sphere, Narayan discovers the unusual purposes that his characters make books to fulfil: In order to escape thoughts of Daisy, Raman picked up the Planter's Story.\(^7\) The Head Master read most of the books as they helped him to do a lot of private thinking when he rested his eyes on the lines.\(^8\) Ramani's ties were kept pressed between the leaves of his three bulky books - Annan-dale's Dictionary; The Complete Works of Byron; and an odd volume of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.\(^9\)

The cream of Malgudi society knows and is proud of India's rich and ancient literature in Sanskrit: Inaugurating Sampath's film, Malgudi's District Judge said, "Our epics undoubtedly are a veritable storehouse of wisdom.

\begin{itemize}
\item 1. BA - p.68
\item 2. ET - p.18
\item 3. ET - p.92
\item 4. MS - p.99
\item 5. BA - p.149
\item 6. ET - p.14
\item 7. PS - p.47 (11 Jul 76)
\item 8. ET - p.165
\item 9. DR - p.7
\end{itemize}
and spirituality. They contain messages which are of eternal value and applicable to all times and climes, irrespective of age, race or sex and so on... India has a lesson to teach the rest of the world. ¹

Narayan's characters engage themselves in the serious study of Sanskrit literature too. Americans are equally enthusiastic: Jagan believed that all the Vedas had emanated from God's feet. Hence he agreed with Grace that the Vedas knew all about everything. Even margosa had been mentioned as the ambrosia in the Vedas.² Sampath showed a desire to learn a few things in Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads from the landlord of Srinivas and clear some doubts.³ Sampath was glad that he had made tremendous progress in his Sanskrit studies under the guidance of Srinivas's landlord who readily opened his mind and soul to every spiritual enquiry.⁴ As Nataraaj's father grew older he began to spend all his time reading the Ramayana.⁵ While things were being fried in the kitchen, Jagan's gaze was unflinchingly fixed on the Sanskrit lines of the Bhagavad Gita.⁶

Malgudi has so changed that a girl of the once-despised 'dancing-girl class' - Rosie - also joins this select band of people: Rosie used to spend her time studying the ancient works on the art of dancing such as, 'Natyashastra of Bharat Muni' and various other works because without a proper study of the ancient methods it would be impossible to keep the purity of the classical forms. She would also want a pundit to come to her to help her to understand the texts and read for her episodes from Ramayana and Mahabharata.⁷ Srinivas wanted to complete reading all the Upanishads. While reading the third Upanishad he forgot his surroundings. He

1. MS - p.134
2. VS - p.74
3. MS - p.121
4. MS - p.145
5. MM - p.9
6. VS - p.18
7. TG - p.113
began to understand that all his domestic worries and all those questions of prestige seemed ridiculously petty.\(^1\)

The spread of education even among women in Malgudi has brought forth the desired interest in literature among women also: Santi spoke of some books she had read in her younger days.\(^2\) Srinivas's wife had the habit of reading novels.\(^3\) After food, Savitri browsed over the pages of a Tamil magazine.\(^4\) Gangu engaged a tutor who made her go through Scott's novels so that she could be fit to serve on public bodies.\(^5\)

The multilingualism of Narayan's characters is definitely indicative of the mixture of the north and the south thus depriving Malgudi of its regional characteristics. Slowly but certainly Hindi literature attracts their attention: Raman hardly cared what book he chose for browsing in the afternoon; it might be Gibbon's Decline and Fall or Kural - that tenth century Tamil classic.\(^6\) Susila was so fond of books that she had been a member of some library. Her library contained Ivanhoe, Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare, selected stanzas of Kamba Ramayana, Palgrave's Golden Treasury and Bhagavad Gita in Sanskrit.\(^7\) While Susila read the Tamil classics and Sanskrit texts without Krishna's help she liked English to be explained by him. She derived a curious delight in turning over the pages of a book. Krishna sat with his wife with one or the other of the books, in the earlier years of his marriage.\(^8\) Bharati told Sriram that his literary equipment had to be good. It was not enough that he spoke Hindi well. She wished he could read Tulsi Das Ramayan without any assistance.\(^9\)

\(^1\) MS - pp.12-13
\(^2\) MS - p.216
\(^3\) MS - p.38
\(^4\) DR - p.9
\(^5\) DR - p.20
\(^6\) PS - p.44 (4 Jul 76)
\(^7\) ET - p.44-45
\(^8\) ET - p.45
\(^9\) WM - p.93
Reading of books has its impact on day-to-day life. Vasu seemed to have picked up his American style of conversation from crime books and films.

