



Research Paper

Critical Analysis of R.K Narayan's writings and his Creation of Malgudi

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Abstract:

Writing a critical appreciation of a literary work needs deep analysis and evaluation of multi-layered aspects such as themes, characters, style, structure and literary technicalities. It also needs a greater clarity on that specific subject and unadulterated information. Experimentation in every aspect of literature is very necessary because a creative writing always combines a great blend of reality and imagination. Besides all these a pure and concrete information is revealed through critical analysis, and to understand writer's writing style, attitude, literary techniques used by him to extract the literary essence from his writings, critical appreciation is needed.

R.K. Narayan has gained a special recognition not only in India but also in the whole world as a writer of short story and novels. But his extraordinary mastery is in writing his short stories. The simplicity of his writing techniques and narrative techniques attract his readers. He created a unique imaginary south Indian village called "Malgudi". The people or the characters in that village are simple, lively and realistic. They move so vividly in the mind of the readers. In his writings he beautifully described the social, political, economical and educational scenario of Malgudi in British occupied India. Some time a deep child psychology, faith and true friendship comes up from his writings, some times the simplicity of village life, innocent childhood and harmless rivalry, socio-political issues and some times Gandhian non-violence moment comes up from his writings. His short stories are compared to those of Guy De Mopassant.

Keyword: Critical analysis, Malgudi Days, lifestyle, Beliefs. Social values, manners, customs characterisations.

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Objectives :

- 1) To associate the readers with R.K. Narayan's fictional literature especially Malgudi Days.
- 2) Analyzing the characters in his stories and shed light on their importance and their lives.
- 3) The socio-economic life style of Malgudi.
- 4) To create a clear idea about the religious beliefs political and cultural environment of Malgudi.
- 5) Shed light on the simple and innocent childhood he used in his writings.
- 6) To associate with the education system and the student teacher relationship.
- 7) To understand the child psychology.

I. Introduction:

R.K. Narayan created a fictional south Indian town called Malgudi. This fictional town has repeatedly appeared in his literary works. Thus Malgudi has taken a very remarkable and important place in his writings. The simple lifestyle of the people of Malgudi, their behaviours, religious beliefs, superstitions, social and sometimes political lives are reflected in his works. Sometimes his writings reflect the social and educational picture of the British colonized India, in the other hand the impression of Gandhian non-violent movement painted in a perfect blend. All these things have come together and centred around this fictional town of Malgudi.

An Astrologer's Day:

"An Astrologer's Day and Other stories" one a collection of short stories by R.K. Narayan. It is the first story from the collection. The story is set in Malgudi, the fictional south Indian town. It was published in 1947 as the Tituler story in Narayan's fourth collection of short stories. The story explores themes such as fate versus free will, deception and the nature of truth. The story is about an Astrologer who chose to be one not out of choice but past mysterious situation in life forced him to be one so it goes without saying that he was a stranger to the star as much his gullible clients. But he did not know how to carry out his profession. In this story the Astrologer is a con man. He pretends to have mystical power to earn living. He is perceptive and offers comfort to his customers by giving them self offering answers. However he is not the hero of the story.

Narayan is critical of both religion and practice of astrology, which were both the domain of the high level Brahmin cast. He himself was a Brahmin but he was against such activities practiced by Brahmins. He also criticized the superstitious society that people blindly follow such customs and malpractices which are the part of that time.

The Financial Expert :

The Financial Expert is a novel about the rise and fall of Margayya. It is a masterful exploration of human folly, ambition, and the quirks of small-town life in India. This story is also set in the fictional town of Malgudi, Narayan's beloved creation. The novel was first published in England in 1952. The novel delves into the life of Margayya, a financial adviser whose rise and fall in the world of money and power is both humorous and poignant, with his trade-mark and keen observation. Narayan weaves a tale that is both a satire of human greed and a compassionated study of the aspiration that drive ordinary people. He also used the language of the ordinary middle-class people of Indian society.

Narayan used ordinary people to illustrate the significance of philosophy of life and virtue in human life to bring myth closer to reality.

Swami and friends :

Swami and Friends is the first novel by R.K. Narayan. This novel was published through the intervention of a friend who was studying at Oxford. Through him, Graham Greene came into contact with Narayan's work and took the responsibility to publish the book. Finally the novel was published in 1935. The novel is about a young boy named Swaminathan and his experiences growing up in the fictional town of Malgudi which is set against the backdrop of British colonial rule in India.

