

2

ISSN 2277-775X

COUNTER-VIEW

A PEER-REVIEWED MULTI-DISCIPLINARY INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

Vol. 2 Issue 2 June 2013



Editor - In - Chief
Dr. Mallikarjun Karajgi

CONTENTS

ENGLISH :

- 08 NATION WITHIN NATION: A CRITICAL STUDY OF BHUJANG MESHARAM'S 'ULGULAN'
Vijayanand Bansode
- ✓ 14 R.K. NARAYAN : A MALGUDI NOVELIST
Chandrakant R. Mandlik
- 19 IMAGES OF WOMEN IN ANITA DESAI'S SELECTED NOVELS
Sukhadeo Raghunath Bhosale
- 23 KHUSHWANT SINGH : LANGUAGE AND STYLE
Manoj S. Bhujbal
- 27 SEX AND VIOLENCE : REINVESTIGATION OF J. M. COETZEE'S *IN THE HEART
OF THE COUNTRY AND DISGRACE*
Devendra J. Ranaware
- 33 TRANSLATION AS AN ISSUE OF CROSS-CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE IN
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
Ramesh M. Tadavi
- 37 TREATMENT OF APARTHEID : A STUDY OF NADINE GORDIMER'S NOVELS
Bramhadeo G. Sarak
- 42 ESL IN INDIA : A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE
V.B.Dode
- 49 CONFLICT BETWEEN THE PERSONAL AND POLITICAL IN SHAW'S *SAINT JOAN*
Dr. Papiya Lahiri

R.K. NARAYAN: A MALGUDI NOVELIST

Chandrakant R. Mandlik

Asst. Professor, Dept. of English, S.S.C. College, Junnar, Pune (MS) India

1. Introduction:

Setting is one of the pivotal aspects in a fiction. As a result of this, it is important to look deeper into it from various angles. The Malgudi locale plays a role not only as a geographical territory but also 'a living character' (Naik, 2004:76) in R. K. Narayan's fiction. Recipient of the Sahitya Academy Award, R. K. Narayan is an internationally reputed novelist who has created an imaginary locale Malgudi for most of his novels. Consequently, he is known as Malgudi novelist.

2. Background and Sources of the setting :

Lawrentian criticism of 'the spirit of place' (Anthony Beal, 1955:296) prompts the reader to take look at Malgudi in Narayan's novels which offers newer perspective. Compared with other aspects of the Narayan's novel (plot, theme, language, characters, style and philosophy), 'place' as an aspect is integral and centrifugal of his fictional world. There is a multidimensional expression of the spirit of place in his novels. The reality is that the place constitutes the real essence of novels. Professor Ian watt has pointed out that one of the important characteristics of the novel seems that it gives its personages, "a local habitations and name" (Bland, 2003:213) Glorifying Yoknapatawpha, Faulkner, has shown his excellent mastery of place in fiction, so seems to be this with Narayan whose fictional setting is Malgudi : a town in South India. *Swami and Friends* the initiation of R.K.Narayan, introduces the world of Malgudi to his readers and the world of Malgudi one may witness grows in size and maturity with his successive novels.

"Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarized in some particular locality, which is home, the homeland. Different places on

the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different starts : call it what you like. But the spirit of place is a great reality". (Beal, 1967:55)

The quotation is a great contribution in understanding importance of the locale 'Malgudi' in Narayan's novels which can be termed as a ceaseless source of his creativity.

3. Setting in Narayan's novels :

The plot construction of Narayan's novels is steered by the particular milieu and background of a South Indian community, which is firmly established in a cultural tradition. The return to the normal, means traditional pattern of life reaffirms his comic vision. This lays stress on the cyclical pattern of Narayan's plot construction. The growth and maturity of characters is paralleled in growth of Malgudi from a small agricultural town to a big industrial city. Malgudi in all Narayan's novels does exist and shape his characters. Beneath the veneer of rebellion, in all the novels runs the theme of illusion verses reality. Myth as the most important influence makes the rebels to withdraw from the deviation and accept sane normalcy in life.