The first effects of reading books are visible. The elderly Malgudians know that literature can be used to mould the life of the young and the old. After taking complete charge of his son, Jagan used to divert his mind by telling him stories from the Panchatantra. Jagan was in the habit of quoting Tamil verses to propagate simple living. It is the habit of Srinivas's landlord to quote verses from the Bhagavad Gita. While Raju is able to quote the scriptures, Raju's mother quotes Tamil poems to make her point.

Ramani is forced to admire Shantabai's learning and shed his pride: Shantabai is able to lecture to Ramani on Omar Khayyam, the Persian Poet, and Fitzgerald. She said she could not exist without a copy of 'The Rubaiyat'.

"India formed the greatest epics in the world such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, and other documents which contained myths. The influence of the Puranas is there in the blood of every Indian and this influence accounts much for whatever is truly Indian in an Indian." In his anxiety to make his novels authentically Indian, Narayan creates the character of Sastri who knows much about the morals of these stories and can strike comparisons: Sastri said that Vasu showed all the definitions of a 'rakshasa.' He quoted a verse to prove how a rakshasa had

1. MM - p.36
2. VS - p.44
3. VS - p.76
4. MS - p.57
5. TG - p.95
6. TG - p.97
7. DR a pp.150-131
to be dealt with. He could expatiate on the lives of various demons in 'Puranas' and displayed great versatility and knowledge.¹

Malgudi takes the next step. Many take to authorship, for various reasons, though: Susila once attempted to write a story.² The Head Master made up stories for children and hardly felt the time passing.³

But poetry appears to most of them both fascinating and satisfying: Chandran felt quite thrilled when Mohan offered to read his poems to him.⁴ He was mystified by most of the twentyfive poems. They were on a wide variety of subjects and they seemed to have incited the poet to anger, gloom, despair and defiance.⁵ Mohan never cared even if he failed in the examination as he wrote poetry even at the cost of study. He could not help writing as he could not help breathing.⁶

The Malgudians enjoy felicity of expression in English and prove to be capable poets: Mohan says that English is the language of the world.⁷ So he wrote his poems in English.⁷ One of Nataraj's friends was a poet who was writing the life of God Krishna in monosyllabic verse. His ambition was to compose a grand epic. Nataraj was thrilled by its regular recitation to him. The poet had succeeded in evolving his own prosody.⁸ Raman was able to compose verses under the stress of an emotion. He guessed poets could write when they would be in a similar state of love-sickness or some other agony.⁹ Krishna had a note-book of about five

1. NM - pp. 95-96  2. ET - p. 146
3. ET - p. 151  4. BA - p. 47
5. BA - p. 49  6. BA - p. 50
7. BA - p. 48  8. MM - pp. 2-136
9. PS - p. 33 (22 Aug 76)
hundred pages. Its pages contained his most cherished thoughts on life and nature and humanity. In addition to shorter fragments that he wrote at various times on a miscellany of topics it contained a long unfinished poem on an epic scale to which he added a few dozen lines whenever his conscience stirred in him. He always fancied that he was born for a poetic career. Some of the pieces were written in English and some in Tamil. Writing poetry satisfied the innermost aspiration of Krishna. He could write a poem as soon as he wished to. So came out a poem about the sick room of Susila.

Apart from Krishna, who was an English Teacher, there are others belonging to other professions who are bilingual even in their literary expression: The forester had made a habit of collecting 'Golden Thoughts' and wished to bring them out in a book form. He had culled epigrammatic sentiments and moralisings from every source - Bhagavad Gita, Shakespeare, Mahatma Gandhi, The Bible, Emerson, Lord Avebury and Confucius - and had translated them into Tamil.