In these series we see Swami a lazy school boy lives with his family and attend Albert Mission school with his friends Samuel, Sankar, Somu and Mani. The arrival of a new student, Rajam, the son of a rich police superintendent threatened Swami's popularity. Their innocent rivalry adds a good taste of amusement to the novel. Finally Rajam and Swami reconciled and become friends.

The book explores the universal theme of growing up, as well as complexities of friendship, the clash between tradition and modernity and the challenges of navigating the adult world.

The English Teacher :

The English Teacher by R.K. Narayan is an autobiographical novel about an English teacher, Krishna. In this novel Krishna seeks inner peace and self-development after the death of his wife, Susila. The setting of the story takes place in the fictional city of Malgudi. However after the death of Susila, Krishna became devastated and loses interest in life and his work at college. One day Krishna met a sanyasi who can communicate with spirits of the dead. Krishna is thrilled to regain his interest in life.

The novel, dedicated to Narayan's wife Rajam. It is not only an autobiographical novel but also poignant in its intensity of feelings. The story is a series of experiences in the life of Krishna and his quest for inner peace and self development after the traumatising death of his wife. Narayan used the stream of consciousness technique in the story, moving backward and forward like a clock's pendulum.

The Guide :

The Guide (1958) the Sahitya Academy Awarded novel by R.K. Narayan about the transformation of the protagonist Raju, a tourist guide into a spiritual guide and holy man. The setting of the story takes place in Malgudi during the time of great change including the construction of a railway line.

Raju's life in Malgudi told in a mix of first and third person narration, moving between the present and past. The novel explores Raju's relationship with Rosie, his time as a tourist guide and his time as a holy man. This story also explores the themes of Hypocrisy and Materialism. At the beginning, Raju is a hypercritical man and he misguides everyone. But later he realizes what it means to serve others selflessly and becomes a saint. He is ready to sacrifice himself to restore hope to the lives of others.

The novel touches on the conflicts between tradition and modernity and the place of man in the universe. It also shows how people can change and do good in life and that there is hope for mankind.

Malgudi Days :

Malgudi Days was published in 1943 by Indian Thought publications and republished outside India in 1982 by Penguin Classics. The book explores the common human experiences and everyday life of ordinary people. The stories are set in the town of Malgudi and portray various aspects of human life. The town of Malgudi is a central to Narayan's imagination and is the source of both pleasure and sorrow for his characters. The book is a blend of tragedy and humour and conveys the moral that all human experiences are equally important, no matter how small.

The Bachelor of Arts :

The Bachelor of Arts (1935) is one of Narayan's best Indian novels written in English. His intention in this novel is to show the mirror to the society and its hypocrisy and false love. His aim is to bring the reality of the society. Here he depicts the main character Chandran's struggle and determination to live a new life after much retrospection. Chandran in this story stands as a real man and he is the representation of everyman in this society. Narayan crafted the issues of Chandran's life as like everyman's. Chandran's life is also categorized into three stages as like the common man, his first term as a student second term as a romantic lover and the final term as a sanyasi.

"Waiting for Mahatma" :

"Waiting for Mahatma" (1955) Narayan explores multiple themes and aspects of India under British colonial rule, making it perfect 20th century Indian masterpiece. It is written against the colonial rule and the injustice done by the British till 1947. He excellently portrays the British exploitation of India and gives a clear picture of the rise of nationalism among Indians. Through the life of the protagonist Sriram's journey from an immature featureless individual to an active practitioner of the Gandhian philosophy, he portrays the deep impact of Satyagraha and non-violence.

Grandmother's Tale :

Narayan's last work "Grandmother's tale, (1992) is a novella that tells the story of a determined young woman whose husband has been missing for years and she goes searching for him. She succeeds in her mission but unexpectedly encounters sub-sequences. Narayan's narrative techniques in this novel strike his readers.

Grandmother's tale is Narayan's contribution to self-reflexive fiction. Towards the end of decades long career as a story teller, he attempts to reconstruct in this book the story narrated by his own maternal grandmother Ammani and also about her mother.

He also depicts the social position of the women in Indian society where we find the prevalence of child marriage and the suffocating conditions of the women.

II. Conclusion :

Narayan is a true author to his readers. He undoubtedly, a gift to his readers and he gave the joy of reading English literature with the taste of simplicity. Through his writings Narayan introduced the greatness of English literature to his Indians. The extra-ordinary qualities of his narrative technique makes his fictional town "Malgudi" a real one. Thus, "Malgudi" in a purely Indianized essence attracts the readers of all ages towards Indian culture and customs.

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