4. Setting and the novelists :

The term setting, with its popular and familiar denotation, is understood as a geographic territory functioning primarily as a background or as a locale of the fictional world set against a certain period of time. It may be any place under the sun or on the moon and cast against any point of time either in the remote past, or the actual present or in the far off future. Setting has also been employed as a fixed or permanent locale depicted in novel after novel as in the case of

Thomas Hardy, William Faulkner, Arnold Bennett et al. But it is only when setting, going far beyond its common meaning, is realized as a living presence. (Naik, 2004:76)

The place may be realized reflecting the customs and attitudes of the community as found in many regional novels like Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and Malamud's *The Fixer*. It is in such novels, that setting represents the psychological, religious, moral, social and emotional milieu in which characters exist. It also depicts the geographic territory which actually exists. Hardy's Wessex, Bennett's Five Towns and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha are the best examples of it. Setting as a spirit of place is realized symbolically as microcosm representing certain nation or people. It is a little world as in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* in which the author confines his characters and his actions to a limited place reflecting the characters' motivation and focusing on the essential nature of human beings. It has also been realized as an active antagonist and protagonist influencing the course of the events and the destiny of the characters. In *War and Peace*, for instance, the geography of Russia appears to be a protagonist defeating and destroying Napoleon's army. In the *Return of the Native* the Egdon Heath overshadows and frustrates the hopes and aspirations of the characters. Hence 'setting' has several realizations ranging from the obvious and the simple to the symbolic and the complex. It is in the latter sense that it virtually seems to control the action, theme and time of the novel.

5. Malgudi: the permanent locale of Narayan's of novels :

Malgudi, the permanent locale of Narayan's entire corpus of novels has never ceased fascinating the common reader and the Narayan critic alike. It represents a unique case of dual existence; first, setting as a geographic territory, an 'unknown and airy nothing' conceived and shaped by the novelist's imagination and turning into a local habitation called Malgudi. Says Narayan:

I remember waking up with the name Malgudi on Vijayadashimi...

Malgudi was an earth shaking discovery for me, because I had no mind for facts and things like that, which would be unnecessary in writing about Malgudi or any other real place... I sat down and wrote the first sentence about my town : '*The train had just arrived at Malgudi Station*'. (Mehta, 1971: 56)

Against this kind there also runs a parallel realization of Malgudi as a real place to be located on the map of South India. There are Narayan Scholars enthusiastically and logically trying to put up theories to establish the identity of Malgudi. M. K. Naik, for instance, has not only put up one such theory, but has in fact conceived of a Malgudi map dotted with the names of every street, every place and every monument in Narayan's imaginary town. (Naik, 1983:152)

Trusting the tale and not the teller, as we turn to the depiction of Malgudi in Narayan's whole corpus of novels, our first encounter, so it seems, is with a typical colonial Indian town. Narayan, one realizes, has no eye (or patience) for the details of the geography which has been dealt with rather sketchily. But the first appearance of Malgudi as a small and typical Edwardian town grows significantly from novel to novel one may have one such glimpse of the growing Malgudi scape in Narayan's *The Painter of Signs* (1976) :

This is a jungle where other beasts are constantly on the prowl to

Attack and bite off a mouthful, if one is not careful. As of this

were New York And blocked the Traffic on Broadway. He would

not recognize it, but Malgudi was changing in 1972.

But it is only when we take setting as the spirit of place, as Lawrence meant it, that Malgudi assumes real significance. The spirit of place is realized subtly; realized like the skin of your

body or like the atmosphere which you most certainly feel and are aware of but which cannot be seen

6. Significance of the place :

An intimate reader of Narayan's novels may underline that his novels show vividly the growth and development of his town, Malgudi. Narayan in the role of an architect and planner of Malgudi has been shaping and reshaping his Malgudi; the development of the small town of 'Swami and Friends', through the commercial city of 'The Financial Expert' to the crowded and modern world of The 'Painter of Signs' has been minutely detailed by Narayan. This growing and changing Malgudi is apprehended clearly through its geographic, educational, commercial and social changes. Its ever-changing phenomenon of the place prompted K.R. Srinivas Iyengar to call "Malgudi as the hero of Narayan's novel." (Iyengar, 1962: 363) We may however, add that Malgudi may appear to grow, change and develop but beneath the veneer of modernity Malgudi essentially remains the same. The reader notices Srinivas, the protagonist in 'Mr. Sampath' voices the novelist's ideas and convictions regarding the ageless spirit of India.

7) Comments :

The spirit of place is prominently realized like the skin of our body or like the atmosphere which we most certainly feel and are aware of but which cannot be seen. Hence, the structure, theme, characterization and the world-view in R. K. Narayan's novels are influenced and shaped by the Malgudi locale.