But that's not all. One finds in Malgudi production of 'books of knowledge' authored by experts who are not satisfied with the way in which books are written. Malgudi has the good fortune of tasting the fruits of learning and research: Vasu was sorry that amateurs had invaded every field of writing and just talked their heads off. To set an example, he had written a monograph on wild life detailing the problems and methods of preserving wild life. The book Jagan had written was his 'magnum opus' on Nature Cure and Natural Diet. Dr. Pal had worked for years and years studying and writing just in order that mankind might be helped.
Dr. Pal's books were written in his spare time. All his four books were about Sociology - so something more serious than story books.

Malgudi that was once the centre of tradition and orthodoxy, wakes up to the need for education in sex: Dr. Pal's 'Bed Life' or 'The Science of Marital Happiness' was intended to serve as a guide book to married couples. The book which Dr. Pal considered a branch of Sociology was based on Vatsayana's Kama Sutra (The Science of Love) and on the research done by modern scientists like Havelock Ellis.

Scholars who are interested in reconstructing the history of civilisation through their research and persons interested in educating the public in the Puranas are busy in Malgudi: Marco had made voluminous notes on all the cave paintings and was confident that when published, it would change the present ideas of the history of civilisation. Srinivas felt that it was his peculiar good fortune to have been asked to prepare the script for Sampath's film on 'The Burning of Kama'. He had little interest in anything else.

Narayan seems to be sad looking to the intrusion into this field, of half-baked writers and also machinery. Malgudi cannot be free from mechanisation of literary effort. Narayan hints at the bane of economic and scientific progress in America and how it affects human individuality and ability in Malgudi: Mali was afraid that the novel he seemed to write might, after all, turn out to be a poem. Mali brought a machine with which any one could write a story. He thought book-publication which was very thin in Malgudi owing to lack of creative writing could be increased with the help of this

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1. FE - pp. 52-53
2. FE - pp. 54-55
3. TG - pp. 113-114
4. NS - p. 102
5. VS - p. 41
6. VS - p. 82
machine. By just pressing the key of the machine, one would get the formula for a story from which one could build up the rest.\(^1\) Grace said that most magazines in America had such machines in their fiction department and three of their products were the country's best-sellers.\(^2\)

No wonder, literary recognition is not always sane and judicious. At least some in Malgudi are alive to this and voice their disapproval. But all is not lost: Sen thought that the Sahitya Akademi at Delhi were wasting funds giving an award to every Tom Dick and Harry. He had decided to send a special copy of Mohan's poem to the Akademi as that was the first time they had had a chance to recognise real literature.\(^3\)

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Another by-product of the spread of education in India during and after British rule is the emergence of scientific thinking and outlook among the people. The growing interest in Malgudi in science and scientific thinking and the consequent coming into question of the established ways of life is indeed Narayan's method of depicting Indian conditions.

"Education, especially English education, is transforming the life of people in the city as well as in rural areas. Those who are educated and economically well-off are the most susceptible to new ways of life", says George Kurian.\(^4\)

Macaulay compliments the Hindus (meaning the people of Hindusthan) thus: "There are in this very town (Calcutta)
natives who are competent to discuss political or scientific questions with fluency and precision in the English Language. Indeed it is unusual to find even in the literary circles of the continent any foreigner who can express himself with so much facility and correctness as we find in many Hindus."

Various instances of the awareness of Physiology and Hygiene are scattered through the novels: The wife of Srinivas implored him to wash his fingers that were ink-stained to prevent poison entering him through food. Dr. Shankar advised Krishna that he must dip his hand in Lentol solution whenever he touched the patient. Susila kept rubbing her lips with her fingers in an effort to eradicate the touch of the fly which came and sat on her lip in the lavatory. Muthu never ate anywhere outside when he was on a travel and that kept him fit. Nataraj cast longing looks at the brown buns arranged in the wayside tea-shops. Normally he would not have dared to eat anything out of a shop like this where flies swarmed over the sugar and nothing was ever washed or covered; road-dust flew up whenever a car passed and settled down on the bread, the buns, fruit, sugar and milk. Despite these, the shop had a constant crowd of visitors. The office of the lawyer was situated in a cotton-godown. Nataraj suspected the spread of tuberculosis and asthma among the clients who visited the lawyer. But the lawyer told Nataraj that allergy is something mental. The old lady warned Susila that an empty stomach made poison.

