

## The fantasy place of Malgudi in R.K. Narayan's "The English Teacher"

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### Abstract

R.K. Narayan is a prolific Indian writer writing in English. His fictions are greatly popular in India and abroad. Malgudi is the central focus of his imagination. This prominent place of the writer is the eternal source of the pleasures and sorrow of the characters of the novel. The writer the multitude sides of this imaginative location in almost all his novels. The characters presented in the fictions feel quite secured in the environment of Malgudi. Malgudi is really a dream for the readers. This place has comparable standard to the other writers of English literature. R.K. Narayan helps in understanding the nuances of Indian culture and its conflict with some examples from his works. Narayan's literary creations are colorful fabrics woven with the intricate threads of Indian culture such as traditions, customs, religious beliefs, faiths, social hierarchies, family system, bitter & sweet melodies of love and marriage, conflict between Indian and foreign cultures, gap between generations, etc., with the touch of humour.

**Keywords:** malgudi, fantasy, Indian culture

### Introduction

#### Malgudi in the English teacher

Malgudi in the English teacher is a many-sided affair. It is so many things. It is for example, railway station, municipality, Albert Mission College, Village, Variety Hall, Bombay Anand Bhavan Restaurant, Trichy Trunk Road, Krishna Medical Hall, Ellamann Street, Market Road, Bombay Cloth Emporium, The Headmaster's School, Mempi Forest, Trichinopoly, Kavadi, Varity Cinema Hall, The Bus Stand retreat, pond, lotus, sunset, tamarind tree, the casuarinas tree jasmine, and the river. There are many other things. It is in a state of eternal flux. It is always extending. There is Lawley Extension where Krishna and Susila go to purchase a house. It is open to be influenced by other places, at least it is related to them in one way or the other. It is related to Hyderabad, Madras, Vellore, Cochin, Delhi, Rangoon, England and Europe. No, it is not only vast. It is very vast. It is related to heaven. Krishna communicates with his wife, susila who is now in heaven.

There are in the novels of Narayan two kinds of Malgudi, the city Malgudi and the nature Malgudi. They may be compared to Shakespeare's court life and the pastoral life. Let us discuss both kinds of Malgudi.

#### The City Malgudi

The city Malgudi is materialistic. Like the court life of *As You Like It*, it is a corrupting influence. Before Jagan moves to the retreat he is in the city Malgudi so materialistic that he counts his earned money in the stillness of midnight. He is so corrupt that he sets aside a part of money as free income-tax. Margayya in *The Financial Expert*, living in the city Malgudi is so materialistic that he, like a financial wizard, thinks only of earning more and more money. Let us now take examples from *The English teacher*. All kinds of

dirtiness, corruption and miserable condition is rampant in the city Malgudi. The condition of the college hostel bathrooms is so miserable that when God asks his assistant to take a culprit to the hell, the assistant takes him to the hostel bathroom passage because the bathrooms are engaged Krishna paces "the little Malgudi railway station". He finds fault with the railway authorities in regard to the carriage door dimension. Susila is imprisoned into the hell-like foul lavatory which leads her to death. There is dirtiness everywhere. Half a dozen flies dot the face of the dead susila. Even on such a holy place like the cremation ground corruption is rampant. Lively discussions over prices and quality go on. The trappings of trade do not leave us even here. Malgudi has earned notoriety for its municipal affairs the municipal staff do not do any work. Their work of cleanliness is done by the sun, the wind and the rain. Like the villain gutter in *The Financial Expert* there is a gutter gurgling in front of the house of the headmaster. The buses always run late. The bus from Trichinopoly to arrive at eleven was not showing any signs even after an hour later. Thus we see all kind of dirtiness, materialism and corruption in the city Malgudi.

#### Nature Malgudi

The Nature Malgudi is spiritual. Whereas the city Malgudi, like a villain, has a malignant influence on the characters, the Nature Malgudi, like a hero, has a benign influence on them. The river and the ruined temple exerts a healthy influence on Savitri. The temple and the Sarayu transform the criminal Raju into the scanty Raju. The retreat transforms Jagan who almost renounces the world. Under the salubrious influence of serene nature Krishna becomes so spiritual that he begins to communicate with the soul of susila. Nature is to Krishna a haven. "It looked like a green haven. Acres and acres of trees,

shrubs and orchards. Far off, casuarinas leaves murmured". The medium and Krishna can communicate with the souls in heaven in the nature's background: "the casuarinas looked more and more enchanting than ever. Purple lotus bloomed on the pond surface. Gentle ripples splashed against the bank. The murmur of the casuarinas provided the music for the great occasion. We took our seats on the pyol of the little shrine. My friend shut his eyes and prayed, 'Great souls, here we are. You have vouchsafed to us a vision for peace and understanding. Here we are ready to serve in the cause of illumination". The souls have selected the friend of Krishna as Medium because in the communion of nature he has attained the spiritual power. The Medium is so much exultant in the communion of nature that he does not desire anything else:

"This casuarinas and the setting sun and the river create a sort of peace to which I've become more and more addicted. I spend long hours here, and desire nothing better than to be left here to this peace. It gives one the feeling that it is a place which belongs to Eternity, and that it will not be touched by time or disease or decay".

### **The Blending of the Two Kinds of Malgudi**

We find in *The English Teacher* the blending of the material Malgudi and the spiritual Malgudi. Here they are both of them together: "Jingling bullockcarts, talkative villagers returning home from the town, and the miscellaneous crowd on the dusty path leading to the Tayur Road on the other side. The sun inclined to the west...The west was ablaze with the sun below the horizon. Dust would soon fall on us." In the above paragraph we have both the bullockcarts and the setting sun juxtaposed. In the following paragraph we have both the retreat and the railway line mingled:

"He liked the pond the temple and the trees, he wanted to be out of town, but near enough to be able to run into it. My views have always been that it must be a quiet retreat, but a railway line must be visible from your veranda or at least a trunk road".

The two Malgudies come closer unite, and harmonies. Thus the Malgudi brings about a unity it unites everything, materialism and spiritualism, characters, plot earth and heaven. In *The Vendor of Sweets* the twinkling stars at which Jagan gazes are the Malgudian stars. Here the heaven from which the soul of susila communicates with Krishna is Malgudian heaven. Thus Malgudi unites even heaven and earth. Malgudi is both reality and fantasy united together. The calamitous premature death of susila is a start reality; her communication with her husband from heaven is a dream-like fantasy.

### **Reference**

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