The structure of Narayan's plot one may underline is governed by the particular milieu and back-ground of the South Indian community, (Girja, 1984:149) rooted in a cultural tradition though not affected by growth and change. The outside influences and forces constitute the motivation in most of plots in Narayan's fiction.

The return to the normal means the traditional pattern of life reaffirms his comic vision. This underlines the cyclical pattern of his plot construction. In spite of aberrations and exceptions, digressions and diversions, the plot construction of Narayan follows a cyclical and classical pattern. The

characters and incidents act and react and the plot moves as a logical sequence.

Narayan's prime object, in structuring a plot, seems to tell a story which is easy to read and amusing. Keeping in mind Aristotelian principle of structure he observes that his story has beginning, middle and an end. The characters and plot are inseparably chained together. Consequently, the action flows out of the character and it influences and moulds characters.

After reading and re-reading Narayan's fictions, one may underline that he is neither Anglo-Indian nor Indo-Anglian, he is Indian both in spirit and thought who does not intend to write for the readers in the west even though his fictional corpus is published and largely read abroad. Narayan does select his themes- all that have been happening in India to entertain Indian readers and not to please those in the West. (Singh, 1999:5) Ved Mehata rightly says, "He seems to carry his home, his cosmos, on his back, as did the ageless Swami."

In Narayan's novels human relationships more prominently family relationships constitute a major theme. The joint family system and its disintegration on account of social changes becomes a root source of the theme. The conflicts and intersections between the two cultures 'East-West' and ways of life- Oriental-Occidental have never ceased to interest the Indian mind.

The theme, Narayan has reflected in most of his novels is the theme of juxtaposition of tradition versus modernity in its various outlooks. And it develops into the basic theme of deviation from the normal in his work of fiction. The theme of rebellion seems to be projected through Narayan's protagonist who is realized as a deviator from the accepted norms: the socio cultural codes. Illusion versus reality as the recurring theme flows in the stream of rebellion. (Dnyate, 1996:11) It is reflected through the role played by the central characters against the background of the sacrosanct tradition. Rebellion is considered as the novelist's strategy for a projection of his philosophy: acceptance through 'rite-de passage'.

The protagonists of Narayan are influenced and shaped by middle-class milieu, sacrosanct tradition and the myths. These components, most

prominently compel the rebels to withdraw from their act of deviation and accept normalcy in their life. It stands for the protagonist's growth on the spiritual level which may be witnessed through the theme of Malgudi novels: the return of the native.

Narayan, who is "firmly rooted in his own culture", draws his characters from the middle class section of the society of South India who are deeply rooted in their traditions and culture. The "flat" characters of Narayan neither show any growth in their consciousness nor do they notice change in their natural attitude. The protagonists, however, seem to be growing on spiritual level. The Narayan characters are typically realized through the cultural ethos.

Narayan imbibes the spirit of his tradition and culture and has faith in the pre-ordained and karma-operating world, his consideration of the ancient 'shastras' and his philosophy of "acceptance" and "quietism" undoubtedly, mirrors the sacrosanct tradition he belongs to. In the word of "acceptance" rebellion is regarded as cultural aberration. The characters at the end withdraw from the act of rebellion and return to the world of "sanity".

Narayan's novels are novels of Malgudi setting and, importantly the novelist has attempted effortlessly to search out the human existence the central consciousness of his fiction. The setting in Narayan's novels can also be viewed as a device to focus on character portrayal. The children in the first family reflect common trait of innocence and they are flashed through divine concept of Blake and Wordsworth's sense of innocence: the child is the father of the man. "Innocence" is realized through the old people, experiencing their second childhood. The innocence is telescoped through the presentation of the rustics who most prominently seem to function as background characters. The traditional morality is projected by them as the collective unconsciousness and their role playing may be taken as choric.

The spirit of rebellion in Narayanesque characters may be treated as a notion of acceptance. Which is understood through Camus's view that the 'Hindus' cannot rebel because they commonly try to seek answers in the myths. The notion of rebellion in the sacrosanct Malgudi society seems to be

considered deviation rather than defiance. The theme of illusion and reality springs out in the flows of rebellion. The deviant's withdrawal from rebellion and returning to normalcy indicates Narayan's strategy of 'rite de passage.'