Knowledge about medicines and their side-effects and medication picked from various sources and passed on to

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2. MS - p.38
3. ET - p.86
4. ET - p.68
5. MM - p.114
6. MM - p.40
7. MM - p.79
8. ET - p.74
others is common in Malgudi: Jagan advised Mali not to eat the headache pills as they are poisonous. The photographer said that an American scientist had recently found out that good photographs were a sure remedy for headache. Jagan had fitted ten watt bulbs in the light sockets in order to benefit the human retina. He told Mali that light rays should soothe the optic nerves and not stimulate them. Jagan knows cold water is good for rheumatism.

Mali's habit of wearing socks drives Jagan to guess about the reasons for heart attacks in European countries: Socks heated the blood through interference with the natural radiation occurring through one's soles and insulated oneself against beneficial magnetic charges of the earth's surface. Even the canteen-man knows enough of science to justify his trade practices. He said the ideas of pure-butter-melted-ghee are antiquated. He is aware that scientists have proved that pure butter and ghee bring on heart disease; the artificial substitutes have more vitamins.

There are many in India who strongly preach and practise Naturopathy having been influenced by Gandhi. Jagan is one of them: Jagan challenged Dr. Krishna that there was a nature-cure even for malignant brain tumour which was impossible to be treated in Allopathy. Jagan's book would contain this information. Jagan hoped to get his book on the colour of the hair and diet, published one day. It is his conviction that if one's diet is controlled according to Nature's specifications, one would never see a grey hair anywhere. Jagan had read in a book that Nature had meant sex to be anything more than a means of propagation of the species; that one drop of white blood was equal to a drop of red.

1. VS - p.28  2. WM - p.155
3. VS - p.129  4. VS - p.122
5. VS - p.75  6. VS - p.108
7. VS - p.74  8. VS - p.114
blood and that seminal waste and nervous exhaustion reduced one's longevity, the essence of all achievement being celibacy and conservation.¹

Jagan's generation could not compromise with some daily habits and was deeply attached to herbs and medicines he was trained to use. It was natural for him to come into conflict with the younger generation most of whom are devoid of such misconceptions as he has: Jagan had immense faith in the properties of margosa and, in spite of its bitterness he called it 'Amrita'. He was opposed to the use of toothbrushes as he declared that they were made of the hair from the pig's tail. Even after the advent of nylon bristles Jagan maintained that nylon had an adverse effect on the enamel.² The landlord of Srinivas bared his strong teeth to prove the efficacy of margosa or banyan twigs as against toothbrushes which, according to him, were made of pigs' tail. He was confident that our ancestors knew more science than anybody today.³ Jagan's wife hated his theories about health-giving substances and lived her own life. Their first clash occurred when he forbade her to swallow aspirin and suggested that she should fry a little margosa flower in ghee and swallow it for relief from headache.⁴ Mali cautioned Grace not to swallow margosa leaves but Jagan said that it was a natural antiseptic, blood-purifier and rich in iron.⁵

With the growth of Malgudi, its businessmen and others are haunted by the desire to earn more and more and to preserve the money so earned. The worship of Mammon is wellknown to Narayan together with its consequences: Dr. Pal hoped to reduce the psychological wear and tear to which

1. VS - p.172 2. VS - p.26
3. MS - p.51 4. VS - p.27
5. VS - p.74
mostly businessmen were susceptible. He expected businessmen to help him set up a Psychological Clinic for their own sake.¹

And in Malgudi, science can't explain all that happens: The doctor treating Sriram's Granny had read in a medical journal about the dead reviving but had never thought it would come within his view. He said such things are enough to make one believe in soul, karma and all that.²

Even then, scientific progress throwing open new possibilities baffles the Malgudians and shows how backward their thinking is: Jagan could not phrase his surprise properly when the Cousin broke the news that Mali wanted to manufacture story-writing machines. Jagan felt it best to acknowledge defeat and give up all pretence.³

The Malgudians have great faith in the efficacy of astrology. Though to most people it may sound superstitious, Englishmen find it logical: Jagan's father had frequent visits from a Mr. Noble, an Englishman, the District Collector, who came for lessons in astrology.⁴

All the important activities in Malgudi have to wait for the auspicious hour and favour of stars: C.W. Krishnan has great faith in horoscopy and knows that the marriage of couples ill-matched in the stars often leads to misfortune and even tragedy.⁵ Somu had given three rupees and a coconut on a plate to each of the Brahmins who fixed the correct moment for the inauguration of Sampath's film. Somu believed that it would be taking a great risk to have the ceremony without beneficial starts.⁶

¹. FB - p.174  2. WM - p.124
³. VS - p.80  4. VS - p.17
⁵. EA - p.86  6. MS - pp.131-132
Malgudiians are trained to believe that astrology holds the key for longevity and prosperity: The priest told Margayya that if Saturn was gratified he could make anyone a ruler of the world or he could just drown one in an ocean of misery. A hermit who could see past, present and future as one dictated the Head Master's life to him after a glance at his palm. He had also fixed the date of death of the Head Master. His life had proceeded exactly as the hermit had predicted.

Narayan is not unaware of the ill-effects of submitting to such prophecies by people who are either non-professional predictors or practise their science without any professional ethics. People lose their initiative and zeal for life. Narayan seems to hint that such predictions bring astrology and palmistry into avoidable disrepute: The prediction about the Head Master's death by a Sadhu - not a professional predictor - did not happen. The note-book in which the prediction was recorded weighed the Head Master down all those years. Now that he had no more pages to watch in the note-book he was glad he could live free and happy. Margayya was angry with the astrologer who refused to modify his opinion about the incompatibility of the horoscopes of his son, Balu and the would be bride, Brinda.

But Malgudi is not wanting in people like Dr. Pal: Dr. Pal helped Margayya to find a different astrologer who rearranged the stars of Balu to suit the circumstances; for a nominal fee of seventyfive rupees. The astrologer gave Sastri three auspicious days for the celebration of 'Radha-Kalyan' in the temple. The days were: good, not so good and half-good.

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1. FE - p.45                        2. ET - pp.167,184
3. ET - p.189                        4. FE - p.153
5. FE - p.154                        6. MM - p.143
P.S. Sundaram's comment well-suits this context:
"There is certainly a humorous side to the Laxmi Puja and
the faith in horoscopes but Narayan would seem to suggest
that all this is not Old Wives' Superstition. The forty
days' worship of Laxmi bore fruit... The astrologer who
pointed out the incompatibility in the horoscopes of Balu
and Brinda was not wrong - within a few months of her marri-
age Brinda had cause to rue it."

With all his belief in the sciences, Narayan does
not fail to record in his novels, the common superstitious
beliefs in the minds of men and women of the older genera-
tion whether they belong to the rural or urban India. Amus-
ing statements by Narayan's characters lend peculiar Indian
atmosphere and flavour to his novels: Krishna's mother ask-
ed Krishna that he should not fail to give Lila an oil joi-
ntment and bath every Friday as otherwise she would lose all
her hair. The villagers of Mangala asked Raju if aero-
planes disturbed the clouds and caused rain and if atom-
bombs dried up the clouds. Sastrī felt suffocated under a
mosquito-net and preferred a mosquito bite. The contractor,
in his sixty-five years of life had never had malaria even
once though he had never been under a mosquito-net. Jagan
thought we are all probably glimpsing the real Heaven with-
out knowing it. Probably all our ancient sages are looking
down at us.