Most of the eccentrics in Narayan's novels are male characters except Shantabai in 'The Dark Room.' The reason is that women in the Hindu society reflect notion of acceptance. Women in the middle-class family "represent 'custom and reason' and know 'what is and what is not proper.'" (Walsh, 1973:12) The eccentrics have a thematic relevance. They distinguishably show growth and development. They offer issues like the spiritual, ethical, cultural and philosophical strategy in life and are understood through their personal peculiarity and incongruity. Narayan has projected the eccentrics through their humorous realization and are picturised through the ways of behaviour and their attitude. They are average and ordinary human beings and underline the strategy of the circular journey of the Narayan's protagonist.

Sanyasa represents the deep rooted Hindu family tradition which may be taken as an ideal stage of life. Suggesting the illusion it underlines deviation as well as the spiritual growth of the character. The notion of 'Sanyasa' symbolizes the last stage 'Sanyasashrama' Narayan views the complete humanity through innocence and experience.

The writer's world-view provides requisite perspective for a perceptive appraisal of his genius. Narayan has remarkably achieved artistic success in assimilating his sense of life. Indianess of the writer has become a greatly sensitive subject in a sharp controversial thought of to be a true Indian. Narayan's world-view underlines his traditional view with regards human existence, life and the universe. The characters of Narayan are deeply rooted in their culture and reflect their unchanging nature and show no development in their personality. The theme illusion versus reality is remarkably understood through the role of the protagonists played against the background of sacrosanct tradition. The notion of 'rite-de-passage' symbolizes growth of the deviating protagonist on the spiritual level, which seems to suggest the recurring theme the return of the native.

References :

- [1] Beal, Anthony. ed. (1967), *The Spirit of Place*. Selected Literary Criticism. London: Heineman
- [2] Bland, D.S. (2003), 'Endangering the Reader's Neck': Background Description in the Novel,
- [3] *Critical Approaches to Fiction*, ed. Shiv K. Kumar and Keith Mckean. Delhi: Atlantic Publisher and Distributers.
- [4] Dnyate, Ramesh. (1996), *The Novels of R. K. Narayan A Typological Study of Characters* New delhi
- [5] Eudora, Welty (1968) *Place in Fiction*. Critical Approaches to Fiction. ed. Shiv Kumar and Keith Mckedn. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company.
- [6] Giria, S.K. (1984), R. K. Narayan: *His World and His Art*. Meerut: Saru Publishing House.
- [7] Hardy, Thomas. (1958), *The Return of the Native*. London
- [8] Mehta, Ved. (1974), "The Train had just arrived at Malgudi Station", *John's Easy to Please*. London.
- [9] Naik, M.k. ed. (1983), *The Ironic Vision. A Study of the Fiction of R.k. Narayan*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd .
- [10] Raizada, Harish. (1983), *The Novels of R.K. Narayan* Gaziabad : Vimal Prakashan.
- [11] Singh, R.S. (1999), 'The Novels of R.K. Narayan': A Critical Evaluation, New Delhi: Atalantic Publishers and Distributers.
- [12] Tiwari, Kanak Lata (2010), *The Novels of Thomas Hardy And R.K. Narayan*. Kanpur, Bhaskar Publications.
- [13] Iyengar, K. R. Srinivasa. (1996), *Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi, Sterling Publishers
- [14] Walsh, William. (1986), *R.K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation*. New Delhi Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

RNI. MAHMUL/2012/44388

To, Mr. Chandrakant Mandlik
Asst. Professor in English,
Shri Shiv Chatrapati College,
JUNNAR
Dist. Pune

Registered Book-Paper
(Printed Books)

750
337/720
x3
579880

भारतीय डाक
भारतीय डाक
India Post

POST LATUR MS
D: RM354072587
Counter No: 2, OF Code: SAK
Amount: INR 20.00
Date: 12/10/2015 16:52
Toll Junnar 9.024105029

"R"
RM 35407258 7IN

COUNTER-VIEW

A PEER-REVIEWED MULTI-DISCIPLINARY INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

Printed at : New Prithvi Offset Printers
Radhe Radhe, Ukhande Complex, Old Cloth Lane, Latur

Published, Owned & Edited by :
Dr. Mallikarjun Karajgi, 'Vijayalaxmi', RE-1512,
Bhagya Nagar, Old Ausa Road, LATUR-413 531 (MS)