A basic suspicion about change and the attendant
refusal to either acquaint with progressive trends or appre-
ciate them objectively is the essence of the public mind in

1. op. His, "R.K. Narayan" - Arnold Heinemann, Delhi, 1973,
p. 80
2. ET - p. 111
3. TG - p. 81
4. ET - p. 66
5. VS - p. 24
Malgudi. An important reason for this seems to be the love of tradition. Narayan tells about his Granny and this echoes in one of his novels: His Granny would go to the backyard and pluck the leaves of a weed growing on an untended wall for treating someone with a scorpion-bite. Sometimes she consulted an exercise book in which he would have noted some special prescription for hooping cough or paralysis.\(^1\) Visitors generally dropped in the afternoon in Raman's house seeking Aunt's advice to swallow some herbal remedy or to listen to her prophecies from a horoscope.\(^2\)

The impact of science starts the change in the otherwise placid life of Malgudi. While the older and less educated people of Malgudi behave with a frown, others have a relish of the progress: The old lady had never heard of buttermilk being given for fever. Krishna said haughtily that the days when butter milk was dreaded were gone.\(^3\) The contractor never trusted English doctors. His son who had typhoid never got well though he was in bed for thirty days and was forbidden to eat anything. Somebody gave the contractor a herb and the patient was given anything to eat and he got well within two days.\(^4\) Krishna remembered that the days of bitter drugs were gone. All medicines were good to the taste and even to see.\(^5\)

Even medical practitioners are not able to categorically deny the utility of talismans and sacred ash; Krishna was apologetic to Dr. Shankar about the line of treatment of his mother-in-law, for his wife. A 'Swamiji' brought by her felt Susila's pulses, uttered some mantras

1. op. Narayan's, "My Days" (Serialised in the Illustrated Weekly of India) p.34 (30th June, 1974)
2. PS - p.44 (4 Jul 76)
3. ET - p.82
4. ET - p.91
5. ET - p.78
with closed eyes, took a pinch of sacred ash and rubbed it on her forehead and tied to her arm a talisman strung in yellow thread. The doctor told that there was a lot in him too. When they understood it fully they would be able to give more complete cures.¹

The picture of a nonplussed foreigner in the midst of the customary pooja to inaugurate any ceremony is indeed both authentic and amusing: De Mello, with his dark suit, probably of Hollywood cut, with his forehead covered with religious marking looked intimidated. After worshipping the camera the priests gave him flowers, vermilion and ash with which he did not know what to do.²

Vasu's scientific outlook is but a symbol of what is happening around in India: Says Vasu, "After all we are civilised human beings, educated and cultured, and it is up to us to prove our superiority to nature. Science conquers nature in a new way each day; why not in creation also? That's my philosophy..."³

Vasu succeeds in opening the eyes of people like Nataraj: Looking at the alum solution, Nataraj closed his nostrils. Vasu told him that the whole process of his work was much more hygienic and clean than paring the skin of vegetables in the kitchen.⁴

Narayan seems to suggest that anyone who, like Vasu, attacks the faith and tradition of the Malgudians is bound to stake his life. But Malgudi is changing very fast. Even women are able to attack pristine innocence with subtlety: The chiefman of the village pointed out to an old shrine in a cave where barren women could go, pray and bear children. He

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¹ ET - pp. 93-94  
² MS - p. 132  
³ MM - p. 15  
⁴ MM - p. 62
sought an explanation for that from Daisy. Daisy simply asked him to enquire with the temple priest for the reason. Raman's Aunt said that chairs were bad for the limbs and joints. People lost their flexibility. Sitting on the floor and rising is the best way to keep from growing fat. Daisy contradicted Aunt and said that those who grew fat would do so whether they sat down on the floor or a chair.

Scientific outlook slowly is universalised and there are people struggling to develop it in others: Aunt believed that it was the duty of the living to help the dead with proper rituals. We had not to question the injunctions of the Shastras, e.g., the gift of a cow to a Brahmin helped the dead man's soul. But Raman was irritated at his Aunt's beliefs. He thought that it was indeed impossible to establish the Age of Reason if people were like that. Raman tried to ask of the tufted priest to be scientific when the latter was very particular about the correct timing of the nailing of the Lawyer's board, as a minute this way or that could make all the difference between a millionaire and a mendicant. All day long Raman was engaged with his old aunt who advised him to do this or that according to the stars. He was determined to establish the Age of Reason in the world. Raman wanted a rational explanation for everything and did not do anything unless he saw some logic in it.

Narayan succeeds in bringing to the reader the real comedy - that which arises out of an equal disbelief both in scientific thinking as also in the god-fearing Indian culture: The old man asked Raman to express his wish before the goddess in the shrine. Raman could not tell him that he aimed to establish the Age of Reason and could think of

1. PS - p.32 (25 Jul 76)  2. PS - p.37 (18 Jul 76)
3. PS - p.45 (4 Jul 76)  4. PS - p.30 (27 Jun 76)
5. PS - p.30 (27 Jun 76)
no boons to ask of a Goddess. Yet he noticed the benevolence in the eyes of the image and a desire to impart Grace. He prayed to the Goddess to get him Daisy without further delay as he could not live without her.\textsuperscript{1}

Another offshoot of the spread of education in Malgudi is the growing aptitude for applied science. This is not missed by Narayan: Chandru was studying for the Intermediate and had a genius for electricity. He had made miniature dynamos, electric bells and telegraph sets.\textsuperscript{2} Babu promised Kamala to show the electric tram made by Chandru.\textsuperscript{3} Akbar Ali, Swaminathan’s classmate, had made a marvellous camera and had taken a lot of photos with it.\textsuperscript{4}

The older generation also has its contribution in this behalf: Krishna’s father had to his credit several bottles of ink - his own make - from a recipe which was exclusively his and of which he was excessively proud.\textsuperscript{5} The coachman’s process of minting higher currency was this - he had a special metal-pot at home in which he kept all base copper coins together with some mysterious herb. He kept the whole thing, he said, buried in the ground, he squatted on the spot at dead of night and performed some Yoga and lo, when the time came all the copper was silver.\textsuperscript{6} The Cousin told that the hair-dyer offered to transmute base metals into gold.\textsuperscript{7}

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Narayan observes the liquidation of Malgudi’s geographical boundaries. Malgudi is wishing to give its people a taste of civilisation and culture abroad. Foreign travel becomes both a fashion and a fad: Chandran wanted to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} PS - p.31 (1 Aug 76)
  \item \textsuperscript{2} DR - p.39
  \item \textsuperscript{3} DR - p.165
  \item \textsuperscript{4} SF - p.108
  \item \textsuperscript{5} ET - p.16
  \item \textsuperscript{6} SF - p.68
  \item \textsuperscript{7} VS - p.191
\end{itemize}
get a doctorate or something and come back from England. He thought a quiet lecturership in some college would suit him wonderfully as there would be plenty of independence and leisure.\(^1\) Chandran wanted to do something really great in England and then search for employment. He also thought of getting into some high post in the Education Service.\(^2\) Krishna had answered an advertisement he saw in an American paper where someone had offered to take on hand people who lacked seriousness and turn them into better citizens. He hoped to leave the country soon.\(^3\) Marco planned to go to Mexico and some of the Far Eastern Countries to study caves similar to those on Mempi Hills and add them on to his work.\(^4\)

Foreign travel holds on the one hand, bright promises and on the other, is cause for avoidable separation: Kailas had made plenty of money years ago in Malaya and had now settled down in his old village.\(^5\) Krishna promised to take Susila to England and Europe if he made a lot of money out of the books he was going to write. He imagined how she would stand astounded before the crowd and magnitude of European cities.\(^6\) Savitri thought that nobody would have dreamt that her sister would grow into a bulky matron with a doctor-husband and seven children, away from everybody in Burma.

The Malgudians however are not unaware of the possibility of futility of foreign travel: Chandran told his father that going to England would only mean a lot of expense because getting a distinction and coming back and getting a suitable appointment - all these seemed to be a gamble.\(^8\) Mali thought that his father would send him to

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1. BA - p.53  
2. BA - pp.124-126  
3. ET - p.15  
4. TG - p.130  
5. BA - p.97  
6. ET - p.60  
7. DR - p.34  
8. BA - p.127
America. But Jagan wondered what Mali would do there. Mali wanted to go to America to learn the art of writing books. Jagan thought it strange and asked whether Valmiki went to America or Germany in order to learn to write Ramayana.

Slowly the disadvantages of foreign travel dawn on the minds, young and old: Mali declared that he had learnt valuable things in the USA at a cost of several thousand dollars. He asked why it could not be made use of by the country. Chandran's mother was confident, our boys specially achieved nothing by going to England. They only would know to smoke cigarettes, drink wine and dance with white girls. Veeraswami asked Chandran what had Indians to learn from the English. He knew it was a drain on the country's resources and asked when this craze would stop. Chandran replied that he might be going to England to teach them something.

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Another virtue that Narayan depicts is professionalism. Indians abide by 'Dharma' which has various connotations. 'Vruthi Dharma' or professionalism is one of them. One should not forget that most of Narayan's characters follow this Dharma though his love of objective depiction makes him to point out a few exceptions in an unpricking humour: "The doctor who treats Susila and in his ineptitude kills her is an unforgettable character. He imagines without bothering to see the patient that she must be suffering from malaria and treats her accordingly. Then he decides that she must be suffering from typhoid but that does not worry him." It is in his portrayal of the adjournment

1. VS - p.35 2. VS - p.51
3. VS - p.131 4. BA - p.129
5. BA - p.61

expert and the star-lawyer from Madras that Narayan is unsurpassed... The seeming admiration for the man is so delicately done that it cunningly brings out his contempt for a class which has more often than not flourished on damned lies and dishonest as well as dishonourable means. And yet there is no direct comment is the work of his ethical sensibility.... This pungent irony is richly developed in the rest of 'The Guide' where Narayan describes doctors, government servants and journalists."

As though to bring to light the real India, Narayan also depicts people of various professions who abide by their respective 'dharma': Swaminathan had the ambition of seeing the Malgudi Cricket Club practise well and win the match. This necessitated his exemption from the physical education classes in the school. He approached Dr. T. Kesavan, for a certificate. The Doctor refused to give such a certificate for fear of being prosecuted as he found Swaminathan in the pink of health. It was nearing midnight and the doctor had been in continuous attendance for fortyeight hours with needle, ice-bag and oxygen, sparing no apparatus in order to save a life: he was physically worn out by the effort. Dr. Joshi said that although their main job was to treat the cattle, they liked to do their best for any creature. Hence he wanted to do what he could for Kumar - the temple elephant of Malgudi. Mr. Brown appreciated that Krishna had shown himself an able teacher. He was sure they had had reason to dread him very much as an examiner. Srinivas's landlord angrily told Sampath that he was not prepared to sell

2. Ibid., p.73
3. SF - p.141
4. VS - p.43
5. MM - p.122
6. ET - p.208
his knowledge as a market commodity. But Sampath told him that without 'Guru Daxina' any piece of learning becomes ineffectual and worthless.¹ It was the professional practice of Raman not to leave to anyone, the nailing of the signboard.² Joseph, the watchman of the Circuit House, was bent upon doing his duty whether people cursed him or blessed him. He was not afraid when a group of tourists wanted to assault him on his refusal to procure girls for them. He ordered them to quit the next morning.³ Nataraj invited the forester to sit and talk but the latter refused to do so as he was on Government hours. Government was not paying him to lounge in Nataraj's chair. He thought to get busy with what he came for.⁴ Though Malgudi's DSP was a good friend of Raju, no freedom is allowed to Raju till his surety bond is held valid by the Magistrate. That was so because Raju was under an arrest warrant of non-bailable nature.⁵

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1. MS - p.121  
2. PS - p.31 (27 Jun 76)  
3. TG - p.114  
4. MM - p.98  
5. TG - p.191